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I

Hannibal Barca: For Carthage; The Right Man for the Wrong Time

By Michael McCabe

A familiar expression in the late 20th century reminds Americans that if Germany won the Second World War we all would be speaking German; a much less common thought is that if Carthage won the Second Punic War we would be speaking a derivative of Phoenician, not Latin. How close was Rome, the superior military force in all of antiquity, to being defeated? The answer is very close. Rome’s survival was a mixture of an adaptation of usual Roman tactics to face a superior foe and a bit of luck. Rome had met her match in Carthage; however, to say that the Second Punic War was Carthage’s war would be giving undue credit to the capital city. This war was Hannibal’s war. Hannibal commanded the Carthaginian invasion force of Italy proper and won several decisive military victories on the peninsula.

Hannibal was one of, if not the best, military generals in all of antiquity and his superior battle tactics went unmatched. Rome’s best consuls of the day were no match in open warfare for Hannibal. How then, was Rome able to survive their first major threat to the continued existence of the Roman Republic? The answer lies in Hannibal’s lack of support from his home city of Carthage and his inability to translate military victories into the conquering of Rome. Furthermore, the tactics of Roman Dictator Q. Fabius Maximus was critical in buying Rome time to rebuild and save Rome from final defeat.

Hannibal wanted to bring the war to Rome, and brought it he did. Hannibal’s strategy was to break Rome’s will, and he believed that once he proved Rome to be vulnerable her allies would desert and support Carthage. Fortunately for Rome, Hannibal underestimated Rome and her allies. Additionally, although Hannibal went unmatched on the battlefield, he was unable to translate his victories into ending the war. Roman historian Livy tells of Hannibal’s flaw in a conversation with his lieutenant Maharbal. Maharbal supposedly told Hannibal after his victory at Cannae, “no one man has been blessed with all God’s gifts. You know Hannibal, how to win a fight; you do not know how to use your victory.” The final flaw of Hannibal’s campaign was his lack of support from his home city of Carthage. His enemies in the senate were suspicious of his success and unwilling to provide Hannibal with reinforcements or siege equipment—both were essential if he was to assault the city of Rome.

The showdown between Rome and Carthage was inevitable; both city-states grew rapidly and vied to be the dominant power in the Mediterranean. Virgil’s epic poem the Aeneid tells us the legend of Carthage’s hatred of Rome stemming from one of Rome’s supposed founders Aeneas spurning the love of Carthaginian queen Dido. Dido’s last words before her suicide were “a malediction to Aeneas and his descendants.” Historically the rivalry truly began after the Romans “involved themselves with affairs in Sicily.” Rome inserted itself into the boiling cauldron that was an island controlled by the Greeks, Carthage, and now mercenaries that pledged allegiance to Rome. Rome’s power play was the direct cause of the First Punic War, in which Rome was able to best Hannibal’s father, Hamilcar in battle. Defeat against the Romans did not stop Hamilcar Barca’s vision of a Carthaginian Empire. After he settled Carthage’s mercenary rebellion, Hamilcar set off to regain lost Carthaginian territory in Spain. By the time of his death in 247 BC he had “re-established and strengthened Carthaginian domination in southern Spain as far north as his new foundation of Acras Leuce [today, Alicante].

Most importantly Hamilcar brought his nine year old son, Hannibal, along to see the military action. Livy in his history of Rome tells of the legend that at age nine Hannibal was led up to a temple altar by his father and bined himself to an oath that “so soon as he [Hannibal] should be able he would be the declared enemy of the Roman People.” This oath was one that Hannibal took to heart—his family’s name had been disgraced after the defeat in the First Punic War, but his father had managed to regain some prestige with his victories in Spain and over the mercenaries in the Truceless War. Hannibal saw the opportunity not only to make his family the most import in Carthage, but to immortalize himself in history—an opportunity Hannibal seized on.

After his brother-in-law Hasdrubal died while commanding forces in Spain, Hannibal was given supreme command of the Carthaginian forces. Hannibal quickly made a power play that was the direct cause of the Second Punic War—he attacked the town of Saguntum, a Roman ally. The Second Punic War had begun, “Hannibal had thrown down the gauntlet. The fall of Saguntum had fanned the sparks of rivalry into a blaze and made war inevitable.” One of Hannibal’s greatest qualities was his decisiveness. He did not waiver when faced with adversity and post-Saguntum shows this quality in Hannibal. He did not wait for Rome to bring the war to his doorstep—Hannibal wanted to dictate the place and the conditions of battle. Hannibal’s strategy was evident:

It is quite clear that Hannibal carried out a carefully prepared plan which he inherited from his father. His object was nothing less than the destruction of the power of Rome before Rome destroyed Carthage, and Rome’s most vulnerable spot was in Italy itself where the Roman federation of states was still loose and the Celtic Tribes of Gauls in the North were in revolt.

Hannibal’s next move was to make his famous march over the Alps and bring the war to the Italian Peninsula.

2 Matyszak. The Enemies of Rome. 2004, p. 21
3 Ibid.
An essential element to all of Hannibal’s military operations was surprise and his march over the Alps was no exception. The Roman’s had control of the sea and felt there was no rush to bring the war to Spain. Hannibal, they believed, had run out of territory to annex and would decay on the Iberian Peninsula until the mighty Roman Army arrived. The thought that an opposing army could navigate the treacherous passage through the Alps had not crossed their minds. Hannibal settled affairs in Spain, leaving his brother Hasdrubal (both Hasdrubal and Hannibal seem to be very common names in Carthage) as governor, and began his march with “90,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and 37 elephants, composed of men from Carthage and her dependencies, Numidia, Spain and the Balearic Islands.” The march over the Alps took a toll on the army of Hannibal where he lost a large amount of men to illness, some to desertion, and others to fighting mountainous tribes who were much more accustomed to fighting in the Alps. Hannibal arrived in Italy with about 20,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry—a substantial force in its own right but one must wonder what if Carthage had controlled the seas and Hannibal had been able to convoy his forces to Italy? It appears that Rome would have been defeated by this massive force. Despite the shortcomings of the mountain passage, Hannibal made it across the Alps “to the utter surprise and consternation of the Romans. Hannibal and his army had crossed the Alps which [the Romans] had never thought of guarding.”

Hannibal’s strategy hinged on the ability to convert local people to the Carthaginian cause—he needed supplies and more manpower. In addition to supplies and troops, Hannibal’s army did not possess any siege equipment due to it being a gigantic burden to force his infantry men to carry ladders over a mountain and impossible to transport the massive siege towers over the Alps. Carthage would be of little help for Hannibal, “in everything that Hannibal did, he had to rely solely on himself, for the home government at Carthage could not be relied upon to support him or to prosecute the war with any energy at all.” Carthage’s senators had always been suspicious of the success of its generals and the enemies of Hannibal made no exception for him. They constantly refused to provide him with reinforcements, even when victory was within the reach of Carthage. Under different political conditions Hannibal’s offensive could have been more organized and constantly been resupplied.

Fortunately for Hannibal, the Celtic tribes in Gaul were filled with resentment toward the Romans and more than willing to provide him with soldiers, supplies, and horses. The Celtic forces were a double edged sword—they were unreliable and they had no real interest in Carthage’s foreign affairs—the Celts wanted revenge on the Romans and would achieve it through plunder. In battle Hannibal saw these mercenaries as expendable assets—very useful, but also very unreliable. They had given Hannibal what he needed most—reinforcements—and now it was time to square off with the Romans for the first time in his military career.

Hannibal’s surprise invasion over the Alps led to the crushing defeat of the Romans at Ticino. Hannibal and his allies descended on the Roman army under the command of Publius Cornelius Scipio. Scipio’s army was routed and his own life was only saved by his young son heroism. Scipio’s son would play a major role in the events to come; however, Hannibal still had the massive upper hand, but he needed to prepare himself as all of Italy was now alert to his presence. His next conflict, and the first true battle of the Second Punic War, was now at hand.
December, 218 BC on the banks of the Trebia was the scene of this battle and once again Hannibal was able to use surprise to his advantage. The Romans knew Hannibal had made his way into Italy, but constantly throughout the Second Punic War the Romans had great trouble in locating Hannibal’s sizeable army. The Battle of Trebia was no exception. In the early morning Hannibal sent out his light and speedy Numidian horse riders to draw the Romans from their camp. The timing of this event became crucial in the outcome of the battle. While the Roman infantry and cavalry chased Hannibal’s horses back toward his main army, Hannibal’s heavy infantry was able to rest, remain warm, and eat a hearty breakfast. Morale in Hannibal’s army was high; the same could not be said for the hungry, tired, and cold Romans. As soon as the Roman’s made their way across the Trebia, Hannibal’s forces met them head on—keeping them in the frigid water as long as possible. The fight was quick—some Romans fled back across the river, but most “perished on the banks of the river, before the elephants and the Gaulish cavalry.”

The message to the Romans was clear: Hannibal was a force to be reckoned with and was in Italy to stay.

Hannibal was able to minimize causalities in his first war effort against the Romans and had hoped to wait until the spring to continue campaigning against the Romans. His reasons were two-fold; first, he wanted his men to rest after a hard fought battle and all the marching they had done over the past years. Second, his mighty elephants were not accustomed to the cold and he feared for their health if he continued to exert them. Unfortunately his situation with the Celts dictated that he march on:

Hannibal was moving. His situation in Cisalpine Gaul was an uncomfortable one; the Gauls did no more than barely tolerate him, and had no enthusiasm for the presence of an army in their own country. The only condition on which they could achieve any feeling of cordiality was the prospect of carrying the war south into the rich lands of Etruria and Campania. Hannibal intended to cross the Apennines into Etruria at the first possible moment.

While Hannibal was most comfortable on the battlefield, his diplomacy and his political tactics were not his strength. For Hannibal the sooner that he was on the move again, the more secure he would feel. His next move was to march south.

Hannibal decided to take the route down into central Italy under the least amount of Roman guard. Hannibal, as has been stated, was quite possibly the greatest general in all of antiquity; however, the Roman consul opposing Hannibal, Flaminius was not. Flaminius believed that he had been tracking down Hannibal’s forces; however Hannibal was able to double back and was able to place his forces in position for a trap. The shores of Lake Trasimene would be where Hannibal would spring his next surprise assault. After an uncomfortable night’s sleep for his troops, and under the cover of an early morning fog Hannibal sprung his trap. It was a short, ferocious battle and ended in disaster for the Roman’s, claiming fifteen thousand men, including their general Flaminius, and Hannibal took another fifteen thousand prisoners. On the Carthaginian side only 1,500 men perished most of them being Gauls. Once again Hannibal had been able to use superior tactics and the element of surprise to overwhelm the Roman forces. Hannibal had finally achieved something no other enemy of

12 Baker. Hannibal. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company 1929. 91
13 Ibid, 96.
14 Ibid, 102.
Rome had been able to up to the end of the 3rd century BC—he stuck fear into the hearts of the people of Rome.

The defeat of Flaminius was a crushing blow to the Roman psyche; however shortly afterward Rome was in for another defeat. Hannibal was able to surround and defeat the propraetor, Centenius. Two Roman armies had again been bested by Hannibal within the span of a couple of months—a drastic strategy change was needed in Rome. The senate “determined to appoint a dictator...the man chosen for the office was Quintus Fabius Maximus.” Roman historians do not give Q. Fabius Maximus enough credit in his role in the Second Punic War—eventually he would earn the title of the delayer. Fabius was a pioneer in guerrilla tactics and believed in keeping the bulk of the Roman army away from Hannibal’s superior forces. His ability to limit Hannibal’s advantage allowed the Roman’s to rebuild, recuperate, and develop a counter attack. However, traditional Roman’s were not proud of the guerrilla warfare tactics under Fabius—they did not possess the honor of the traditional Roman battle.

Fabius’ tactics had been tried and tested, “he would follow Hannibal’s army, always taking advantage of the ground, refusing to fight in conditions that favored the enemy, but losing no chance to cut off his forage parties and deny him supplies.” The guerrilla style tactics exposed Hannibal’s greatest weakness—his lack of supplies. What little supply caravans being supplied to Hannibal were often hijacked by Roman forces making Hannibal’s forces hard pressed for weapons, food, and manpower. ‘The delayer’ bought Rome time and began to reestablish its depleted military for another traditional battle with Hannibal’s forces—this time the battle was to take place at Cannae.

The war seemed to have reached a stalemate. Hannibal could not gain ground against Roman forces that would not present themselves for traditional battle. However, Hannibal’s army received some promising news. Fabius’ term as dictator had reached its limits and the central authority in Rome would again be in the hands of the consuls. The consuls deviated from Fabius’ guerrilla war strategy and raised a massive army with the intention to finally crush Hannibal’s forces in open warfare. Livy’s account of the events leading up to Cannae is that the new Roman consuls and their new massive army followed Hannibal to the fields at Cannae and then divided their forces. Hannibal was more than prepared for this attack; in fact, he hoped the Romans would choose the fields of Cannae due to the fields allowing for a fighting place for his cavalry, who had proved thus far to be invincible. Hannibal’s elaborate military game of chess had now been set on the fields of Cannae.

Hannibal capitalized on the separation of the Roman forces, quickly sending his light Numidian cavalry into the flanks of the Roman camps. While this attack served only as an opening skirmish, it struck the Romans with fear, and quickly took away their confidence. When the battle proper began, the Roman armies found themselves stuck in positions with very little maneuverability, which would lead to disaster for the Roman armies. The military tactics employed by Hannibal at Cannae have been studied for centuries after his victory, but in essence what occurred was:

“The Spanish bulge [Hannibal’s infantry], were struck by the irresistible advance of the enormous Roman centre, [and] began to cave in; and it caved in by degress, till the Roman centre was sucked as if into a funnel. The Romans went on, insensible crowding

15 Ibid, 104.
16 (Dorey and Dudley. Rome Against Carthage. 1971, p. 56)
17 (Livy. Volume V: Books XXI-XXII. 1905, p. 347)
closer, and the bulge gave way before them, until the two deep columns of Libyan infantry, facing inward, became two long lines enveloping the Roman flanks.\(^{18}\)

Although Hannibal’s forces were fewer in number, they had managed to completely surround the bulk of the Roman army. The final piece to Hannibal’s masterpiece was the flank by his general Hasdrubal, who had managed to attack the rear of the Roman Generals. The army was in disarray, separated from its leaders, and completely surrounded. Cannae was a crushing defeat for the Romans, and the closest Hannibal would come to conquering the Italian Peninsula.

Hannibal had once again displayed military brilliance in his victory; however, his actions after Cannae showed his fatal flaw. His general Maharbal urged Hannibal to march on the capital as the entire Roman state would be in complete disarray. Hannibal chose to rest his troops instead; a decision that would save Rome. Hannibal sent his general Hanno to Carthage in order to rally support for his effort in Italy and for the senate to send him a convoy of reinforcements. The Carthaginians had always been distrustful of the success of their generals and they sent Hannibal “4000 Numidians and 40 elephants.”\(^ {19}\) A substantial force, but not one that Hannibal could employ in a siege of the city of Rome. The aftermath of Cannae and Hannibal’s inability to lay siege on the Roman capital city saved the Italian war effort in the Second Punic War.

While Rome had once again been crushed on the battlefield, there was a shining light to come out of the battle; the allies of Rome stood by her. The main political component of Hannibal’s strategy—to convert Rome’s allies to the side of Carthage with his displays of military power—had failed. Additionally, the Roman will had still yet to have been broken—“with every disaster the Roman determination to resist was strengthened, and in spite of his triumphs on battlefields Hannibal had already failed, for the Roman federation remained unshaken.”\(^ {20}\) Although Hannibal’s forces remained strong in numbers, had yet to be defeated in battle, and held a substantial position in Italy, the war had effectively turned against Hannibal for good. He was never able to gain another military victory that rivaled the significance of Cannae—Hannibal had one chance at seize Rome and he passed on it.

The war in Italy turned to a stalemate, but there seemed to be one final hope for Hannibal. His brother Hasdrubal had raised an army in Spain and was mirroring Hannibal’s passage of the Alps and had arrived in Italy. If they were to link “their victory would be an absolutely decisive victory. Rome was in no condition to recover from a serious defeat.”\(^ {21}\) The Roman generals would not be fooled this time. A legion led by Claudius Nero was ready for Hasdrubal after his mountainous journey and planned an ambush. Nero’s legions were victorious, and Hasdrubal was killed in action. Hannibal had no knowledge of his brother’s defeat until before one of his last battles in Italy. His brother’s head was thrown into his camp and Hannibal supposedly declared “I see there the fate of Carthage.”\(^ {22}\) Hannibal would receive no more reinforcements in his conquest of Rome, and his declaration of the fate of Carthage proved to be an incredibly accurate one.

With the war in Italy stalled, Rome changed its tactics and went on the offensive. In the last years of the 3rd century BC a Roman army under the leadership of the greatest Roman general of the time, Scipio the younger, brought the fight to the doorstep of the Carthaginian

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\(^{18}\) Baker. 137
\(^{19}\) Ibid, 154.
\(^{20}\) Beer. 79.
\(^{21}\) Baker. 239.
\(^{22}\) Beer. 80.
capital. Hannibal was recalled from Rome in order to lead the defense of his homeland. The irony here is rich: a city that would not lend support to its greatest general in his campaign on the greatest power of antiquity, called for his support to protect their city.

Hannibal would meet his rival, Scipio, on the fields outside of the Carthaginian town of Zama. The two forces were equal in number and strength; however, it seemed Hannibal had one final advantage: he had 80 elephants at his disposal. In what appears to be the only miscalculation of his military career, Hannibal believed the elephants would break through the Roman army ranks, which were fairly inexperienced in elephant warfare. Scipio’s military genius showed in his organization of his ranks to allow for the elephant charge to run directly through his ranks. The elephants proved to be more of a burden, some “insufficiently trained, were scared by the blare of trumpets, and ran amok among the Numidian cavalry.”23 Hannibal’s elephants were a disaster, and he found his cavalry was in disarray. In the main bulk of the battle Scipio was able to successfully adapt his tactics to prevent Hannibal from effectively using his last lines of highly trained veterans to overwhelm the Roman ranks.

For the first time Hannibal had been defeated on the battlefield, and with it brought an end to the Second Punic War. The Romans were again victorious against Carthage despite the military brilliance of Hannibal Barca. He waged war on the Italian Peninsula for nearly a decade and a half before his final defeat on the African plains of Zama. Hannibal would survive the war and spend the rest of his life on the constant run from the Romans until at the age of sixty-four, he consumed poison and supposedly declared “let us now put an end to the great anxiety of the Romans who have thought it too lengthy and too heavy a task to wait for the death of a hated old man.”24

The story of Hannibal is a tragic one. One man, unsupported by his homeland, brought fear to the hearts of the greatest military power in the ancient world. Had Hannibal been successful in his strategy to convert Roman allies to his side his success would have all but been assured. Hannibal would have then had access to more manpower and siege equipment. Rome was disorganized and in a state of panic after many of Hannibal’s victories. If Carthage had been willing to provide Hannibal with reinforcements sent across the sea rather than having to travel across Europe and through the dangerous pass in the Alps, Hannibal’s forces could have been resupplied and refreshed with fresh legs. Despite Hannibal’s dominance as a military general, he was not the victor in the Second Punic War. The political situation seemed calculated against him, and he did not have the ability to use his victories to further his cause of the annihilation of Rome.

Hannibal seemed to have met his match in Scipio Africanus (the title he received after his victory at Zama). Scipio was able to capitalize on the few mistakes Hannibal made; which leads to the inevitable question: Did the fifteen years of unsuccessful campaigning in Italy, followed by the death of his brother, weaken Hannibal’s resolve? The answer appears to be yes; however, credit must be given to Scipio’s brilliance at Zama. Make no mistake, despite his defeat, the Second Punic War was Hannibal’s war. One man stood up to the military machine of Rome and was nearly victorious. Hannibal achieved a feat no army had been able to do—having Romans fear him, which has eternalized Hannibal as one of the greatest generals in antiquity.

23 (Dorey and Dudley. Rome Against Carthage. 1971, p. 146)
24 Beer: 1955. 82
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II

The Newburgh Conspiracy:
A Choice that Changed History

By Lauren De Angelis

Introduction

“Gentlemen: By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together; how inconsistent with the rules of propriety! how unmilitary! and how subversive of all order and discipline, let the good sense of the army decide.”

After mounting the podium in the Temple of Honor on March 15, 1783, George Washington began his speech with these moving words. Looking around at the angry faces of the officers of the Continental Army, Washington hoped that this speech would sway history. Either his men would listen to his wise words and choose loyalty to the government, or they would spurn his statements and lead their own revolution against it. In these few minutes, Washington held the fate of the United States of America, the new Republic, in his hands. It is safe to say that Washington felt uncertain about his capabilities to persuade his men. In one of the darkest moments in American history, Washington stood up with his head held high, ready to look into the eyes of his soldiers and declare that faith and loyalty must endure.

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As the American Revolution was concluding in 1783 after seven arduous years of fighting, a bizarre event occurred in Washington’s camp in Newburgh, New York. The officers of the Continental Army responded to an anonymous summons that called for them to rebel against the United States government because Congress was delinquent in paying the officers. Stricken with poverty, the soldiers felt trapped in a destitute state that they feared would be permanent unless immediate actions were taken. This anonymous summons declared that only mutiny would bring forth change because entreaties and words had only resulted in empty promises and empty pockets.

In order better to grasp the viewpoint held by the officers in Newburgh, it is vital to understand what was going on in Congress during the beginning of 1783. There existed two factions within the government, which caused tension. This tension reached its pinnacle in Newburgh. The government had been set up so that the states held the most power while the national government remained weak. There were those in Congress, however, known as the

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1 GW to the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783, Fitzpatrick, WGW, 26.
Nationalists, who felt that the national government needed more power. This need was seen most in Congress’ inability to tax and raise revenue that would pay off the ever-increasing debt. Those who favored states’ rights thwarted any chances of this from happening. Some members, therefore, hatched a plan to use the army as a means to achieve more control. By fueling the fire that existed under the army, the Nationalists hoped that they could convince the states to give them the authority to raise general funds and pay off the debt of the American Revolution. Although the Nationalists were willing to risk the Republic in order to do so, one man stood in their way: George Washington.

Washington played the most prominent role in the Newburgh Conspiracy because he alone stood between the army and Congress. He alone defused the tense situation that had developed due to an anonymous summons. Even prior to the summons, Washington was the liaison between Congress and the army. He continually pushed for better conditions, pay, and supplies for his men. In March 1783, he could have stood by and watched the army fix its own problems, but instead he chose to be proactive. Calling his own meeting, entreatling Congress on the army’s behalf, and promising justice in return for loyalty, Washington averted disaster by placing his own reputation on the line.

This chain of events could have swayed two different ways, but it was Washington’s intellect and moderate nature that prevented extreme measures from occurring. He understood that he had to play many roles in order to preserve the Republic. Washington was a commander, liaison, and fellow soldier, which allowed him to identify with both Congress and the army. By listening to both sides, he was able to walk the middle line and prevent the mutiny while also advancing the army’s cause in Congress. It is irrefutable that Washington made an astounding difference for not only his men, but also the government. His actions before, during, and after the events at Newburgh demonstrate Washington’s dedication to his country and his loyalty to the Republican ideal.

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Washington’s role in the Newburgh Conspiracy is not a prominent topic in many articles and books about Washington’s life. There may be a few pages or simply a short chapter dedicated to this momentous event in history. Although they competently discuss the event, they do not give justice to the extent of Washington’s role during these few months in 1783. Many also do not even talk about the actions he took directly after the Newburgh Address to help secure funds for the army and smooth over relations between the army and Congress.

Richard Kohn writes two of the most prominent works regarding the Newburgh Conspiracy. His book *Eagle and Sword* devotes a chapter entitled “The Newburgh Conspiracy: Nationalism and Militarism,” which gives a sound summary of the event, but mainly focuses on the situation in Congress and how it manipulated the army to rebel. Kohn does not go into great detail on Washington’s contributions beyond a general explanation on his decisions to call his own meeting and read his own speech. By not establishing Washington’s thoughts and motives behind his actions, Kohn is unable to portray Washington’s indispensability throughout this event.

Not only does Kohn give a general background to the Newburgh Conspiracy in his book, but also chooses to analyze the supposed conspiracy in greater detail in his other well known article, “The Newburgh Conspiracy: Reconsidered.” This work focuses on both the conspirators in Congress and their incriminating decisions, such as Robert Morris, who resigned as Financier, and the leading conspirators in the Newburgh Camp, especially Horatio Gates. These discussions are important when attempting to understand the Newburgh Conspiracy and are quite interesting,
but do not display the whole picture because both writings end with Washington’s meeting. By ending so abruptly, Kohn is unable to show how the army’s demands were met.

In other books that discuss Washington’s entire life and military career, there appears to be a similar trend of neglecting a discussion on the results regarding pay for the army. In *George Washington’s War*, Bruce Chadwick discusses the Newburgh Conspiracy in the chapter entitled “Coup D’état.” Even though he discusses the event in more detail than other authors, Chadwick sums up Washington’s meeting in four paragraphs. He moves quickly through Washington’s actions using only three sentences to do so. Not only does he shorten his prose about the meeting, but also in what had happened after. He sums up his chapter by merely stating, “They left the temple slowly and returned to their posts”2 This ending leaves the reader to guess what happened in the days and weeks following the event because he then moves his discussion to December 1783.

After analyzing various works, this pattern of incomplete narrative appears often. One book, however, did at least touch on the immediate after shocks of the Newburgh Conspiracy. That book is Stuart Leibiger’s *Founding Friendship: George Washington, James Madison, and the Creation of the American Republic*. Although his work focuses on the relationship between James Madison and Washington, it also gives more details about Washington’s role and how he affected change in the subsequent weeks of the Newburgh Conspiracy.

For instance, Leibiger writes, “In the weeks following the Newburgh crisis, Washington sorted out what had happened...From Newburgh...Washington anxiously followed the revenue plan’s fate” that could have provided the funds necessary for the army.3 Although he goes into some detail that is lacking in other sources, he too ends this scene in American history somewhat suddenly by saying the threat declined after preliminary peace. Yes, this is true, but there is so much more that can be said about Washington attempting to procreate funds and mediate after the preliminary peace is signed.

The authors who have written about the Newburgh Conspiracy divulge information regarding Washington’s role, if one looks closely. They do a fine job at analyzing his character, actions, and influence; however, there is little discussion about how he affected change after the formal address. In order to fully understand the Newburgh Conspiracy, one needs to look at it from all sides and understand just how much effort Washington put forth to preserve the union. Therefore, this paper will set out to explore the Newburgh Conspiracy in general, but focus specifically on Washington’s role after the address and how he altered the course of history. This will provide the final piece to the Newburgh Conspiracy puzzle, and thus help shed light on a turning point in American history!

### Chapter 1

#### Congress’ Predicament

In January 1783, Congress faced rising tension from the public creditors, especially those soldiers who had given up seven years of their lives to fight for American independence. These tensions culminated when a deputation of army officers arrived in Philadelphia on December 31, 1782. This deputation included General Alexander McDougall, Colonel John Brooks, Colonel

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Mathias Ogden, and Colonel Stephen Moylan. This deputation hoped to secure the funds that had been promised by Congress since the beginning of the war. It is evident in the memorial from the officers that the army was facing levels of poverty that would prevent it from maintaining a life after war. Stating, “Our distresses have brought us to a point. We have borne all that men can bear-- our property is expended-- our private resources are at an end, and our friends are wearied out and disgusted without incessant applications.” These officers realized that they had exhausted all other outlets and needed Congress’ help. However, help from Congress had previously proved to be limited.

As soldiers of the Continental Army, enlisted men were promised a certain amount of provisions that included food, clothing, and compensation. Delivering only seven or eight-tenths of the original sum, Congress was unable to satiate the officers’ inherent needs. Also, those soldiers who had previously retired from service were unable to provide for themselves under the half-pay resolution of 1780, which provided officers with half pay for life, because the states were unwilling to support the resolution. They witnessed “with chagrin the odious point of view in which the citizens of too many states endeavor to place the men who are entitled to” half-pay. They believed that it was Congress’ responsibility to pay them, not the states’. Therefore, the deputation asked Congress to commute this half-pay for life for full pay for a number of years or one large lump sum payment. However, Nationalists in Congress, such as Alexander Hamilton and Robert Morris, believed that Congress could not help the soldiers without first taking power away from the states.

Because the Americans feared a distant centralized government, they created a confederation that had a weak federal government and strong state governments. This meant that the states had the power to raise taxes, fund projects, and ultimately pay creditors who rendered services during the war. These stipulations inhibited Congress’ ability fully to help the suffering soldiers in the army. To remedy this situation, Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance, declared that Congress needed the power to raise funds. In his “Observations on the Present State of Affairs,” Morris stated, “To give Congress proper authority, the Confederation should be amended. Influence may be obtained by funding the Public Debts, on general Revenues.” He strongly believed that the states would be unwilling to fund the current debt and also the interest imposed by previous ones. To avoid these problems, he believed the establishment of “general funds” under Congress would not only be accepted by more individuals, but also be seen as more just.

After the deputation presented their requests, Congress began to fear the power of the army. The Congressional Committee asked the deputation what actions would be taken if Congress was unable to help. They responded:

- It was impossible to say precisely, that altho’ the Sergeants & some of the most intelligent privates had been often observed in sequestered consultations, yet it is not

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known that any premeditated plan had been formed; that there was sufficient reason to dread that at least a mutiny would ensue.\(^7\)

Not only did this response foreshadow the events that would take place in March 1783 in Newburgh, New York, but also brought the reality of mutiny to the minds of congressional leaders. It is worth noting, however, that George Washington believed in his army’s integrity. Writing to Robert Morris on January 8\(^{th}\), Washington gave reassurance regarding his army’s intentions, while also declaring his hopes that the results would strengthen the ties between the government and the army. He declared, “I have no doubt of a perfect agreement between the Army and the present Contractors—nor all the advantages which will flow from the consequent harmony. Surely I am, the Army will ask no more of the Contractors than their indubitable rights.”\(^8\) Washington knew the character of his army, and did not think them capable of overthrowing the government. These threats urged Robert Morris into action, but it should be noted that Morris was one of those individuals who wanted to use the army’s anger against Congress in order to gain the right to tax. Despite his underhanded intentions, he did try to calm the situation in the beginning. Meeting with the deputation personally on January 17\(^{th}\), he stated that he had been searching for new sources of funds since October of 1782. However, these sources had not yet reached fruition. Morris sought to raise revenue by drawing against the Dutch loan of 1782 through the importation of specie from Havana. Not only did he execute this plan, but also decided to overdraw on the French loan of 1783. He believed this was in the best interest of Congress because the tension within the army was rising.\(^9\)

This tension became most evident after General Nathanael Greene had advanced two months pay to the Southern army after the British were expelled from Charlestown in December 1782. The Northern troops felt neglected and wanted equality. Thus, Robert Morris decided to advance one month’s pay to the Northern army to appease them. This would eventually prove to be troublesome, however, causing further deterioration of the faith that certain officers held in Congress. There was no solid relationship between Congress and the army. Because of this, the army was more likely to voice its concern or even take action against Congress.

Robert Morris risked bankruptcy to ensure that some payment went to the army, but this risk proved to be too great. On January 18\(^{th}\), Robert Morris learned that the overdraft was rejected, which meant that the government’s resources were overextended. There was little he could do to raise funds for the soldiers because his personal attempts had failed. The states too had proved time and again unwilling to pay the soldiers. Therefore, he decided to resign on January 24\(^{th}\). Although he was in debt, Morris’ actions point to his probable role in the ensuing Newburgh Affair. He knew of the army’s discontent and wanted to cause excitement in the army so that it could be used to threaten Congress and the states to provide for general revenues.\(^{10}\) This argument towards Morris’ guilt is only further strengthened when he demanded that the injunction of secrecy be removed from his resignation in late February 1783. By exposing the truth to the general public, he knew that he could manipulate Congress.

In order fully to understand Morris’ desperate demand for general funds, one needs to grasp the concept of “general funds”. When Congress debated this issue in January 1783, Alexander Hamilton talked extensively on the subject. He declared:

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\(^7\) “Notes on Debates,” January 13, 1783, Hutchinson et al., PJM, 6:32.
\(^8\) GW to RM, January 8, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:284.
\(^9\) RM to John Pierce, January 20, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:337-338.
\(^{10}\) Editorial Note, January 24, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:366.
That funds considered as permanent sources of revenue were of two kinds 1st such as wd. extend generally & uniformly throughout the U.S. & wd. be collected under the authority of Congs. 2dly such as might be established separately within each State, & might consist of any objects which were chosen by the states, and which might be collected either under the authority of the States or of Congs.11

The term “general funds” thus means the ability for Congress to tax all states, instead of allowing each state to tax individually. Nationalists in Congress of course favored the former option because it was far more simple than allowing the states to decide these issues separately. Likewise, Congress feared that the states would abuse the power of collections, which would eventually cause much corruption within the state governments. It was widely believed that those states who did not agree with commutation would supply funds inadequately or not at all. Those who supported the states’ power, however, refuted the nationalists’ beliefs by stating that collections that had previously occurred statewide did not result in mass corruption and were handed out lawfully Nevertheless, the Nationalists hotly debated this issue and truly believed funding through the states would be inadequate to appease the public creditors.

Those in Congress knew that this issue required an immediate decision because it was brought up by a public creditor who had the power to force the issue, namely the army. On January 28, 1783, James Madison rose and stated “the patience of the army has been equal to their bravery, but that patience must have its limits; and the result of despair can not be foreseen, nor ought to be risked.”12 This statement shows Congress’ fear. The ensuing debates concentrated heavily on appeasing them. By the end of January, Congress decided to appoint a committee consisting of Samuel Osgood, Thomas Fitzsimons, John Lewis Gervais, Alexander Hamilton, and James Wilson, which began calculating the cost of commutation.

In early February, Congress focused on establishing a commutation that would be acceptable to the majority of states. The committee decided to grant five years full pay, which would equal to half pay for life. However, other members of Congress debated this resolution. Other possible options emerged; including 5 ½ years full pay in gross, which was turned down on February 4th. It became apparent that many members in Congress could not agree on the aforementioned commutation. This inability to compromise stems from the belief that Congress did not have the power under Articles of Confederation. Writing to Madison, Edmund Randolph demonstrates the importance of this point when he stated, “Congress ought not to raise a revenue by other means, than those prescribed in the confederation.”13 It was natural for representatives of individual states to resist in changing the already precarious status quo in the United States. Therefore, a decision regarding the commutation could not be reached until concessions were made by the states.

The indecisiveness of Congress in regards to establishing general funds in order to subsidize the debt, coupled with the impending peace, led some Nationalists in Congress to use the threat of the army rebelling to sway Congress. For example, the Assistant Superintendent of Finance Gouverneur Morris, wrote a letter to General Henry Knox beseeching him to influence the army to unite with all public creditors in order to receive just compensation. He stated, “The Army may now influence the Legislatures and...after you have carried the Post the public

11 “Notes on Debates,” January 27, 1783, Hutchinson et al., PJM, 6:136.
12 “Notes on Debates,” January 28, 1783, Hutchinson et al., PJM, 6:146
13 Edmund Randolph to JM, February 7, 1783, Hutchinson et al., PJM 186.
Creditors will garrison it for you.” Although Gouverneur Morris did not overtly urge the army to rebel, he hinted at action. He wanted them to use their power and influence to force Congress to establish general funds by using the army as a bluff. He expressed similar sentiments to Nathanael Greene on February 11th, but this time he stressed the approaching peace as a catalyst for the officers to act. He believed that it would “give very serious thoughts to every officer.” Although he did not specifically state what actions would be used, one can assume it would be through some type of violent threat. The “serious thoughts” Morris alluded to shows there were ideas circulating about the army’s power, but a letter by Alexander McDougall, under the pen name “Brutus,” solidifies the argument that at least some Nationalists wanted to use the army as a bluff in order to achieve their demands.

Alexander McDougall was himself an advocate for using the army in order to establish general funds to pay the ever-increasing war debts. He was one of the few who overtly declared using the strength and military power of the army to force this decision. To Henry Knox, he stated, “the sentiment is daily gaining ground, that the Army will not, nor ought not, to disband till Justice is done to them” It is clearly evident that this letter established the threat that heretofore had been alluded to in letters written by Gouverneur Morris. By declaring the army’s intentions, McDougall hoped that he could manipulate Congress into a just decision. However, it is apparent that McDougall did not judge the character of the army correctly because both Generals Knox and Washington were loyal to the national government and believed their army would prove to be loyal too.

In response to the concerns brought up by both McDougall and Morris, Henry Knox responded to Gouverneur Morris. He explained how the army had always been viewed as thirteen separate entities that now wanted to merge as one under the power of Congress. Although Knox did not specifically say how this was to be done, he reassured Morris by maintaining, “They are good patriots and would forward every thing, that would tend to produce union, and a permanent general constitution. But they are yet to be taught how their influence is to effect this matter.” Knox’s statement illustrates the army’s lack of guidance in the matter of influencing Congress. Knox, as one of the men who sent the deputation in December 1783, wanted the army to help its cause, but in his educated opinion, he did not feel the army was prepared for any military action against the government. Likewise, he himself believed that the national government would provide funds, which meant a rebellion would be unnecessary.

The resignation of Robert Morris, the letters written by Gouverneur Morris, and the declarations by Alexander McDougall point to their part in the Newburgh Conspiracy. Granted, there is no definitive proof regarding most of these individuals’ involvement; however, the words and actions of these men seemed to have been meticulously thought out in order to gain ground in the state-dominated Congress. Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress had little power and had to fight against the dominance of the states. It is thus likely that those who were in favor of Congressional authority could have used more drastic means, such as threats, to gain rights in order to create a stronger nation.

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In Congress, there was still no agreement regarding payment for the army, even though it had decided to sit as a Committee of the Whole. Concern was rising, which is seen in Alexander

14 GM to HK, February 7, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:417.
15 GM to Nathanael Greene, February 11, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:425.
16 Alexander McDougall to HK, February 12, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:120
17 HK to GM, February 21, 1783. Ferguson, PRM, 7:449.
Hamilton’s letter to George Washington. Although Hamilton contacted Washington, one must understand that Hamilton was also an advocate for creating a stronger Congress. However, he did not want to go passed the point of no return. He therefore warned Washington of the potential threat, even though he may have secretly wanted the army to help create a more central government.

Hamilton spoke of the precarious state of the national finances and the fear felt regarding the army’s next action. He entreated Washington to walk the moderate path that he was so used to. Stating:

This Your Excellency’s influence must effect. In order to do it, it will be advisable not to discountenance their endeavors to procure redress, but rather by the intervention of confidential and prudent persons, to take the direction of them. This however must not appear: it is of moment to the public tranquility that Your Excellency should preserve the confidence of the army without losing that of the people. This will enable you in case of extremity to guide the torrent, and bring order perhaps even good, out of confusion.\textsuperscript{18}

Hamilton shows the importance of Washington’s leadership during this time. For without moderation, the revolution could have potentially turned into Civil War. Although this was the first letter written by Hamilton to Washington regarding the disposition of the army, Washington had known about their grievances for some time. He had informed Robert Morris of the complaints of his men as early as 1782 and had been working secretly to procure funds. Washington’s actions were always done to benefit his men, which would be seen in his decisions to thwart mutiny and save the Republic in March 1783.

Washington knew that keeping the army at bay while funds were being created was vital in maintaining order. A problem that occurred was the tendency for troops to violate private property. This violation was seen as an act of disobedience, which could have been seen as a precursor to outright rebellion. In order to stop the troops from breaking the law, Washington did everything in his power to keep order through the creation of markets that would be used by both civilians and troops to buy and sell goods. Washington realized, however, that this was only a small measure that would only temporarily distract the troops from their present grievances. Washington confided in George Clinton, who was then the governor of New York:

In order to put a total stop to an evil which I am apprehensive will otherwise be of very pernicious consequence, it is my earnest wish and desire, that effectual Measures might be taken to prevent the Inhabitants from purchasing or receiving...public property that may be in possession of Soldiery.\textsuperscript{19}

Washington’s actions show that the soldiers needed to use illegal and dishonorable practices in order to procure the minimum for survival. Because Congress could not give these soldiers their just due, they had to find other ways to get it. Washington refused to tolerate this anarchy and used his power to alleviate some of his men’s suffering.

As Congress debated subjects ranging from a 25-year impost to dividing up the creditors in order to pay, the situation became more severe. Because they could not agree, the soldiers were forced to wait in a state of limbo. Hamilton, who was a veteran of the army and a close

\textsuperscript{18} AH to GW, February 13, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:254.

\textsuperscript{19} GW to George Clinton, February 17, 1783. Fitzpatrick, \textit{WGW}, 26.
correspondent of Washington, told Congress about the growing ill will of the army towards both Congress and Washington. Stating:

He knew Genl. Washington intimately & perfectly, that his extreme reserve, mixed sometimes with a degree of asperity of temper both of which were said to have increased of late, had contributed to the decline of his popularity; but that his virtue patriotism & his firmness would it might be depended upon never yield to any dishonorable or disloyal plans into which he might be called.  

Congress was sure that Washington would remain loyal; however, the concern for the army’s intentions was still present. Unless they came to a decision soon, they would face a major threat that they hoped Washington would be able to extinguish.

During this tense time, Alexander McDougall sent another letter to General Knox under the name of Brutus. He spoke of Congress’ fear and possible actions toward the army, if peace were made with Britain. He stated that Congress was indeed scared of the possible repercussions of a strong, central army during a time of peace. Therefore, he believed that “an attempt is soon to be made to split the Army into detachments to prevent their being formidable.” If this split did in fact occur, McDougall felt that the states would cancel their militia debt. The inconsistency of payment from the states drove McDougall to his conclusions. In the face of these hard decisions, he felt it was nearly impossible to advise the army on how to achieve their goals.

The situation in Congress became disastrous when Robert Morris’ resignation was published on February 26th. As previously mentioned, Robert Morris resigned after his actions to secure funds failed, but his resignation was not yet made public in order to avoid hysteria among both civilians, and more important, the army. His resignation brought about a financial crisis that seemed insurmountable due to the amount of credit Morris held. Without this man in office, many spectators felt that the republican experiment was near its end. Sir Guy Carlton, a British authority in New York, wrote to Thomas Townshend, the British Secretary of State for Home Affairs: “The manner and his language...seem connected with the [army] petition and to be part of the same plan, tending to place General Washington at the head of all power.” This statement enforces the rumors that were circulating regarding Robert Morris’ actions. By removing himself from power, Morris hoped to cause a panic that would in fact help Congress gain power; however his actions could have also caused the downfall of the republic.

Members of Congress feared the worst, especially with the publication of the resignation of Morris and increasing rumors regarding the army’s intentions to refuse dispersion. Joseph Jones, a Congressman from Virginia, wrote to Washington about his fears and concerns:

That when once all confidence between the civil and military authority is lost by intemperate conduct, or an assumption of improper power, especially by the military body, the Rubicon is crossed, and to retreat will be very difficult for the fears and jealousies that will unavoidably subsist between the two bodies.

The working relationship between members of Congress and the army was clearly at stake in this comment. If the army acted on their feelings of discontent, then Congress would be unable to

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21 AM to HK, February 27, 1783. *PHK*, 11:165.
23 Joseph Jones to GW, February 27, 1783., *Timothy Pickering Papers*, 34:143.
trust or work with them again. By writing to Washington, Jones hoped to save the relationship that had remained in tact since the outset of the war. Washington again is seen as the only individual who was capable of using the advice of Congress and help the army to understand the financial constraints they were under.

Chapter 2
Washington: The Liaison

Washington himself was frustrated with the lack of control and power he had in regards to ensuring payment for his men. He wrote to Hamilton “that the public interest might be benefited, if the Commander in Chief of the Army was let more into the political & pecuniary state of our affairs than he is.” Washington knew that his status as commander of the Continental Army made it difficult for him to remain moderate because he did in fact want to help his men, but did not have the power to do so. He felt extreme anguish about the army’s sufferings and the inability of Congress to decide how to alleviate them. Nevertheless, he did not lose faith in the army. He believed, “If there is such a disposition shewn as prudence & policy dictates, to do justice, your apprehensions, in case of Peace, are greater than there is cause for.”

Although Hamilton may have had concerns about the allegiance of the army, Washington did not. Washington did, however, emphasize that Congress did need to keep an open mind to all concerns that the army had or else destroy everything that had been accomplished in the previous eight years.

Following Washington’s advice, Congress tried to make a compromise on March 6th, which attempted to give Congress the ability to raise revenue while appeasing the reluctance of the states. Prior to this day, Congress had created a sub-committee to draft a revenue plan, which embodied a “5 percent ad valorem impost on virtually all imported goods as well as prize ships and their cargoes.” Not only would there be an impost, but also revenues from tariffs on wine, brandy, and rum, which would go directly to Congress. However, the states maintained the ability to create their own taxes in order to increase revenue. This compromise would allow revenue to be raised annually in order to pay the debt. Although this seemed like a plausible solution to the problem of wartime debt, Nationalists in Congress disliked the idea not only because it favored the states too heavily, but also went against the provisions of credit.

Robert Morris responded to Congress’ compromise by asserting that public creditors had the right to ask for their payment up front on a specific date. They did not, under the law, have to wait for the debt to be paid over a number of years. He stated, the “Government have no Right to oblige Creditors to commute their Debts for any Thing else. Any Revenues for the public Credit must be such that Money may be borrowed on them to pay those to whom it is due.” He then listed issues he saw in this compromise that threatened the ability of the debt to be paid. This list included punctuality of payment, for whom the payments were intended, and the inability of Congress to send collectors.

During this heated debate in Congress, a letter arrived from General Washington addressed to Robert Morris. Expressing his fear that the mood of the army was worsening as

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25 Ibid
26 Editorial Note, March 8, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:518
27 Editorial Note, March 8, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:525-526.
days progressed, he stated, “as danger becomes further removed from them their feelings seem to be more callous to those noble Sentiments with which I could wish to see them inspired.”

These fears became alarming after an anonymous summons circulated throughout the Newburgh encampment on March 10th, which called for a meeting of the officers on Tuesday, March 11th, in order to respond to the problems that arose from their lack of payment.

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The anonymous letter was written by a Brigadier General named John Armstrong. He was one of the more radical members involved in the Newburgh Conspiracy because he in fact wanted the army to rise up against Congress. In his first Newburgh Address, he spoke of the government’s lack of care towards the army. He asked the men if they could “consent to wade through the vile mire of dependency, and owe the miserable remnant of that life to charity, which has hitherto been spent in honor?” These strong words strengthened the growing dissatisfaction of the army. Following these words, he demanded that these men give Congress an ultimatum. Armstrong asserted that the army would remain true if Congress followed through with the demands of the December deputation; however, if it did not, then the army would find an alternative way to achieve its ends. Armstrong stated, “If peace, that nothing shall separate them [Congress] from your arms but death; if war, that courting auspices, and inviting the direction of your illustrious leader, you will retire to some unsettled country, smile in your turn, and ‘mock when their [Congress’s] fear cometh on’.”

These were sober threats that Washington took seriously because he knew that mutiny had been a possibility for some time.

On March 11, 1783, Washington’s General Orders demonstrated his complete control of the situation. Having read the summons of this anonymous individual, Washington did everything he could to defuse the feelings the letter brought. He did not want to silence the officers by denying them their chance to speak their minds because he knew that this would only further inhibit progress. He called his own meeting, which he had the power to control, so that the situation did not get out of hand. Washington stipulated in his orders that “his duty as well as his reputation and true interest of the Army requires his disapprobation of such disorderly proceedings,” therefore a meeting would be held on that Saturday at noon.

Those in command at Newburgh knew that the course of history hung on this meeting. This fear can be seen in the letter General Knox wrote to Benjamin Lincoln, the Secretary at War, on March 12th, the day after Washington’s orders had been issued. He asked Lincoln that Congress needed to take this threat seriously because Knox was not sure Washington’s meeting would quell the storm created by the summons. He stated, “What will be the result? God only knows- Congress ought not to lose a moment in bringing the affairs of the army to a decision.”

Not only can one see alarm in Knox’s writings, but also in Washington’s. On the same day Knox wrote to Lincoln, Washington wrote to the President of Congress. He informed the president that the army had planned an unauthorized meeting in which to discuss possible action against Congress. Washington told him that he was doing everything possible to aid the situation; however, he asked for the president’s help. He declared:

I have nothing further to add, except a Wish, that the measures I have taken to dissipate a Storm, which had gathered so suddenly and unexpectedly, may be acceptable to

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28 GW to RM, March 8, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:538.
32 HK to Benjamin Lincoln, March 12, 1783, Ferguson, PHK, 12:19.
Congress...that Congress have the best Intentions of doing ample Justice to the Army, as soon as Circumstances will possibly admit.33

Washington did indeed try to help this matter the best way that he could at the camp, but he knew he needed Congress’ help. He expected that the government would take this warning seriously and take action. In another letter addressed to Congress, he asked outright for immediate aid. He warned the members of Congress that if the army had met without approval, then they would have come to a decision that was too inconceivable to describe. Further to emphasize what needed to be done in order to avoid such occurrences, Washington stated, “if they [the army] are turned loose without liquidation of accts, and an assurance of that justice to which they are so worthily entitled,” then the men had no other option, but to rebel.34 Washington fought for his men, and did not allow Congress to forget the heroic acts that they had performed, which had earned them the right for pay.

Although this summons was circulated at the Newburgh encampment, Washington was aware that it did not originate within its confines. He realized that with the arrival of Armstrong from Philadelphia also came the arrival of the summons. Therefore, it was likely that Armstrong was the culprit. Though Washington did not divulge his hypothesis, he did allude to it in a letter written to Jones. Not only did Washington accuse Armstrong in this letter, but also members of the Continental Congress, such as Robert and Gourveneur Morris, for their alleged involvement. He declared:

That some members of Congress wished the Measure might take effect, in order to compel the Public, particularly the delinquent States, to do justice...it is generally believ’d the Scheme was not only planned, but also digested in Philadelphia; and that some people have been playing a double game; spreading at the Camp and in Philadelphia Reports and raising jealousies equally void of Foundation.35

Washington seemed disgusted with these facts because he was trying to be the moderate leader who would keep this republican experiment from falling apart. If Congress did not support him in this endeavor, then there would be no hope. He had faith that Congress could help these soldiers while also solving the budget problem. They did not need to resort to underhanded and dangerous tactics to do so.

On March 13th, Washington disclosed to the army the resolutions that Congress had made on January 25, 1783. Reaffirming their rights to pay and security, these resolutions should have helped appease the army. Washington wanted to instill trust in the army regarding Congress’ abilities. As Saturday approached, the day of the meeting, he hoped that the army would contemplate these resolutions and would realize that being honorable and loyal was the right thing to do. Although he was not sure that this plan would work, Washington carefully thought out his actions in order to keep the army from outright rebellion against the government.

Finally, Saturday March 15, 1783 arrived. It must have been a day of tension and apprehension for both the commanding officers and the men. At the meeting, which began at noon, General Gates presided. Although Gates was a general under Washington, his role in the Newburgh Conspiracy must also be observed because he was a prominent member of it. He was chosen by Congress to lead the mutiny, which he believed would help him take power from his

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31 GW to The President of Congress, March 12, 1783, Fitzpatrick, WGW, 26.
34 GW to AH, March 12, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:287.
adversary: Washington. Even though Gates presided over this meeting, he was in no way helping.36

When the meeting began, Washington who, in a dramatic fashion, walked in to the assembly hall and stood at a podium in order to deliver his speech. Washington was not a fine orator like many of his peers, but he carefully prepared his speeches to properly convey his point. He began by formally addressing the anonymous summons. Washington stated:

the Author of the Address, should have had more charity than to mark for Suspicion, the man who should recommend moderation and longer forbearance...But he had another plan...in which...love of Country have no part; and he was right, to insinuate the darkest suspicion, to effect the blackest designs.37

Washington juxtaposed his character with that of the author. He wanted to emphasize the fact that he himself was for the country and for his men whereas this author was selfish and did not understand the repercussions of the acts he wished the army to take. It appears Washington used this language to show the officers how this author did not know what was best for the army, and instead illustrated how he knew what needed to be done. Washington called himself the army’s “faithful friend.” He could have said commander or leader, but he saw himself as one with them. He suffered with them and truly wanted to help them. Throughout his entire speech, Washington reaffirmed that belief.

Not only did he continually affirm his allegiance to the army, he also pledged that Congress would provide for them. He stated:

I cannot conclude this Address...without giving it as my decided opinion, that the Honble Body, entertain exalted sentiments of the Services of the Army; and, from a full conviction of its merits and sufferings, will do it compleat justice.38

Washington confirmed that he had no doubts in his mind that Congress understood the suffering of the soldiers. He promised them that Congress would pull through their budget problems and succeed in giving them fair compensation. All he asked of his men was patience because Congress was a slow governing body and to trust in his judgment. After all the years he had served them, Washington hoped that they would listen to him.

To close his speech, Washington asked them to think about the repercussions of their actions. He did not want them to ruin their reputation as a loyal army. He implored, “in your favor, let me entreat you, Gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures, which, viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained.”39 Washington believed strongly in the integrity of his army and hoped that these words were enough to convince them to change their minds and take a more hitherto moderate course.

His thought out speech asserted his opinion strongly, without alienating himself from his men. The officers, however, were unmoved. After his formal speech was delivered, Washington pulled out a letter from Joseph Jones that spoke of Congress’ resolve to help the soldiers. As he did this, he dramatically pulled out his glasses, which he received from his doctor a few months prior to this event and murmured, “he had grown gray in their service, and now found himself growing blind.”40 This affected the men strongly because they now could better understand the

36 Kohn, “The Inside of the Newburgh Conspiracy,” 199-201/
37 GW to the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783, Fitzpatrick, The WGW, 26.
38 GW to the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783, Fitzpatrick, WGW, 26.
39 GW to the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783, Fitzpatrick, WGW, 26.
40 Kohn, Skeen, 288.
loyalty and sacrifice that their commander had done for them throughout the past seven years of service. The men were lost for words, and a number of accounts even state that some men cried. This poignant moment was a instant where the men looked at their actions and realized that they could not turn their back on one of the few men who genuinely cared about them.

It is hard to say whether or not Washington adlibbed these words on the spot or had previously planned them. Knowing Washington’s character, however, causes one to believe that he might have thought about what could affect his men prior to the meeting. He had worked with them for years and knew what could bring about a response. Also, he had to do so in a dramatic fashion or else risk alienation. Likewise, it is interesting to consider that he had read his entire speech without his spectacles, yet could not when reading Joseph Jones’. Every word, phrase, and action seemed to be as dramatic as needed. He walked in dramatically, stood at a podium, and declared these thought out words to emphasize how important he viewed this meeting. Therefore, it is not surprising that he would think to use empathy and pity to manipulate the emotion of his men.

Upon completing his speech, Washington left, allowing the officers to draft resolutions regarding ideas about what had just taken place. General Knox proposed a motion, which was seconded by General Israel Putnam. They resolved that the army would thank Washington for his speech and his allegiance to his men. Also, they agreed that Washington would know that they had deep respect for him and would not, could not disappoint him. The army then decided that a committee would be formed of one general, one field officer, and one captain in order to craft resolutions that the army could utilize in order to help solve this problem. For a half hour, the committee, which included Knox, discussed the army’s options and future actions.

Although the anonymous summons had wanted to drive the men to outright rebellion, the outcome of the meeting was quite different. The resolutions that the committee passed did not speak of rebellion, but instead loyalty and forbearance. The army stated that they could not disgrace themselves with selfish actions and pledged “that the army continue to have an unshaken confidence in the justice of Congress and their country.”41 The committee also decided that Washington needed to write to the president of Congress for redress of the army’s problems. They saw Washington as a true intermediary and respected him for that quality. The army had seen Washington’s leadership in action and hoped that his strength on the field would transfer to Congress.

Lastly, the committee declared their disgust with the anonymous author who had asked them to do the unthinkable. They firmly stated,

That the officers of the American army view with abhorrence, and reject with disdain the infamous propositions contained in a late address to the officers of the army, and resent with indignation the secret attempts of some unknown persons to collect the officers together in a manner totally, subversive of all discipline and good order.42

It is logical to think that Washington’s meeting with the officers had a profound effect on them. They went from supporting this anonymous author to completely rejecting his stance. This thus appears to be a fine example of Washington’s ability to influence his men. Had another leader handled this situation, then it most likely would have ended differently. Washington’s resolve to see his army through this storm only strengthened the already existing bond between them. Although there was tension between Washington’s use of moderation and the army’s want for

change, this tension eased because Washington articulated how beneficial moderation could be instead of civil war.

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In the days that followed Washington’s meeting, he continually expressed his gratitude to his army. In his general orders, Washington stated, “notwithstanding the storm now has passed over...the officers have...given the most unequivocal and exalted proofs of patriotism”43 Not only did he express these sentiments toward his officers, he also ensured that they understood what the resolutions entailed. He did this by allowing them to copy down the official papers if they saw fit, which showed the men that Washington was hiding nothing from them. By taking these actions and expressing his beliefs, Washington further took control of this situation because now all officers had access to the documents and the reasons behind them. This is a further testament to Washington’s leadership capabilities, which were utilized during times of great distress.

Although Washington admitted that the storm had now passed over the men, he knew that the situation was not over. He understood that the soldiers were still suffering and would continue to suffer until Congress made a decision. He emphasized these facts to Joseph Jones in a letter on March 18th. He believed that the men were “too sore by the recollection of their past sufferings to be touched much longer upon the string of forbearance, in matters wherein they can see no cause for delay.”44 His statement illustrates the tenuous peace that had come over Newburgh, but shows that this peace could end at anytime if Congress did not take this situation seriously. From the outset of the war, Washington saw these men acting as soldiers and knew they should be paid as such. He entreated everyone in hopes that he bore enough influence to push Congress to a definitive decision. Washington wanted to make sure his men got paid because peace with Britain loomed, and he knew that the army should not, could not be disbanded until they got what they deserved from the government.

In the aforementioned letter, one can see the private concerns that Washington divulged to Joseph Jones. However, his formal letter to the President of the Continental Congress, more eloquently and fervently stated what the army needed from their government. Washington emphasized again his soldiers’ patriotism, and requested that Congress validate the promises he had made to his men. He also stressed that it would be of utmost danger to dissolve the army without payment. For he believed:

the establishment of funds, and the security of the payment of all the just demands of the Army will be the most certain means of preserving the National faith and future of this extensive Continent.45

Washington was well aware of the financial situation that America faced as a young country, but he believed that to dissolve the army without such financial security meant a life of destitution and poverty, which is a life these men did not deserve.

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The entreaties of Washington did not go unacknowledged as Congress now realized the dire nature of the situation. Much was weighing on Congress at this time because not only was it facing a potential uprising from the army, but also many other problems that ranged from the

inability of securing further funding from France to the inability to cope with the resignation of Robert Morris. The entire state of affairs in the United States “gave peculiar awe & solemnity to the present moment, & oppressed the minds of Congs. With an anxiety & distress which had been scarcely felt in any period of the revolution.”  

It seemed evident to members of Congress that there was little time to waste. Decisions needed to be made at once or else they faced the fall of a republic.

Congress again debated the matter of enacting general revenue to pay the creditors. During these debates, the question of practicability kept occurring. Hamilton asserted that, under the Articles of Confederation, the possibility for creating a general revenue was near impossible. His position on this subject was not new because he had continually pushed for a more nationalized government. Others also voiced a similar opinion. For example, Stephen Higginson of Massachusetts “described all attempts of Congs. to provide for the public debts out of the mode prescribed by the Confederation, as nugatory.” This is just one example of the growing discontent regarding the national government’s inability to intervene in state affairs.

Finally on March 21st, the Report on Half Pay for the Army was drafted. In this report, Congress stipulated plans to alleviate the suffering of the Continental Army. This document resolved:

That such officers as are now in service and shall continue therein to the end of the war shall be intitled to receive the amount of five years full pay in money or securities on interest at six per Cent as congress shall find most convenient, instead of half pay promised for life by the resolution of the 21 of October 1780.

Not only did Congress provide for those officers in service, but also those who had previously retired. They too would receive payment “collectively in each state of which they are inhabitants.” It seemed that Congress was making every effort to help all those men who had served in the past and in the present.

Although the resolutions had been written, Congress had not passed them yet. Because of Washington’s entreaties, on March 22nd, Congress was more willing to accept and pass the resolutions put forth. The members had the events of both Newburgh and Washington’s advice fresh in their minds, which may have truly manifested a fear that would not subside until a decision had been made. Therefore, after some revisions, Congress passed these resolutions after a motion made by Eliphalet Dyer of Connecticut on March 22, 1783. It appeared as if progress was occurring.

Now that these resolutions had been passed, Congress had to ensure that the impost on imported goods was executed properly and lawfully. Formal peace was in America’s grasp, which only further increased the need for the impost. The army would soon disband and ask for their funds. One sees this concern in a letter written to Gourverneur Morris:

The People of America must begin to pay taxes... Peace is in a manner made...now we must help ourselves...the differences in the price of country produce and of importations must enable People to pay with a tolerable degree of convenience to themselves.

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46 “Notes on Debates,” March 17, 1783, Hutchinson et al, PJM, 6:266.
50 Matthew Ridley to GM, March 24, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:630.
It was evident that those in power knew that the state of the Union depended on a communal effort to allow the United States to repair its credit. Although the letter showed confidence in this system, Robert Morris did not agree with Gouverneur Morris because he saw a bleaker picture about both foreign and domestic affairs.

Robert Morris had always wanted to incite the army to grab what was theirs and overturn the dominance of the states in the process. He saw threats coming from every side and did not know if the United States would survive all of them. He stated, “When I make observations I cannot forbear adding that if no excesses take place I shall be sorry that ill-humours have appeared. I shall not regret importunity…from the army.”51 His statement shows that he did not fully believe that the impost and commutation would actually work because of the states inability to sacrifice for the creditors. He did state that progress was being made however and Congress had convinced eight states to provide for the commutation of half pay. It thus appeared that progress was being made in order to help the soldiers, but nevertheless the potential issues arising seemed quite probable.

Although it was evident that Congress was making an effort to help the Continental Army, Washington still intervened on their behalf because he did not want them to be manipulated by the government. He wrote a letter to Hamilton that spoke of his concerns. He declared, “while I urge the army to moderation…and endeavor to confine them within in the bounds of duty, I cannot as an hon{est} man conceal from you, that I am afraid their distrusts ha{ve} too much foundation.”52 Washington was alluding to the continuing rumors that had been spreading in the army. This mistrust lay in the possibility that the army may be disbanding without first getting their full pay. To Washington, Hamilton was extremely blunt about the concerns the general had made to him. He thus replied to Washington by stating:

The army...express an expectation that Congress will not disband them previous to a settlement of accounts and the establishment of funds. Congress will not disband them previous to a settlement of accounts and the establishment of funds. Congress may resolve upon the first; but they cannot constitutionally declare the second. They have no right by the Confederation to demand funds.53

Hamilton saw this as a real problem, but was quite pragmatic about the situation. He realized that to have the army remain intact during peacetime would not only cost the country more, but also could cause unrest during times of inactivity. Hamilton reassured Washington about Congress’ intentions. He told Washington “that Congress are doing, and will continue to do, everything in their power towards procuring satisfactory securities.”54

Washington was indeed frustrated by the Articles of Confederation because they had continually caused his army to be treated with little dignity and respect. He wanted the country on a more solid foundation, especially since he had witnessed firsthand the weak nature of the Articles. He told Hamilton, “No man in the United States is... more deeply impressed with the necessity of reform in our present Confederation than myself...almost all the difficulties...of the army have their origin here.”55 This statement only reaffirms Washington’s beliefs and understandings regarding the national government. These statements also show his tendency to

51 RM to GW, March 25, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:636.
52 GW to AH, March 24, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:304.
54 AH to GW, March 25, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:308.
55 GW to AH, March 31, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:310.
favor nationalism over states rights because he was tired of seeing his army suffer continually. He wanted justice and he knew it would be hard if the states still retained great power.

Despite his frustration, Washington was grateful to those members in the Continental Congress, including Madison, Jones, and Hamilton, who had helped ensure that his men received the commutation for half pay. He announced Congress’ resolutions on March 20, 1783, which brought some peace among the officers because they knew that they had affected change. Washington even wrote to the President of Congress stating, “The Commutation of the Half Pay... will give great satisfaction to the army; and will prove an additional Tie to strengthen their Confidence in the Justice, and benevolent intentions of Congress towards them”. It appeared that the relationship between Congress and the army was not sullied forever because neither held complete contempt for the other. However, this does not mean that the army was completely content with resolutions because they could never completely trust the government again.

Although Congress had helped the army, members of high rank discovered that there had existed members in Congress, including Robert and Gouverneur Morris, who did not have the best interest of the army at heart, but instead only wanted to use the army for their own personal gains of getting the resolutions passed by the states. Washington alluded to the army’s outrage in a letter to Hamilton dated on April 4th. Washington stated:

some Men (and leading ones too) in this Army, are beginning to entertain suspicions that they... are to be made use of as mere Puppets to establish Continental funds; and rather than not succeed in this measure, or weaken their ground, they (Congress) would make a sacrifice of the army and all its interests.

Washington warned Hamilton that the army was not happy about this discovery. The men felt like they were mere chess pieces that the members of Congress could play with. Hamilton responded to Washington by saying there were two different types of men in Congress: those who were for the power of the individual states and those who yearned for Continental politics. It was the division and tension between these two groups that drove those who wanted Continental politics to use any means, including the army, to achieve these ends. Hamilton told Washington the reasons behind why certain actions occurred, such as Robert Morris’ resignation, was the fact that no other alternatives existed at the time. Literally, it was a desperate time that called for desperate measures, and Hamilton did not apologize for these actions.

Washington again faced the rising tensions of his men, but these tensions did not culminate in another anonymous summons because the army was disbanding. Those in power felt that it was not necessary to keep the full army functioning until the final settlement had been reached, therefore Washington could begin to send soldiers home. However, Washington did not do so until he could secure an advance of pay for his men. Washington thus asked Morris, who had not yet left office:

for... 2 Months pay to the Army previous to the dissolution of... I cannot but hope...that the measure will now become practicable... because I know that... disagreeable consequences may be apprehended unless the proposed expedient is adopted.

56 GW to AH, March 30, 1783, Ferguson, WGW, 26.
57 GW to AH, April 4, 1783, Fitzpatrick, WGW, 26.
58 AH to GW, April 8, 1783, Syrett, PAH, 3:318.
59 GW to the Superintendent of Finance, April 9, 1783, Fitzpatrick, 26.
Although Washington asked for this advance, the government still did not have funds to provide for such a payment. The payment would average $750,000, an amount that taxes and the states could not readily come up with. Robert Morris decided that “the most therefore which can be done is to risk a large Paper Anticipation.” The issuing of a paper anticipation was extremely delicate because the states had to pay the money back or else face a complete destruction of the nation’s credit line. However, Robert Morris believed that the creation of paper money was practicable in order to more easily and peacefully dissolve the army. Washington labored intensively for his men and even convinced Congress to allow the army to keep their firearms and accoutrements “as an extra reward for their long and faithful services.” Also, the army would be given certificates that could be redeemed for an amount of land that each soldier was entitled to. It is quite evident that Washington went above and beyond the call of duty for the army because he truly cared for them. He wanted to ensure that his army was not forgotten and neglected by those in power because without these men, who sacrificed everything for the sake of independence, there would have been no victory.

Despite Washington’s efforts, the impost would not be ratified by the states and failed much like the impost of 1781. There were many states, especially in the New England area, that still felt that the impost was in fact a pension, something they refused to give to the soldiers. Even though the impost failed, the labor he put forth for his men shows how great a leader Washington truly was. During a dark hour of American history, Washington weathered the storm and kept the United States Army together, which proved to be vital in ensuring that the Republic survived the American Revolution. Washington could have joined the coup or could have stepped aside to allow it to occur, but he did not because that meant the government no longer had control. Civilian control of the military is a cornerstone of the American Constitution, a cornerstone that Washington believed in strongly.

Chapter 3

Washington’s Role in Retrospect

The country faced a crisis early in 1783 for many reasons stemming from Congress’ inability to collect and redistribute general funds for public creditors. The Articles of Confederation prevented it from doing so because Americans feared a strong central government after having been subjected to the tyranny and injustice of George III. They did not want to fight for their freedom from one monarch in order to be subjected to another. Having power within each individual state ensured that this would never occur. These fears however almost brought about the demise of this newly-formed republic in March 1783. After analyzing what would be known as the “Newburgh Conspiracy,” one should see how close the United States of America came to a military mutiny and overthrow of the government. George Washington’s role in this affair helped the government and the people rise up in the face of adversity in order to preserve this tenuous union.

60 RM to A Committee of Congress, April 14, 1783, Ferguson, PRM, 7:701
61 “General Orders,” May 1, 1783, Ferguson, WGW, 26.
Washington was not a man who took threats lightly because he knew how precarious the republic was. He saw how his men had suffered because there was no cohesive way to receive funds in order to distribute not only pay, but also food, clothing, and other equipment. Time and time again he saw how his soldiers descended into poverty and financial depression. It pained him to know that there was very little he could do to prevent it. Washington always walked a moderate path so that he would not alienate himself from others. Although this moderation caused tension with his men, it also allowed for Washington to take on the role of a liaison, which is a role that prevented a mutiny.

As a liaison, Washington wrote hundreds of letters to those in power so that they were well aware of the dire situation. He knew how to articulate precisely what needed to be done in a way that was not threatening. By writing to many members of Congress, Washington developed a close relationship with its leading members, including Hamilton, Madison, Robert Morris, and Joseph Jones. Because these men were continually in contact with Washington, they were able to better understand the mood at Newburgh. Using Washington’s advice, they would be able to help influence Congress by showing how Washington was an able commander who not only understood the debt problem, but also understood the plight of the people. Washington knew this country well and knew his men even better, which gave a more personal incentive to solve this national problem. Washington was a truly able liaison because he utilized his influence and took control during this dark time.

Although Washington was a liaison, he played many other roles during the Newburgh Conspiracy. Another important role Washington had to take on during this time was that of a steady commander. As previously stated, Washington believed in taking a moderate route. He even stated during his address to the officers that the anonymous author did not understand the importance of “moderation and forebearance.” The question then arises how did Washington utilize his moderate nature in order to save the army from a mistake that would have forever sullied the Continental Army.

The soldiers at Newburgh were extremely tense and angry with Congress for neglecting to follow through with the promise of the 1781 impost. They had gotten to the point where extra legal action was the only logical next step. Many of the men looked toward Washington to lead them in this endeavor, and were angry when he did not. Looking at the character of Washington, it is unsurprising that he would not lead such a mutiny. These extreme actions went past the point of no return. He believed in Congress and its ability to aid the soldiers. Washington took control of the situation by calling his own meeting that was on his own terms. This thus allowed the men to formally address their concerns, but in a way that was organized and nonviolent. This truly was a testament to Washington’s moderation because he did not silence his men completely, but instead gave them a place calmly to state their problems.

Lastly, Washington also had to play the role of a soldier. Although he was the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, Washington identified with the common soldier. This was a crucial role because his men could not view him as a distant dictator. If that were the case, then they would not have been as loyal to him, and his efforts to appease them would have been for naught. Washington established a close relationship with the army by being one with the soldiers. One sees the strength of this bond when some of the men cried as Washington declared that he had gone gray and blind in service to them. He was not just their commander, but instead

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62 George Washington to the Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783. The Writings of George Washington, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia.
so much more. He was a mentor, a friend, and a trusted confidant who always had their interests at heart. He suffered with his men continually. For example, he stayed in the camp every winter instead of going back to his home at Mt. Vernon because he did not feel that it was right for them to bear the elements while he did not. Washington truly balanced his roles as a commander and a fellow soldier, which endeared him to his men and helped him save the Republic.

Few men have existed in history who were as great a leader as George Washington. Facing a mutiny in the spring of 1783, Washington maintained control while not alienating himself from both Congress and the army. He did so by playing many roles throughout these tense months. He was indeed a strong individual who was not swayed to act irrationally. Instead, he persevered using his best judgment. Although the army did not get the funds that it had wanted, he did however keep it from making a mistake that could have changed the course of history. Yes, the financial situation was dire in 1783 because of Congress’ inability to raise funds, but Washington did not allow that fact to destroy all that he and the army had worked for. Washington did, in fact, make a choice that changed history, and it was a choice that allowed for the United States of America to prosper into what it would become today.
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The Peace of Westphalia and its Affects on International Relations, Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

By Steven Patton '12

The Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648, ended the Thirty and Eighty Years Wars and created the framework for modern international relations. The concepts of state sovereignty, mediation between nations, and diplomacy all find their origins in the text of this treaty written more than three hundred and fifty years ago. This peace, which was actually made up of two different peace conferences, was the first attempt at modern international diplomacy and formally solidified the beginnings of religious toleration from a political perspective. It was one of the first attempts at codifying an international set of laws and essentially provided the basis for international communities like the European Union and the United Nations and even laid the groundwork for an early American nation. The Westphalian system still remains the model for international politics around the world and the concept of state sovereignty, solidified by the peace, is still the basis for modern international treaties and conventions.

In order to understand the significance of the Peace of Westphalia, it is necessary to look briefly at the wars which sparked the gathering of the congress. The 30 Years War (1618-1648) was a conflict between feuding Catholic and Protestant estates within the Holy Roman Empire which gradually evolved to become a conflict involving most of Europe.1 The war was also, and more importantly as far as the lasting effects on international affairs is concerned, about the right of princes in the Empire to sovereign rule.2 Throughout the conflict, the Catholic Hapsburgs fought Protestant princes of Germany who were supported by France, Sweden, and Denmark.3 This summation of a thirty-year long conflict obviously is an oversimplification of the complex circumstances which sparked and sustained this war but, for the purposes of explaining the treaty which ensued, is sufficient. The Peace of Westphalia also ended the 80 Years War which raged

from 1568 until 1648 and was fought over the Netherlands’ desire for independence from Spain. After the Twelve Year Truce, a ceasefire agreement between both sides which proved to be short-lived, fighting resumed in 1621 and from then on coincided with the 30 Years War until both wars ended in 1648. Despite this, the prevailing conflict which the peace addressed in greatest detail was the 30 Years War, a war which ravished the Holy Roman Empire, displaced thousands of Europeans, and killed approximately 3-4 million Germans, a significant portion of the population.

The negotiations known as the Congress of Westphalia began in 1642 and lasted another 4 years until the end of the 30 Years War in 1648. Diplomatic representatives from 96 different entities were present at the negotiations which met in two cities within 30 miles of each other-Osnabrück and Münster. The Catholic estates involved in the conflict including Spain, France, the Dutch, the Holy Roman Empire, and a papal mediator met in Münster while the Protestant estates met under the leadership of Sweden and an imperial representative at Osnabrück. During the entire duration of the Congress at Münster and Osnabrück, the war was raging only a “three day’s hard ride” from the peace talks. Because a conference on such a large scale had never taken place prior to the 17th century, the “diplomats” who attended the peace talks were “stumbling over conflicting claims of precedent” and were worried that even participating in the negotiations was a threat to their nation’s future power. Additionally, while the negotiations commenced in 1642 and the Congress convened on December 4, 1644, some scholars argue that true negotiations did not begin until November of 1645 when Count Trauttmannsdorff, the President of the Imperial Privy Council (of the Holy Roman Empire) arrived in Münster. Finally, by 1648, conditions for nearly every nation involved in the conflict had worsened, the Empire had lost about a third of its population, and leaders began to compromise. Soon after, a compromise was reached and, on October 24, 1648, when the Treaty of Münster was signed, the Peace of Westphalia ended the 30 Years War.

Before an understanding of the peace of Westphalia can be achieved, an analysis of the goals of the treaty must be completed. When the representatives from all involved nations and states met at Münster and Osnabrück, they had certain goals in mind. National representatives

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5 Ibid.
8 Ibid
11 Ibid.
14 Ibid
Count Maximilian Von Trautmansdorff of the Empire, Johan Oxenstienna and Johan Adler Salvius of Sweden, and Comte d’Avaux and Marquis de Sable of France all had specific instructions by the leaders of their own respective nations not to engage in any sort of compromise too quickly.¹⁵ No nation wanted to be seen as weak and none wanted to be held responsible for the more than three decade long destructive conflict. By 1645 there were strong motives for seeking some sort of peace agreement in a war which cost millions of lives including, by some accounts, one third of the entire German population.¹⁶ The goals of the peace conference for each nation can be summed up as follows: the French wanted control of strategic military fortresses including of Metz, Toul, Verdun, Breisach, and Alsace among other areas in addition to four cities on the Rhine known as the “forest cities”; the Empire wanted a united kingdom under the leadership of the Emperor; the princes of the provinces of the Empire wanted sovereignty over their own kingdoms; the Dutch wanted independence from Spain, and Sweden wanted territorial gains of their own.¹⁷ The primary compromises of the represented estates at the congress were written down in the two treaties at Münster and Osnabrück and are summed up by David Maland as follows: the separate states of the Empire were recognized as sovereign; attendance at the established state church was not mandatory; the Peace of Augsburg was affirmed and Calvinism was accepted as a permissible religion; matters of religion were to be settled not by a majority vote but rather by a compromise agreed to by the conflicting parties; the United Provinces were granted independence from Spain and the Empire; Spain was forced to “give away all points to the Dutch”, and other land boundaries were shifted.¹⁸ The additional long term effects of the Peace of Westphalia, though likely not immediately foreseen by the writers of the treaties, were far more influential than the short term land and power shifts.

The long term effects of the compromise which were achieved under the Peace of Westphalia were significant and the peace itself was a monumental, modern, and for its time, revolutionary achievement. In his essay on the Peace of Westphalia, Wyndham A. Bewes writes, “no questions that had ever before received a diplomatic settlement had been of such far-reaching importance, or had been settled with the concurrence of so many powers.”¹⁹ This notion of an international effort to solve a conflict using diplomatic methods where all sides participated and agreed to compromise, rather than a dominant nation simply dictating policy to a losing nation, was very new in the 17th century.²⁰ Bewes concludes, “Never [before the congress] had there been such a numerous and brilliant assembly of Ministers and Statesmen of so many different nations and never had so important and complicated political interests been discussed with solemn sufficiency.”²¹

The peace dealt with many topics of high importance to the European powers at the time but, from a modern international relations standpoint, three of the issues which were resolved are

¹⁶ Ibid
¹⁷ Ibid
²⁰ Ibid
²¹ Ibid.
of particular significance. The first of those issues is the religious freedom which was solidified by the treaties at Münster and Osnabrück. The Peace of Westphalia “confirmed the Peace of Augsburg which had granted Lutherans religious tolerance in the Empire” that had been taken away by Emperor Ferdinand II in his Edict of Restitution of 1629 (the Peace also granted the same tolerance to Calvinists). For religious issues, the peace was “essentially a broadening and a clarification of the Peace at Augsburg” which, both then and in modern society, is of great significance. Before the Peace, states viewed all other foreign nations and policies in terms of good and evil: their own view as good and anything which opposed it as evil. James Nathan sums it up well: “If one side fought with God, it followed that the other had sided with the devil. For the hundred years that preceded the treaties of Westphalia, only truces were permissible.” Because of this, the Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück which dealt with rivaling nations were fairly revolutionary. Before any compromises could be made, the dozens of parties present at the congress had to agree on a sort of procedure for the talks. Scholars agree that “it was necessary to reach preliminary agreements on procedure before the actual work of making peace could begin”. Luckily, by late in the war, national leaders were quickly growing tired of the conflict and began ordering their representatives at the conferences to make some concessions to put an end to the damages which had been incurred by their states.

While most today would view the diffusion of religious influence in national affairs as a positive aspect of the peace treaty, the Catholic Church and papacy at the time certainly did not. Pope Innocent X, the leader of the Catholic church at the time of the negotiations, denounced the Peace of Westphalia in a papal bull because it undermined his “pan-European political power”. Similarly, most Catholics at the time saw the Peace of Augsburg (upon which many of the religious tenets of Westphalia were based) as only a “temporary, emergency measure” which should not become permanent law. What is also significant here is that the writers of the treaties anticipated these objections from both the papacy and the Catholic population throughout Europe. The treaties required any state which signed it to ignore any objection made on the basis of religious supremacy from both Catholic and Protestant leaders. Once the Peace of Westphalia was ratified by each estate’s representative, “the role of the Christian community of

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25 Ibid
28 Ibid.
31 Ibid
states was replaced by the rule of state consent." This new, revolutionary treaty completely changed the relations between church and state and established a new precedent whereby states would become sovereign entities, immune (generally speaking) from the political pressure of any one church. Conversely, since the Peace’s adoption, Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists at least could practice their faith without any serious intrusion from the emperor.

The second essential issue with which the Peace of Westphalia dealt was the nature of war and its intended uses. Before 1648, war was the accepted means of instating policy changes when one country found fault with another. It was the “legitimate form of solving conflicts” before the Peace but, after the treaties were agreed upon, “No state was allowed to be destroyed...and compensation was to be awarded to those states that gave up strategically advantageous possessions.” Since the mindset of nations thinking in strict terms of “good” and “evil” was beginning to disappear in the 17th century, diplomacy and negotiation could be used as an alternative to war. While this is not to suggest that there was no form of negotiation before the end of the 30 Years War, it seems that official recognition of the diplomats of countries and official offers to compromise could not be utilized in terms of a nation’s foreign policy prior to the peace.

The third and possibly most significant and lasting outcome of the Peace of 1648 is the idea of state sovereignty. Before and during the 30 Years War, German provinces were under the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor who controlled the actions of provincial princes. What the Peace of Westphalia effectively established was “territorial superiority in all matters ecclesiastical as well as political” of princes in the Empire. The Peace had given them many rights which were previously held only by the Emperor: “they could ratify peace treaties, they could levy taxes....they could declare war” and possibly most significantly, “war could not be declared by the empire without their consent.” This meant that the princes’ power was greatly increased while the Holy Roman Emperor saw a drastic reduction in the scope of his. After the peace settlements, power in the Empire had become much more decentralized- a quality which would prove to be very important in diplomatic negotiations in the centuries following the war.

The Peace of Westphalia is seen by many scholars in both history and in the field of international relations to be the basis for much of modern international law and professional diplomacy. Each of the three primary elements of the treaties: wider formal religious freedom,

32 Ibid
34 Ibid
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid
39 Ibid
40 Ibid
41 Ibid
42 Ibid
the introduction of the diplomatic profession, and the recognition of sovereign states contributed to this long-lasting impact. In the 17th century and throughout the 30 Years War, the idea of supreme central authority of say, the Holy Roman emperor or the papacy, was starting to be questioned though there had been very little effective international diplomacy which tried to alter that reality. Scholars of history, law, and politics were beginning to seek out a more effective system of relations for states which relied less on a supreme central authority and instead diffused more power to each sovereign state. The 17th century historian Hugo Grotius who died shortly before the settlements at Westphalia believed that "kingly states could only achieve complete legitimacy as part of a society of sovereigns to whom they owed certain duties" and "denied that there had to be a supreme sovereign for there to be a law of the society of kingly states or sovereigns." This concept of state sovereignty is a very long lasting one and is still in practice in many areas of foreign policy today including in the U.N., the European Union, and even the United States of America.

These three concepts which were established at Westphalia, however, did not come about overnight; they instead seem to be the work of the evolution of political ideas over the 16th and 17th centuries. Kenneth Colegrove, a former U.S. diplomat and member of the executive council of the American Society for International Law, writes that before the Congress of Westphalia, "International law was in its infancy and the vocabulary of diplomacy had not yet assumed the accuracy and precision which was to characterize it in a later period." He argues that diplomats, if one can call them such during the 17th century, did not even have words like "mediation" in their vocabulary which made the negotiations at the peace congress extremely tedious, perhaps explaining why they took several years. The process which occurred both at the congress and during the years leading up to it was an important piece in the evolution of the diplomatic process and remained in use, unchanged for more than two centuries.

While the concrete achievements which came from the Peace of Westphalia, namely state sovereignty and religious freedom, were obviously significant, the diplomatic process and profession which emerged from the congress was arguably just as important. Auburn University international relations professor James Nathan argues:

Before the Westphalia settlement, there was no recognizable diplomatic profession. Spies, irregular envoys, and heralds citing scripture or handing out ringing declamations were the usual route that princes chose to alert one another to the start of war. After Westphalia, the diplomatic craft was practiced by a kind of well-born guild, with

46 Ibid
48 Ibid
members who were adept at melding reason, precedent, and law with quiet allusion to the implication of armed compunction.\textsuperscript{49}

Nathan also believes that since the settlement at Westphalia, diplomats and those in combat sought “victory less and the achievement of favorable peace more.”\textsuperscript{50} This shift in thinking by both diplomats and combatants signaled a way of more modern thinking which paved the way for modern inter-state politics. This was a change from previous medieval political thinking which centered around a system based on obedience to a central hierarchy to a more modern system wherein leaders recognized the sovereignty of each state and had the ability to utilize diplomatic recourses before resorting to war.\textsuperscript{51} To further limit the possibility of war, power was dispersed among various states in order to ensure that no one state would have the military might to conquer others without the help of neighboring nations.\textsuperscript{52} This is obviously not to say that the Peace prevented all wars but it did set a precedent and provide a platform for discussion between nations in one of the earliest attempts to resolve international conflicts before the outbreak of war. The diplomatic form which emerged from the Congress of Westphalia provided the model upon which international negotiations progressed down through the First World War until the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.\textsuperscript{53}

Even after international relations were renegotiated after WWI, scholars argue that the effects of the Peace of Westphalia and the framework which it provided can be seen in many modern international communities including the United Nations, formerly the League of Nations, the European Union, and even to an extent, the United States of America.\textsuperscript{54} The charter of the United Nations written in 1945 has some of the very same provisions which were included in the Peace of Westphalia written some 300 years earlier.\textsuperscript{55} A scholar of international law at Tufts University, Leo Gross writes that the provisions of the Peace of Westphalia “constitute, in a sense, an early precedent for Articles 10, 12, and 16, or the Covenant of the League of Nations” and that the Charter of the United Nations “would seem to have left essentially unchanged the framework of the state system and of international law resulting from the Peace of Westphalia.”\textsuperscript{56} Just like the charters of the League of Nations and the United Nations, Westphalia included provisions to discourage war and promote civility between sovereign states.\textsuperscript{57} Specifically, the treaty signed at Münster specifically outlawed any immediate recourse to arms. Section CXXIV of the treaty states:

\begin{quote}
It shall not be permitted to any State of the Empire to pursue his Right by Force and Arms; but if any difference has happen'd or happens for the future, every one shall try the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[50] Ibid.
\item[51] Ibid
\item[52] Ibid
\item[53] Ibid
\item[55] Ibid
\item[56] Ibid
\end{footnotes}
means of ordinary Justice, and the Contravener shall be regarded as an Infringer of the Peace. That which has been determin’d by Sentence of the Judge, shall be put in execution, without distinction of Condition, as the Laws of the Empire enjoin touching the execution of Arrests and Sentences. 58

This excerpt from the treaty written in the 17th century sounds very similar to the League’s charter which bans any recourse to arms of a nation in search of territory expansion. 59

In addition to laying the foundations of international relations charters like that of the League of Nations, some argue that Westphalia was also an early model for the birth of America and the modern relations of European nations. 60 Phillip Bobbitt, the author of The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History compares Westphalia to Philadelphia which was the birthplace of the American colonies and says that both Westphalia and Philadelphia were “the birthplace of a new constitution for a small society of states. 61 This reference to the American Constitution shows both the longevity of the Peace of Westphalia and its far reaching effects, not just on Europe, but also on North America. Within Europe the peace provided the model for the European Union in which each state or nation keeps its own sovereignty but is united under the larger authority of the Union whose leadership is comprised of its member states. In much the same way, the Westphalian system provided this sort of arrangement for the sovereign principalities of Germany while keeping some form of cohesiveness amongst the Holy Roman Empire. 62

Scholars would agree that the Peace of Westphalia was, for its time, a revolutionary and monumental achievement; it developed the framework for international diplomacy, a construct which simply did not exist prior to the 17th century. This peace was extremely influential down through the Treaty of Versailles and the Westphalian tradition can still be seen in modern international politics. Compromises reached by the congress in 1648 on the issues of individual state sovereignty, religious tolerance, and diplomatic solutions to international warfare were the precedents of common and international law until the First World War and, arguably, still form the core of foreign policy. The Westphalian tradition can be seen in various modern international forums including the United Nations and is one of history’s leading examples of how one conflict can impact the affairs of dozens of independent nations for centuries.

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid
Works Cited


IV
Winston Churchill:
Guardian of Civilization

By T.J. McCarrick ‘12

It is often said among historians that “we stand upon the shoulders of giants,” learning from and building on the wisdom won by the tiresome work of great men and women before us. But with that prominence comes a price, the price of being put on trial again and again before the ever changing tribunal of history. As John Lukacs writes, “Historical thinking and writing and study are, by their nature, revisionist. The historian, unlike a judge, is permitted to try a case over and over again, often after finding and employing new evidence” (Lukacs, 21). That Winston Churchill is such a historical giant well-tested in the hallowed halls of history is beyond dispute; what is not is what kind of giant Churchill was and whether his contributions to the course of world events were on par positive and negative. In analyzing two definitive works with differing perspectives on Churchill, *Churchill: Visionary. Statesman. Historian.* by John Lukacs and *Churchill: The End of Glory* by John Charmley, the following question can be answered: Should Winston Churchill be hailed as the savior of Western civilization or should he be vilified as an alcoholic imperialist drunk? The answer, as it often does, lies somewhere in the middle.

The above notwithstanding, questions of Churchill’s character often lend themselves to answers of a polarizing quality. John Charmley’s analysis in *The End of Glory* champions the type of negative character portrayals of Churchill that have become vogue as of late. Paying some small praise to Churchill’s positive characteristics, Charmley proceeds lambasting what he considers to be an overly romanticized myth about Churchill. He writes, “Showman that he was, stalking through the bomb-sites with taurine glares of defiance, massive cigar stuck firmly in his mouth, he became the mythical ‘Good ole Winnie’” (152). What this myth obscures, however, was a profoundly impulsive, ill-tempered, intellectually lazy man. And yet, despite these shortcomings, Churchill’s indefatigable ambition propelled him to his position of prominence. Charmley, quoting Churchill explains, “You know I have unbounded faith in myself” (Charmley, 9).

Underpinning this faith, though, was an insufferable vanity which, coupled with his mental acumen proved lethal. Charmley explains that the “ebullient” and “seld-centered” Churchill, left unchecked, became intolerable in public office. He writes, “Churchill had little time or space for other people and their opinions ... One of the reasons why the Churchill marriage was a success... was that for most of it Clementine had the strength of character to stand up to her husband and prevent him becoming in the domestic sphere what he too easily became in the public sphere, a petty tyrant” (86). Much of this self-assuredness and sense of entitlement
is often ascribed to his aristocratic upbringing. Lukacs, quoting *The Daily News* in 1908 explains, “To the insatiable curiosity and the enthusiasm of a child he joins the frankness of the child. He has no reserves and no shams. He has that scorn of concealment that belongs to a caste which never doubts itself” (Lukacs, 143). And because of this air of superiority, Churchill was never effective in applying his intelligence to others arguments. Charmley explains, “Churchill’s self-education...provided no training in learning how to think, how to weigh arguments, and how to judge your own ideas against those of others...he was marked by egotism and naïvety” (152). This boyish arrogance and temperament coupled with Churchill’s high office placed him, on more than one occasion, in the position to affect change, not always for the better.

It is crucial, therefore, to isolate some of Churchill’s official failures as distinct from but connected to his personal flaws. The first grouping concerns his hearty endorsement of a number of failed military strategies. The most well known is his fierce advocacy, during World War I, of a naval operation through the Dardanelles as a part of a grandiose scheme to near instantly knock Turkey out of the war. In short, it was a disaster, as predicted by a number of military men. Lukacs explains, “Battleships and other warships were sunk; the rest of the fleets had to turn around; their naval artillery could not (and should not have been expected to) destroy the guns of the fortifications on land; the subsequent decision to land troops and conquer the Gallipoli peninsula over land turned into another sad disaster” (143). In this vein, Churchill was hopelessly wrong in terms of his tactical vision. This is to say nothing of his strategic vision which left much to be desired as well – given the state of mobility and technological capacity of German forces, it is difficult to suggest the Balkans as the linchpin of penetrating German territory. This provides just one in a series of tactical military blunders advocated by Churchill including his support of the White Russians during the Bolshevik Revolution as well as the failed Norwegian campaign in WWII.

Additionally, Charmley argues that Germanophobia ultimately caused Churchill to consummate an illegitimate marriage with Stalin’s Russia – a marriage which would bear bitter fruit. Regarding Churchill’s fear of the Germans, Charmley asserts that Churchill was really nothing more than a warmonger preparing for Armageddon. As a result, any chance of making peace with Germany was not entertained. Charmley writes:

> The ‘finest hour’ myth has such a hold on the British national consciousness that even to suggest, fifty years later, that a compromise peace might have been had is enough to prompt letters to the press denouncing such an idea as ‘shameful’ and the product of ‘dubious hindsight’...The best accounts of the Second World War written to mark the fiftieth anniversary of 1939 declared grandly that after the fall of France, German peace feelers were brushed aside with scant evidence of interest in them...there was a continued interest in ‘peace.’ (Charmley, 422-423)

This interest, according to Charmley was not only among many British officials (though he contends evidence of that is conveniently in absentia), but also among the British populace. Churchill, however, at every juncture, from Munich to Operation Barbarossa, ignored the possibility of peace with Germany creating, “the spectre of a menace which was even greater than the one he destroyed” (Lukacs, quoting Charmley, 151).

That menace which was borne of Churchill’s antipathy towards Germany was Stalin’s red menace in the East. In order to counteract growing German power in continental Europe, Churchill envisioned an Anglo-Russian alliance as a buffer to German dominance of Europe. Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union allowed this vision to become a reality. “Churchill had long
trumpeted the necessity for a Russian alliance, but lulled by the siren voice of Ivan Maisky and the grandeur of his own vision, he had never stopped to ask what might be the price which Stalin would demand” (Charmley, 361). This quotation demonstrates a point central to, what Charmley believes, is one of Churchill’s most egregious shortcomings – the auctioning of Eastern Europe to Russia. Lukacs explains the position of those historians who join Charmley’s company in this view. He writes, “They accuse Churchill of double standards. He, who fought bitterly and single-mindedly against the appeasement of Germany and of Hitler, went a very long way to appease Stalin and Russia...His hatred of Germany blinded him throughout the war. It also made him an accomplice in allowing Russia and Communism to advance far into the heart of Europe” (Lukacs 21-22). In this way, some suggest that Churchill foolishly dismissed any chance of peace with the devil he knew (Hitler) and in so doing condemned Eastern Europe to the devil he didn’t (Stalin).

The inability of Churchill to halt the Soviet advance into the heart of Europe lies very closely near the final shortcoming to be analyzed – his subservience to the United States. Perhaps begrudgingly, Churchill realized that the 20th century was not to be hailed as a British one. Any chance of such a vision would likely have been shattered with the houses of London during Germany’s blitzkrieg. By this point the eventual liquidation of the British Empire Churchill sought to maintain was inevitable, and playing second-fiddle to the Americans was the only way Britain could achieve some sort of peace and independence with honor. But what really was won? Lukacs quoting Charmley explains, “One simple fact: the Prime Minister’s policy in 1940 had, in effect, failed. Far from securing Britain’s independence, it had mortgaged it to America” (150). And so Churchill’s Germanophobia, far from securing Britain and Europe from the Nazi war machine, traded their respective futures to the Americans and the Soviets.

But is Charmley’s portrait of Churchill a true one, a fair one? Simply put, no, it is not. Leaving aside the factual inaccuracies, fatally flawed historical lessons, and widespread popularity among Nazi supporters (which will be discussed later), there are two other issues looming large for Charmley. The first is his obvious bias. John Lukacs describes the important influence of Piers Mackesy, the son of Major General Macksey, on Charmley. Such a relation would be unremarkable excepting the fact that there were personal disagreements between the Major General and Churchill. Mentioned only in passing by Churchill in his War Memoirs, Charmley devotes “five pages and ten references to Churchill’s quarrel with that incompetent general, while there is but one single sentence about the Hitler-Stalin Pact...a very peculiar ratio for a historian” (153).

An additional problem is the manner in which he employs sources. Not even attempting any measure of impartiality, Charmley openly attacks, often in his notes, those historians with whose views he disagrees and simultaneously lavishes praise on those with whom he is in accord. One disturbing example is Lukacs’ illustration of Charmley’s reliance on David Irving, whose work has some notable anti-Semitic leanings. To wit, some of the following are examples of Charmley’s reliance on Irving: “Winston was certainly bankrolled by wealthy Jews” and “So was Churchill the hired help for a Jewish lobby which, regarding Jewish interests as superior to those of the British Empire, was determined to embroil that empire in a war on its behalf.” (153). (I would really hate to give in to the urge to draw parallels between Irving’s words and the words of a genocidal dictator in the Rhineland in 1940, but if the boot fits...) Charmley’s reliance on such works bespeaks a sad truth, the truth that he sought to find evidence for a previously held position and in so doing undertook not a “proper revisionism of a historian” but a “denigration by a pamphleteer” (152).
Did Churchill have his faults and personal shortcomings? Certainly; all people do. But Lukacs contends, and I tend to agree, that Churchill’s virtues far outweighed his vices. A woman who Churchill fancied when he was younger put it best: “The first time you meet Winston you see all his faults, and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues” (144). And those virtues were magnified one thousand fold as his political career blossomed. His wit, intelligence, foresight, and courage were put on full display, as were his faults. Lukacs explains, “Churchill’s foresights were historical rather than political. Impetuosity, impatience, willfulness, fancifulness were Churchill’s faults, often. Shortsightedness? No. An unwillingness to think? Seldom: perhaps never” (4). Such qualities contributed to Churchill’s open-mindedness, an invaluable quality. Churchill himself once wrote, “An unchanging mind is an admirable possession – a possession which I devoutly hope I shall never possess” (138-139). But his ability to take seemingly contradictory policies should not be mistaken for indecision. Rather, his advocacies and policy positions were based in principle, allowing for flexible application. As such he simultaneously could warn of the dangers of Tory democracy and defend it, vigorously oppose Hitler while tolerating Stalin, and do about-faces on a number of positions concerning Ireland and India. It is through this lens that one must view his successes and failures.

One should not confuse my endorsement of a net positive view of Churchill to mean he had no practical failings. The Dardanelles debacle, the Norwegian nightmare, his imperialist leanings (especially towards withholding dominion status from India), and his failure to support German resistance movements are tragic. But it is important to remember that there is more than myth in Churchill’s “finest hour.” Earlier than all others, Churchill envisioned a vengeful Germany dominated by the increasingly radical, though, at that time, little known Adolf Hitler. As Hitler rose to power, Churchill’s predictions came true. Lukacs writes, “He saw that Hitler had forged a formidable unity of a people; that German National Socialism was a terrific wave of a possible future; and it was against this that his Britain had to stand fast” (9). And stand fast it did, much to the chagrin of Charmley and Co. To negotiate with Hitler was fundamentally impossible as it would condemn Europe, and perhaps, Britain to complete and total German dominance. Again, Lukacs writes, “What is not speculation is what Churchill...called ‘the slippery slope.’ If... a British government had signaled as much as a cautious inclination to explore a negotiation with Hitler, amounting to a willingness to ascertain his possible terms, that would have been the first step onto a Slippery Slope from which there could be no retreat” (2). Churchill’s unyielding courage in dismissing appeasement with Adolf Hitler made clear that though Britain could not defeat Germany by themselves (which later they were not), so long as Churchill’s Britain pressed on, Hitler could not achieve his ultimate goal.

Enter the Churchill- Stalin relationship, borne of necessity – the necessity to stop Hitler at all costs. Lukacs explains, “As early as 1940 he saw two alternatives: either Germany dominates all of Europe; or Russia will dominate the eastern portion of Europe (at worst for a while): and half of Europe is better than none” (10). To be clear, Churchill abhorred Communism; his willingness to support the White Russians in their opposition to the Bolsheviks is instructive. But what Churchill was able to do was what many of his contemporary American allies could not – distinguish Stalin and his nationalist ambitions from the international rhetoric of the communist movement. Lukacs writes, “Churchill’s recognition that Stalin was a nationalist and not an internationalist Communist; and that the clue to the Russian ‘enigma’ lay in the interests of the Russian imperial state as seen by Stalin” (12). Though he initially misestimated Russian support for some of its allies a la Czechoslovakia under threat of German invasion, he had a
clear grasp of the bigger picture. That said, he did not underestimate the Soviet threat. After all, this is the very same Winston Churchill who warned of the iron curtain descending over Europe.

In this way, Churchill understood the Russian threat in the East – so much so that he lobbied the American forces to cut off the Russians westward advance as early as possible. If there is any great failing of Churchill’s career it is this. But it is silly to misappropriate the blame for the fall of Eastern Europe to Churchill and not place it rightly on the shoulders of Eisenhower and America. There was little leverage that Churchill could bring to bear on this question, not to mention the central importance of the Anglo-American relationship for the future. That said, he pushed the Americans on this question, and after the war was over on questions of the Soviet Union – hardly the actions of an American pawn. Lastly, it was Churchill who predicted that Russia could not subjugate Eastern Europe forever; their peoples would not tolerate it. Approximately a half-century later, his prediction proved right.

The above provide but two examples of Churchill’s visionary quality, a talent greatly emphasized by Lukacs. I believe that this talent was greatly aided by another, perhaps underemphasized facet of Churchill’s life – his role as a historian. After all, Winston Churchill is one of a very few people who made history, but also wrote it. And this, I believe, was the secret to his success. His mastery of events before him gave him the foresight and visionary ability to see and thus shape those things lying before him. Lukacs explains, “history was not, for Churchill, like painting, something one turned to for relaxation or merely to turn an honest guinea to meet his mountainous expenses. History was the heart of his faith; it permeated everything which he touched, and it was the mainspring of his politics and the secret of his immense mastery” (124). And by making history the core of his person, the core of his politics, Churchill became the consummate statesman-historian, unsurpassed in his visionary ability. He saw himself standing at a key crossroads of history, perhaps one the defining moments of the modern era. And he chose to defend civilization. Take his poignant words towards the close of his career. He said, “Which way shall we turn to save our lives and the future of the world? It does not matter so much for old people; they are going soon away; but I find it poignant to look at youth in all its activity and ardour...and wonder what would lie before them if God wearied of mankind?” (18). I imagine that the landscape of the world would look something like Europe at Hitler’s peak. We should consider ourselves lucky that Winston Churchill never wearied of defending mankind.
Bibliography


Géricault and The Raft of the Medusa: Reflecting French Society

By Veronica Ventura ‘11

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Introduction

Théodore Géricault was a French Romantic artist in the early nineteenth century. During that time period, the political climate was fluctuating between the empire of Napoleon and the monarchy. French society was constantly changing whenever there was a shift in power. The subsequent revolutions affected the culture tremendously.

Géricault used the current events around him to create works indicative to his times. When Napoleon was in power, his paintings reflected the Bonapartists’ view of the emperor’s army. After the monarchy was restored, the painter produced a work that voiced the uncertainty many felt concerning the new government.

Eventually, his greatest piece, The Raft of the Medusa, would be the artwork that encompassed many aspects of nineteenth century French Society. Based on a shipwreck caused...
by insensible royalist leaders, the painting stirred the public. Royalists were offended by this supposed attack, while Bonapartists were delighted in believing that Géricault was glorifying their struggle against the monarchy. One feature of the painting in particular, the “Father” figure, embodied these conflicting emotions and sensations of many Parisians.

In addition to this, the character of the “Father” was an allusion to Ugolino, an icon of cannibalism. The “Father” also hinted at madness. Géricault was fascinated by darker subjects. His interest is analogous to the rising interest in the gruesome and morbid in France. The Raft of the Medusa not only presented French society with its own struggles, but the painting also introduced society to the uprising Romantic Movement.

The Early Works of Géricault

The Salon was the appellation of the esteemed art exhibitions in Paris, France that Louis XIV started in 1667. Since 1737, the Salon was an annual event in which many artists participated. When Napoleon Bonaparte was First Consul in 1799, he became a great patron to the arts and used the popular style of Neoclassicism to help enhance his political image. The Salon changed noticeably after Bonaparte was crowned Emperor in 1804. Artists were now painting images glorifying the emperor, and they continued to do so until Napoleon had to renounce his throne in 1814. France would be a monarchy again.

However, despite the extreme political changes that were already underway, it was announced that the Salon would still continue to display the arts during the summer of 1814. Many people, particularly artists, wondered why the king would allow the Salon to continue that year, since Napoleon had been using the Salon for his preferred subject matter. The recently restored king may have wanted the Salon held in order to show the public that the new government was steady. This exhibition would be the first time in over two decades that artists had to conform to royal standards. Artists had the predicament of switching from the subject of Napoleon to Louis XVII in less than a year, giving artists little time to create new works under a regime where the artistic guidelines had not been drawn. Artists were allowed to submit past works for that year, perhaps to help alleviate the problem of finding a new subject for their paintings.

It was in the 1814 Salon that the artist of focus, Jean-Louis-André-Théodore Géricault, presented both his past Salon submission Charging Chasseur (Figure A), and his new work, Wounded Cuirassier Leaving the Field of Battle (Figure B). Unlike other painters of that day who entered pieces that strayed away from political subjects, Géricault submitted these two together, and uncomfortably reminded the viewers of the rise and fall of the emperor.

The Charging Chasseur was originally submitted to the Salon in 1812. It is a massive 2,920 millimeters high by 1,940 millimeters wide, and depicted an officer of the Imperial Guard. Its subject matter fits with the norm during the time of Napoleon’s rule, since the piece depicted a sentry in the act of running into battle. The sentry sits atop the horse on a leopard skin with his sword out. This act of rushing into battle corresponds to how Napoleon was during his Wars, and thus was accepted favorably during the Salon of 1812.

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2 Ibid, 382.
4 Ibid, 61
As large as it is, it was impressive how long it took for Géricault to complete it. Eitner states that the painter probably had at most three weeks to start the actual artwork. The brief amount of time to create such a large piece led Géricault to have some compositional errors. The foreshortening of the horse’s leg was rushed and is slightly off. It is almost out of proportion with the rest of the animal’s body. His brushstrokes vary throughout the painting, as well. Certain areas on the horse’s face were painted with bold, large strokes; other parts of the body are painted with smaller patches of color. Besides the horse, the colors throughout the painting are vibrant, and the hue of the smoke gives the work an intense atmosphere. Overall though, the painting has bravado, a massive figure charging into battle along with his animated steed.

For the **Wounded Cuirassier** to be shown along with the fighting Imperial guard was a bold action for Géricault. The meaning of the two in juxtaposition would not have been lost to the audience. Cuirassiers were heavily armored cavalry soldiers that Napoleon used frequently. The soldier in this painting appears defeated, looking back at the battle as if it had been lost. In addition to this, he is holding his agitated horse back. Instead of bold colors, the **Cuirassier** has more muted tones and the soldier is larger. Perhaps he is depicted larger to focus on the defeat in his countenance. Géricault’s brushstrokes are less bold. The defeated soldier would have been a representation of Napoleon’s defeat and the consequences of the Restoration. How mighty Bonaparte and his army had been, only for many to be defeated.

This hint at the recent war most likely affected the Salon critics’ opinions toward Géricault’s latest work. Once again, Géricault had about three weeks to complete a larger than normal painting, this time 2,929 millimeters high by 2,270 millimeters wide. His composition was similarly rushed as his last submission, however, this time some critics were more prone to disapprove while the others were content with ignoring the painting. Some weaknesses the evaluators found were that, “Not only does the horse’s head appear to be joined directly to its rump, but there is a conflict in its very motion...The animal’s spine, besides being too short, seems broken in the middle.” Unlike the Salon of 1812, the royalist reviewers did not overlook the faults of the painting, since they were trying to publicly disapprove of the empiric reminder. Regardless of these prejudices, Géricault had presented the otherwise dull Salon with an original

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5 Ibid, 33.
6 Ibid, 34.
10 Eitner, Lorenz. *Géricault: His Life and Work*, 64.
painting. It struck a chord with the public and presented them with reality. Napoleon was gone, and France was vulnerable.

**History of The Raft of the Medusa**

Géricault painted exactly what was happening in society and, having the bravado youth brings, did not hold much back. The painter’s next submission to the Salon would be grandiose. His masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa* (Figure C), was presented during the Salon of 1819. This dramatic work illustrated the scandalous shipwreck that occurred in 1816. The artist wanted a scene painted that would be as truthful as it could be. He wished to make the reality of it apparent, so the painting has impressive dimensions of 4,910 millimeters high by 7,160 millimeters wide. As the wrecked and dilapidated raft rides the precarious waves, the few survivors are signaling to a distant, almost invisible, ship. There are corpses on the raft, and a distraught castaway holding a body. The colors that compose the painting are mostly muted greens, blues, and browns. Eitner states that Géricault used these somber colors to better complement and focus on the severity of the scene. These colors give the painting a glow, as if there was a special lighting that emphasized the figures. Such a large piece of work makes the viewer feel as if they are part of the raft itself, trying to see the ship toward which the others are waving.

Many French onlookers would have known the context behind the painting that spectators of the present day may not. Géricault was obviously acquainted with the story, and sympathetic to the victims of the real raft for which the painting was based. For the purposes of further in-depth discussion, the history behind the event will be explained.

While on its way to Senegal, *La Méduse* crashed against rocks on the West African coast, even though the sea was tranquil. Hughes Duroy de Chaumareys, the captain, was incompetent and failed to safely guide the ship in clear waters. It is almost inconceivable that someone unqualified for the duties of a captain could have received such a title. However, de Chaumareys had received his title, not through merit as a sailor, but through official favor. As *La Méduse* had to be abandoned by the four hundred aboard, de Chaumareys, along with the other officers, went on one of the six lifeboats that could only hold about two hundred and fifty. The other unlucky passengers had to cram onto a makeshift raft. On this raft, many were killed from both nature causes and extremely unnatural causes. They were found by another ship, the *Argus*, which rescued the final fifteen.

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11 Ibid, 185.
14 Ibid, 158-159.
15 Ibid, 162.
Two survivors of the abandonment, Alexandre Corréard and Henri Savigny wrote *Naufrage de la Frégate la Méduse* in 1817 that described the horrors of raft. During the first night course at sea, the winds were so strong that many could not stay on the raft. The next day, many men were drinking heavily and became enraged at the situation. There was a mutiny between those who were attempting to tear the raft apart and those attempting to save it. Many died, but the raft was not destroyed that night. However, darker events were to occur. Since they were abandoned and left with little food, the starved individuals eventually resorted to cannibalism on the fourth day. As the days stretched on, many men became insane; others became sick, and then killed in order to save rations. By the end of thirteen days, only fifteen men were left. It is provocative to note that all the survivors were former Napoleonic soldiers.

Géricault read the *Naufrage* and met with Corréard and Savigny when he arrived back in France after a trip to Italy. He was sympathetic to their experiences; causing him to eventually decide to make his next work about the shipwreck. Eitner states that Géricault found it difficult to pinpoint exactly the image the artist wanted to portray. The painter:

...struggled to translate the words of Corréard and Savigny into images, grasping at anything that might help him give substance to their tale – popular lithographs of the shipwreck, the talk of survivors, a scale model of the Raft, built for him by the Médusa’s carpenter.

After receiving all of this information, he started his preliminary sketches for the painting. He had many ideas and images in mind; Géricault was attempting to find a scene on which to focus.

**Finding the Subject**

Even though Géricault was sympathetic to the situation of the survivors, it would not be particularly correct to say that the artist was making a radical statement with his painting. Eitner states, as well as a few other scholars, that Géricault was not particularly political. He was sympathetic to causes, but he was not trying to anger the government at all. His interest in modern subject matter led him to paint events or people that were relevant. During his first Salon exhibition, his subject, a charging soldier, was appropriate to the ongoing Napoleonic Wars. His *Cuirassier* piece depicted a general feeling of confusion and uneasiness the people may have had after the fall of the emperor. *The Raft* depicted an event that stirred debate within the French viewers about the government. While the French in the Bourbon Restoration could have taken certain sentiments from Géricault’s painting, present day society can learn much from his masterpiece about French nineteenth century society. Although Géricault may not have intended it, *The Raft of the Medusa* represents certain aspects of French Romanticism, particularly its interest in morbidity, which can be seen in the themes surrounding the artist’s "Father" figure in the painting.

In order to further discuss the figure, it would be valuable to elaborate on the themes of Romanticism. As it is further explained, it will become clear that the artist lived before the artistic movement was popular. In addition to the condensed history of the movement, it would also be helpful to talk of Géricault’s own influences.

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The beginning of the Romantic Movement is difficult to pinpoint, as its influence came in at different times in various countries. A forerunner of Romantic ideas was the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who lived from 1712 to 1778. His *Social Contract* inspired the French Revolution, which stressed the idea of people ruling over themselves, as opposed to being ruled by a government. Rousseau's other work, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, focused on nature and how it influenced humankind. While his more political work inspired the French Revolution, his “return to nature” view was for the most part ignored at first. Romantic historian Lillian Furst states that once the Reign of Terror took over there was little imaginative writing. It seems reasonable to follow that art would have been limited to that of the Revolution and, later, Napoleon. French Romanticism became popularized much later than the German or British Romanticism. Romantic ideas include: nature influencing man's character, acknowledging nature’s beauty, nostalgia for the past, a religious influence, adventure, and individual freedom and creativity.

Another important aspect of Romanticism was “the cult of the sublime.” Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757. Burke's book reflected on the aesthetics of art, and how there was an “irrational” fascination with pain and death, along with beauty and life. The themes of the hideous and beautiful are elements of the “sublime.” It is this idea of morbidity that became popular with Romantics and has its beginnings during the Bourbon Restoration. Indeed, historian Alice Killen states that real and paranormal horrors, such as murder, suicides, ghosts, and demons, became popular in literature due to the changing psychological climate in France after the Revolution. An example of the entertainment value of horror can be seen in the *fantasmagorie* shows that Parisians would view. These magic-lantern shows were intended to scare the audience with lights, sounds, and moving figures portraying apparitions and cadavers.

Géricault admired poets such as Byron, Miller, and Tasso. Near the end of his life, he was in need of money and decided to illustrate poems and works by Romantic poets and writers for publishers. However, besides his 1822-1823 oil sketches from Byronic works, such as *Mazeppa* (Figure D), the artist was not inspired to paint from literature. The fact that Géricault did not want to choose topics from literature identified him as an original thinker. While there are hints in the *Raft* to Dante, most of his works show that he was much more interested in modern events that were happening. Unlike the work of his contemporaries, because he painted from real-life, his works contain the realism that many other paintings lacked. Instead of working from literature, he was able to paint from examples all around him. Since the world

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27. Ibid, 611.
30. Ibid, 259.
around him constantly shifted and changed toward a seemingly daunting future, the artist would be influenced by the pessimistic atmosphere.

Géricault was definitely interested in macabre subjects, if not completely charmed by them. During the years of 1815-1816, the artist was distressed and guilty about his furtive, passionate love affair with Alexandrine-Modeste Caruel, his young aunt that was married to Géricault’s uncle, Jean-Baptiste Caruel.31

Caruel had done much for Géricault. While the artist had a father, Georges-Nicolas Géricault, the two were not close. Georges-Nicolas did not wish for his son to be a painter. So after Géricault left home at seventeen, he stayed with his uncle. Caruel allowed Georges-Nicolas to believe that Géricault was working at the uncle’s firm.32 After doing so much for his nephew, in return the artist was in love with Caruel’s wife. This pain was too much to bear.

It was most likely because of his need to escape that Géricault decided to leave for Italy. There, he studied mostly Michelangelo, which caused his style evolved. According to Eitner, he began using more chiaroscuro, defined as the interplay of shadow and light. The artist was also interested in the sculptural quality in human forms.33 Even though his trip was enlightening, he was still troubled and sad. There are letters that Géricault wrote to his friend Dedreux-Dorcy where the artist frequently expressed his disheartened moods.34 What exactly created these moods id not known, but it could be attributed to the guilty affair that he left in France, or perhaps the doubt he felt about his own talent after seeing the masters in Italy.

During 1815, something else may have affected Géricault’s disposition, as well. In his home country, the Second White Terror began. After the Hundred Days, King Louis XVIII was restored on the throne. In Marseilles, there was an extensive termination of anyone attached to or loyal to Napoleon. A famous example of this system of elimination is seen in the case of Maréchal Ney, a Bonapartist, was judged and then secretly shot. The White Terror consequently put the Bourbons in a bad light for many French citizens and must have affected the out-of-country artist when a few of his relatives were murdered.35 His stance on politics began to lean toward the old empire, as a result.

When Géricault returned from Italy in 1817, there was a period of great personal crises. After being away from his lover for so long, Alexandrine and he continued their affair until she became pregnant with his child. Within months his uncle would be aware of the betrayal and Géricault would have to endure the consequences. In order to deal with this, he became more interested in painting than normal, paid further attention to the news, and was more willing to become influenced by his friends. Being involved in other peoples’ lives was better than being entangled in his own. Géricault lived in “La Nouvelle Athènes” where his neighbors were creative individuals, such as actors and writers. They lived on one side and on the other side resided Napoleonic veterans, including Colonel Louis Bro. He spent much time in the studio of a popular French artist at the time, and next-door neighbor, Horace Vemet. Being friends, Vemet influenced Géricault with his outspokenness against the Bourbons and his interest in modern subjects.36 As he tried to paint something that would make him renowned, Eitner states that Géricault had started to change his thought-process:

31 Ibid, 75.
33 Ibid, 106.
34 Ibid, 134.
He understood that in his too-exclusive concern with formal expression he had neglected an important resource...The true alternative to the falsity and boredom of official history painting was not the elimination or the neutralization of subject-matter, but the use of more vital subjects, taken directly from contemporary life and capable of touching the viewer’s nerve. 37

He felt that his talent could be used and applied to modern subjects and things that would have struck his audience emotionally. Current events would be his inspiration. These new subjects would be taken and, using what he learned from the old masters in Italy, painted in such a grand and personal way that they would impress those who saw them.

The Power of Emotion

As he continued to work in Vernet’s studio, Géricault began to teach himself how to create lithographs. Impressive considering that he was new to the medium, most of his print work dealt with the Napoleonic veterans who were now poor and desolate, living on half-pay. 38

Once again, he was influenced by the people and subjects around him that were motivating. To reiterate, though, the artist was still not political, he was simply being sympathetic to the unfortunate. While his friends were Bonapartists, he was more liberal. Géricault’s works never truly set out to voice an opinion against or for the royal government. The topics he chose to depict created emotions within himself that he may have felt would have the same effect on the audience.

While the artist now had the idea of choosing contemporary subjects, he was not sure of what his next project would be. Even though he had heard of the Medusa, there were other subjects that interested him. This other subject provides a glimpse into Géricault’s personal interests, and how it eventually led him to choose the shipwreck.

In 1818, at the same time he was starting sketches for the Raft, he was also contemplating whether to work on the scandalous murder of a former official, Fauldès, in the South of France. The magistrate had been dragged out of his house, murdered, and then dumped in a river by thieves. Géricault had been hoping to create a “heroic” piece from the newspaper accounts. However, Eitner tells of how someone had shown Géricault a print of the murder that was superior to his own lithographs and he decided not to go through with a whole painting devoted to Fauldes. 39 It would have also been difficult to create emotion from the French audience, as the event dealt with petty robbers and a gruesome murder. While this sensational murder was appropriate for newspapers, it perhaps would not have gotten praise from art critics.

Géricault’s lithographs give an example of his new realism. There was more humanity in his works, instead of making the figures bland and stoic. Like the Wounded Cuirassier, his lithographs depicted Fauldès and the veterans with pity. Emotion, and the power it held, was to aid the artist’s focus.

When he felt intensely for the subject, it helped center his vision. An example of this is when he and Colonel Bro found his friend General Letellier in bed after committing suicide. General Letellier had just lost his beloved wife and died wearing her scarf over his head. Géricault quickly drew the General in his state (Figure E). The sketch is very realistic; not a hint

37 Ibid, 148.
38 Ibid, 154.
39 Ibid, 156.
of exaggeration.\textsuperscript{40} Death was powerful in itself, and to add anything extra to the scene would have taken away from the beauty of deceased.

This incident serves as another example of Géricault’s Romantic qualities. He was moved by this morbid subject. The idea of suicide was probably on his mind at the time, as well. During the time he had found the deceased General, his love affair was about to be revealed. In the summer of 1818 Alexandrine-Modeste was a month away from having their child, and the affair would be exposed.\textsuperscript{41} To avoid the shame and scandal must have been desirable. Even though this personal connection prompted his necessity to draw this sketch, the idea of suicide was, in fact, popular in Paris at the time.

Before and after Géricault’s lifetime, suicide accounted for two-thirds of deaths in Paris.\textsuperscript{42} Most were poor Parisians who were stuck in their undesirable social situation. When a person did not have enough money to live properly, he or she just did not wish to live at all.\textsuperscript{43} The sketch of the general, while it is specifically about one man’s hopelessness, was also a representation of other Parisians’ dejection.

With Letellier’s death fresh in his mind, Géricault had already decided to further his project of the \textit{Raft}. While he had decided that the \textit{Méduse} would be the subject, he now had to choose a specific point on the raft to depict. As stated above, Géricault had contacted the raft’s carpenter and had a scale model built. In addition to that, he also started to collect documents about the raft in order to get more data to stimulate his vision.\textsuperscript{44} From early sketches and designs,

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_E}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_F}
\caption{Figure E and Figure F}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_G}
\caption{Figure G}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 157.
\textsuperscript{41} Eitner, Lorenz. \textit{Géricault}, 22.
\textsuperscript{44} Eitner, Lorenz. \textit{Géricault: His Life and Work}, 165.
he was interested in about five incidences according to the survivors: the mutiny, the cannibalism that took place, the rescue of the raft, the sighting of the Argus, and the hailing of the Argus. The order in which the artist drew his scenes was fairly straightforward. The surviving first drafts are on simple figures, and then he would develop on the character or objects further. Through this process, historians were able to tell that the painter first was mostly interested in the scenes of the mutiny, rescue, and cannibalism the most in the beginning, and later decided he would focus on the sighting and hailing of the raft. These preliminary drawings show how Géricault was fascinated with the more gory details from the accounts of Corréard and Savigny. While the rescue of the shipwrecked sailors was a topic that the artist did not depict often, he concentrated at first on the mutiny and the cannibalism that took place.45

He had quite a few sketches and pen illustrations on the mutiny. Here, the scenes were intense. In one pen sketch, there are figures twisting around each other in a struggle to the death (Figure F). Some are desperately holding onto the raft to avoid drowning in the harsh sea. There is a figure of a man holding onto a woman and a small child, presumably his wife and son. In a black chalk, wash, and gouache picture, it is a similar scene except the figures are larger and less of the sea is shown, perhaps in a way to highlight the conflict (Figure G).6 A change was made to the man holding his family, though. Now the man is only holding one person, saving him either by rescuing him out of the sea or from going into the sea.

Even though there is only one saved drawing that depicts anthropophagy, it is a finished work of black chalk, wash, and gouache. As it has been stated above, the more developed the work, the greater the probability that Géricault had been progressing to that point. Once again, Géricault depicts a topic that may not have sat well with the audience, as cannibalism is rarely

depicted in Western art. From the *Cannibalism on the Raft* piece, it can again be seen that the sensationalism of the event interested the artist greatly (Figure H).

Through all the preliminary sketches of the mutiny and cannibalism, the same theme of an older man, the “Father” figure mentioned, kept constant. Another aspect that was constant in the beginning was the arrangement of the figures. The events, such as the mutiny, the rescue, and the cannibalism, were all displayed as if the raft were a stage. As he further experimented on the composition, Géricault had the idea of moving the raft closer to the foreground and having the figures leaning toward a focal point, in order for the viewer to feel as if they were another castaway on the raft. This was first used in the hailing of the *Argus* drawings. After these sketches, the painter felt he had found his subject. The hailing of the ship invokes anxiety, hope, and disappointment. Once he had decided on his subject, he began to carefully decide what figures and aspects would be in the final painting. There are many pages that Géricault sketched only certain characters and features that would eventually be integrated into the *Raft*. One of the main figures, and the focus of the essay, was the man holding the body of a younger man.

This theme of the “Father Mourning his Dead Son” was a basis for much of the painting, and was the foundation from which the viewer starts and follows through the piece. This figure, perhaps out of all the figures in the composition had, perhaps, the most personal connection to Géricault. As a man who had been separated from his lover, his son, and a betrayer of the uncle whom had raised him, the artist may have thought the father mourning his son was indicative of his situation. The thought of a man losing his son and the guilt and despair he felt may have been what the artist wished his uncle to feel. This idea comes from the fact that at the end of 1818, Géricault had just prepared a studio where he could concentrate on his project. At the same time, Alexandrine-Modeste had recently given birth to her nephew’s child. Géricault’s uncle had been incensed and sent her away while the child, Georges-Hyppolite was registered as an orphan. The painting would be his way of escaping the scandal and guilt.

When he had finally decided to begin the final composition, Géricault shaved his hair in order to prevent the temptation of leaving. As a man so particular about his appearance, the cutting of his hair was intense. He stayed secluded in the studio and slept in a room attached to the building. A few friends would come to visit, and sometimes pose for him. Some famous painters who posed include Eugène Delacroix, Robert-Fleury, and Steuben. He even made sure two figures in the painting were likenesses of Corrèard and Savigny. The figures, it shall be seen, were given much thought and attention.

**Interest in the Macabre**

Géricault favored black chalk, crayons, pens, and pencils when he started the sketches. Quite a few drawings focused on the light and shadows the figures or objects would cast. While this exercise of sketching before embarking on a huge painting was normal, his other preparatory studies were more bizarre. To better understand the feeling and emotion the men on the raft must have felt, Géricault began to paint studies of limbs, severed heads, and terminally-ill patients from the Hôpital Beaujon. Eitner believes he did this to keep himself emotionally charged while being isolated in his workspace (Figure I and Figure J). As he studied how the body decayed, he

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48 Ibid, 168.
49 Ibid, 169.
50 Ibid, 175.
51 Ibid, 175, 99.
could possibly have felt as if he were there on the ship. This allowed the final product of the
Raft to have a quality of authenticity in its figures. It is important to note that these are fully
finished paintings of the limbs and heads, as opposed to just rough sketches, like the other scenes
in the Raft. These morbid still-lifes were singular and kept his attention for a while during the
Raft’s preparation.

Géricault was able to get these body parts from the local hospitals and morgues. He kept
the bodies until the stench was too much. When certain friends visited, they would be upset that
they had to model near such corpses. While the artist’s behavior may seem very odd, remember
that there was a great fascination with death and horror, in general, with Parisians, as stated
above. In addition to viewing light shows meant to frighten, Parisians had been frequenting
morgues since the late eighteenth century.

The beginning of public display of dead bodies started in the basse-geôle of prisons. Basse-geôle was a place where people were brought in to identify the bodies of their missing
family members. Eventually, the basse-geôle was known as “the morgue”. In 1718, the word
“morgue” was added to the dictionary of the Académie with its definition being, “a place at the
Châtelet [prison] where dead bodies that have been found are open to the public view, in order
that they be recognized.” Already, the viewing of the dead was a normal part of French culture.
A morgue was not just a place where the dead were kept, but it was also a place for the dead to
be publically observed.

While it was possible to see the bodies in the prison, the area where the bodies were kept
was not ideal for recognizing people. The lighting was poor and individuals had to view corpses
through bars. When the main prison in Paris, the Châtelet, was destroyed in 1804, the morgue
moved to a building made specifically for the public presentation of bodies. The new building
was reminiscent of a Greek temple in the Marché-Neuf, which was a popular location in the
heart of Paris. As Schwartz writes, “Other European cities also had their morgues, but only in
Paris were corpses displayed behind a large glass window through which the public might freely
pass.” As this quote implies, there was something about French society that made morbidity
almost conventional. The motive of moving the morgue to the Marché-Neuf was to help police
identify bodies. However, Parisians found the morgue to be a free place to go where corpses
were presented in a grand display. While death in itself is a natural part of life, the Parisian
society transformed death into a form of entertainment.

Vanessa Schwartz states that there is a scholarly idea that the revolutionary crowd and the
Parisian crowd were closely related, since Paris was wrought with numerous upheavals in
government. Linked to both the revolutionary crowd and the Parisian crowd, Géricault
represented both parts of French society. With family fortune keeping him financially stable, and
having political friends such as Bro and Vemet, the painter was both a part of high society, as
well as the revolutionary crowd. By this account, his works are even more indicative of French

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52 Ibid, 183.
53 Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, Nina. “Géricault's Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the
Scaffold.”, 602.
54 Cohen, Margaret Cohen, Christopher Prendergast. Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, and Genre. Minneapolis:
56 Ibid, 46.
57 Ibid, 59.
society. Going back to the figure of the “Father,” his representation of death and cannibalism show how French culture was interested in terror and the “sublime”.

The “Father” and His Implications

In the *Raft*, the “Father” was depicted as an older man who looks away from the ship. He wore a red head cloth as he held a youth, the “Son”, in one hand, while resting his head on the other hand. Out of the nineteen figures, and out of the fourteen living figures, the “Father” was the only one completely unaffected by the faint ship. Even though one man was holding his hair out of frustration and another man was looking away in or to call attention to the *Argus*, it was the “Father” that does not react in any way to the possible salvation. Géricault placed this older man in the foreground of the painting. The “Father” is the first image to strike the observer. This figure could be understood in several ways during that time period.

The “Father” in Géricault’s has been linked to Dante Alighieri’s portrayal of Count Ugolino from the *Inferno*. Count Ugolino was a traitor to his nephew, Nino de’ Visconti, a leader of a political group in Pisa. He worked alongside the Archbishop Ruggieri. However, Ugolino was then betrayed by the Archbishop. The Pisans captured the Count and his four sons and shut them up in a tower. They were left to starve and Ugolino was infamous for eating his dead children. Cannibalism in the *Inferno* is “an allegory of men preying upon one another in an unjust society.”

In the *Raft*, the men on the ship are portrayed as wronged men who are trying to save themselves. However, in order for them to have lived for so long on the raft, they had to prey upon the other castaways and be the most ruthless and tough. They survived mutiny, literally preyed upon the bodies of the weak, and threw overboard those who were sick so as to preserve rations. The *Inferno* uses cannibalism as an allegory of men using each other, and so does Géricault. The “Father” that may represent Ugolino, points to the cannibalism and the unjust society that placed those men on the raft. The royal government allowed de Chaumareys to become a captain solely because of his birth. There was no need to test his merit in the flawed royalist government. If there was a competent captain behind the *Méduse*, the chances of so many people dying would have gone down exponentially.

The “Father” even wears a military medal on his chest, the Legion of Honor. The Legion of Honor was an order of merit for military and civilians who were examples of liberty and equality created by Napoleon. In order for him to have earned the medal, the “Father” either had spent 20 years doing peacetime service or was an excellent war hero. This old man has served under Napoleon and now must suffer under the unjust royalist government. As Boime suggests, the leaders of the Restoration purposefully intended to have the old supporters of the emperor murdered. Murdered or, as seen in the “Father”, mentally incapacitated. It could be implied that he was able to survive for so long because he had the Bonapartist mentality, or he was an upstanding citizen that was being punished by the prejudiced Restoration leaders. Considering the White Terror, this is not so remarkable.

While there was no actual depiction of a man eating another, unlike the *Cannibalism* piece, there are corpses strewn over the boards, and the “Son” that is held by the “Father”

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60 Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848*, 143.
62 Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848*, 143.
appears to have stumps at the end of his legs. While the older man holds the younger man who is missing limbs, it also recalls the cannibalistic Count. In Dante’s epic poem, Ugolino feels great remorse and horror at his own actions. The Father’s countenance is also reminiscent of this idea. He is one of two people in the Raft that does not look toward the Argus. However, he was alone in his grief for another.

Even though there is no factual proof that the painter was thinking about his personal issues when creating the “Father,” bearing in mind his tendency of using currents events as inspiration, he may have had his uncle in mind when creating the “Father”. As stated before, it was almost an unconscious idea through all the preparatory sketches to keep the theme of a father holding his children. At first it started with a man holding his whole family in the Mutiny, and then to just a man holding his son. Perhaps Géricault identified with the idea of going mad with guilt. However, this time he hoped his uncle, who had been supportive of his nephew’s artistry only to be betrayed, would still be mournful if Géricault died. Grief and sadness were large elements in their connection. There is a link between Ugolino and Géricault’s paternal relationships.

Indeed, the “Father” also calls attention to the madness that certain castaways felt before they committed suicide on the real raft. One would have to be slightly mad at any rate to resort to anthropophagy. In the painting, the older man’s face was mostly covered in shadow, his head supported by his hand. He looks away from the others toward the sea in a blank stare. The position the “Father” poses is the same pose as the melancholic madman. Also, the “Father” figure hides his hands slightly when covered by his hair. All these characteristics point toward the traditional iconography that implies insanity. What was the cause of his madness? His reason was lost when he could not face the injustice that happened to him and his “Son.” Like Ugolino, this “Father” will forever be punished by his guilt. French society was aware of Dante’s Ugolino and many who viewed Géricault’s painting may have seen the allusion to the Count. The critics may have noticed the hint at madness, as well. There was a trend involving the signs of madness.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, there was an important book written by John Caspar Lavater that dealt with the physiognomy of humans. Lavater’s book was translated into French and was immensely popular, especially with its numerous illustrations. This novel allowed many artists to see the signs of insanity in a person, and used these signs in their works. As Gilman states, “It was the artists who themselves transmuted this tradition into new manners of seeing insanity as well as being influenced by it.” While Géricault was using a combination of melancholy and madness on the figure, other artists in France were experimenting with physiognomy, likewise.

The way Géricault depicted the madman, or the “Father”, was more empathetic and portrait-like, as opposed to painting the madman using stereotypes. As stated above, he had sketched patients in the local hospitals. While this is unusual, he was not the only person to do this. There was a Swiss artist who made a sketchbook of patients of a Zurich asylum during Géricault’s time. So he was not alone in his thoughts of treating the mentally-ill as people, rather than all of them being raving lunatics. The “Father” had grown crazy due to the harsh

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64 Ibid, 62.
65 Ibid, 131.
66 Ibid, 69.
conditions he was put through, not because he was evil or possessed. Similar to General Letellier and the poor, forgotten Napoleonic soldiers, life was severe.

Gilman writes, "The concept of a portrait of a single insane individual embodies the new status of the insane as citizens within the state, not outcasts from it." This quote describes Géricault’s project of painting portraits of patients in an asylum for his friend, Georget. While this was one year after the exhibition of the Raft, the artist’s sympathies toward the oppressed were most likely unchanged from the year before. After being friends with forgotten soldiers and oppressed Bonapartists, for one to think he had compassion for the burdened and stereotyped mentally-ill is not implausible. He was one of the initiators of a new way of depicting asylum patients as humans in French art.

**Salon Reviews**

The fact that people were interested in the states of insanity again points to the increased attractiveness of the “sublime” and the beginning of fashionable Romanticism. As Delacroix looked upon the many sketches for the Raft, he was impressed at how “truly sublime” they were and how these pieces, “demonstrated the power of art to transfigure what was odious and monstrous in nature.” While certain subjects may have been dreadful, at the same time they were compelling.

This new way of enticing the viewer was so bold that critics were divided in their reviews of the Raft. However, in order to further discuss the critics’ reactions, the Romantic qualities of the painting should be mentioned. In this way, critics’ disapproval or praise can be understood better after explaining the innovation of the artwork.

One of the key properties in Romantic art is the importance of Nature. The men in the Raft were faced with the immense power of the seas; and also faced with human nature. Nature affects humans’ behavior, and so these men were forced to act in ways never thought possible. Since the Argus was depicted with the size of a speck, the sea appears even more expansive, and the possibility of the ship rescuing the castaways just as miniscule. If the viewer was concerned for these hailing men, when he or she stepped in front of the impressive painting, the observer may have felt like one of the survivors. The chances of the faraway ship seeing the raft would have been slim and while hope was there, so was disappointment.

Another Romantic idea was the nostalgia for the past. As Géricault had visited Italy, and studied Michelangelo, Raphael, and other great Italian painters, his figures in the Raft, recall these influences. As the artist painted the large figures, they have the build of sculptures. Toned and brawny, these are the survivors; quite different compared to the way the actual starved and dirty castaways looked when they were saved. The colors and shadows highlight the figures even more so. The motions of their actions were emphasized by the odd studio-like lighting. As the main figure at the top of the pyramid of sailors attempts to hail the speck, all the bodies are twisting and directed toward the point in the horizon. These bodies were most likely inspired by Michelangelo’s use of gigantism, or the increase in body proportions, as the figures are so large and muscular. There was also an influence of Peter Paul Rubens’ use of multiple forms working together. Using these masters’ works as inspiration, the Romantic nostalgia for antiquity was achieved after recalling the Renaissance and Baroque art periods.

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67 Ibid, 90.
69 Ibid, 189.
70 Ibid, 192.
With a sense of adventure and danger, *The Raft of the Medusa* was a grand example of Romanticism. After eighteen months of constant work, the piece was finished. The public reaction to the painting was quite curious. The Salon of 1819 was strikingly similar to the Salon of 1814; both years observed the return of the monarchy. In charge of the biggest exhibition since the Bonaparte ruled were both the director of the Royal Museum, Comte de Forbin, and the secretary-general of the Musée du Louvre, Vicomte de Sennones. They wanted the theme of the 1819’s exhibition to focus on the triumphs of the royal government. It is interesting that, while he was supportive of the monarchy, Forbin was actually friends with Vernet and the artist’s group. As artists began to enter their works, many paintings dealing with mythology or classical themes were rejected. This was evidence that there was censorship against most subject matter that could allude to Napoleon or the empire. However, Géricault’s piece was still accepted even though it was clearly a piece about the Méduse scandal. Boime believes that there had to be a “token” liberal picture allowed in the Salon. Another possible reason for why the *Raft* was admitted may be that since Géricault was part of Vernet’s circle, Forbin must have been acquainted with Géricault. This association may have opened a spot in an otherwise exclusive exhibition.

In either case, those in charge knew that the *Raft* made some sort of statement, and wished to suppress it slightly. The original title, *The Raft of the Medusa*, was listed in the Salon Catalogue as “Scene of Shipwreck”. Almost everyone knew what particular shipwreck it depicted. The response to the painting varied between artistic oppositions and political oppositions.

There were some reviewers, like Landon writing in *Annales du Musée*, who did not appreciate the painting because the subject matter was not appropriate for a canvas that large. Landon was upset that Géricault had chosen such a dreadful scene to depict and he believed no one would want to buy the painting. Why would anyone buy a work that constantly reminded the viewer of despair and horror? This would be an especially important question considering the royal funding. Landon believed that, “history painting was designed to perpetuate the memory of elevating events that were of general interest (such as a coronation) or emotions whose description would be of general benefit (patriotism or piety).” To Landon, there was no point in painting such a sad piece that did not “elevate” the viewer. On the contrary, the shipwreck was startling news and was probably of great interest to the audience. Emotions run deep through the painting, and while there were certain pressing issues addresses, there was also a sense of hope and the strength of humankind to survive. Compositionally, some critics did not think the somber tones were agreeable; the “blackness” was too much. However, this “blackness” may have been due to the placement of the *Raft*. Géricault made the mistake of hanging the painting high above one of the leading doors into the Salon; the already somber colors appeared to darken the higher it rose. Other reviewers thought that the figures were arranged in an “obviously pyramidal” fashion, or that the work had “lack of a ‘centre’.” Critics disagreed with each other, of course.

71 Ibid, 185.
72 Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848*, 145.
75 Ibid, 188.
76 Ibid, 189.
Those who did enjoy the so-called "pyramidal" structure and the center of the Raft, which
the other reviewers apparently overlooked, praised Géricault’s composition. They found
the figures compelling and moving. The Comte O’Mahony was a writer for the Conservateur
and wrote how the changing of the title of the painting in the Salon catalogue did not hide the actual
event depicted. He commended Géricault’s brash brushstrokes and the vigor it expressed. The
overall color of the piece was appropriate for the subject matter. Overall, O’Mahony said of the
painting “What a hideous spectacle but what beautiful picture.”

The scene was powerful without the extra layer of political theories because the vision itself spoke of all the horrors in
life. This idea fascinated many of the general audience.

For the reviews that focused on the political implications, there were two sides: royalists
and the left-wing liberals. Some royalists were upset that the men in the painting had nothing to
denote class or nationality. Without such indicators, they were unable to understand the supposed
message of the piece. Most royalist reviewers did not sympathize with the victims of the
shipwreck, and instead believed Géricault failed to stir up pity using the images of agony. These
wounded men were being used as “misguided attempt on the part of ‘an obscure circle of a
despised party’ to gain the benevolent attention of the throne and of legitimism”. Instead of
seeing the men on the raft as victims, he saw them as objects used to gain the acceptance of the
royalist opinion. Géricault painted in order to stir emotions within the audience, but the royalist
side thought it was a device to gain support for the opposition.

The opposition, on the other hand, was supportive of the artist’s subject matter and the
political issues it raised. Henri de Latouche was appalled by the change in title and accused the
royal jury for hiding the incident for which the government was responsible. De Latouche was,
unlike the royalist critic, compassionate toward the castaways. Another writer, this one for Le
Constitutionnel, was greatly affected by the Raft and formed a parallel between the castaways
and Napoleonic veterans. Seeing the Legion of Honor on the “Father’s” chest, the critic was
grateful of the link between the castaways and the soldiers. It is interesting to note that some of
the royalist critics missed the Legion of Honor. Both groups were forgotten and abandoned, left
to survive with nothing. However, they were still beautiful and strong throughout their situations.

The general public was “disturbed and fascinated” by the Raft. In fact, as Étienne
Delecluze, an art critic, recalled the Salon of 1819 years later, he stated that the Raft had
“extraordinary success” as it stirred up many reactions. Compositionally, it was a break from
the Neo-Classical school of Jacques-Louis David. It was bold and emotional. These men were
fighting to survive, and the viewer was almost forced to feel the same. The horrors of the Raft
were enticing to the society that was used to visiting morgues and frightening shows. Now they
could feel as if they were a part of a tragedy as they stood at the base of the outspread canvas.

Conclusion

Géricault was seriously injured in a horseback-riding accident that left him weak and
feeble. He never fully recovered and passed away the twenty-sixth of January, 1824. He was
thirty-two and four months old. Even though he died so young, Géricault left an enormous
mark on Romantic art. Interested in current events, his works constantly dealt with modern topics

77 Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848*, 147.
81 Eitner, Lorenz. *Géricault: His Life and Work*, 188.
82 Ibid, 191.
83 Ibid, 279.
and issues. From his first painting in the Salon of 1812, the Charging Chasseur, where he depicted how society viewed Napoleon and his armies as valiant and unstoppable, to the Wounded Cuirassier in the Salon of 1816 where he expressed the uncertainty of the people to the new government, Géricault was not afraid to paint what he desired. While he was from a wealthy class, this did not hinder his ability to feel compassion for the veterans, painters, and writers. As he grew up in constantly shifting political times, his politics were also slightly affected, mostly through the influence of his friends.

As he changed, so did society with him. French individuals must have constantly worried about what would happen to their country next. Would the emperor come again or would the monarchy finally be stable? Their future was unclear, and so they attempted to entertain themselves by transforming death into a form of entertainment, rather than worry about the future. While the Romantic Movement had not yet become popular in France, peoples’ tastes were on the verge of change. They were already fascinated with the beauty of the “sublime.”

Géricault was interested in the beauty of the horrible. His morbid still-lifes were rendered with care and not exaggerated with drama. After seeing and sketching the suicide of his friend, he knew the power of emotion would translate beautifully into art. Combined with his renewed love of modern subjects, his final Salon entry in 1819 was to be his masterpiece. Once he heard the story of the castaways of La Méduse, abandoned by their royalist captain, and the horrors they went through, the painter knew what the topic would be for his greatest work. The Raft of the Medusa was an intimidating piece to stand before. The audience was struck with not only the size, the surprising light, and the color, but the realistic men who were portrayed. These men were united in pain, hope, and uncertainty.

The “Father” was perhaps one of the most disturbing characters as he was beyond hope. Instead of rejoicing at the sight of rescue, he was lost in his own mind. Whether by madness or grief or both, he was unable to be rescued. Recalling Count Ugolino, he represents the cannibalism and murder that occurred during the real shipwreck. The “Father” had been driven to eat his own kind, perhaps his own kin, identical to Ugolino. Whether Géricault intended it or not, the “Father” could also represent the type of struggle to survive in France at the time.

As the Hundred Days and White Terror showed, many persons would perish before there was a glimpse or sighting of peace. As the suicide rates were always high, many Parisians were growing despondent and may have wished for an end to the suffering. When the French audience gazed upon the Raft, they may have understood a touch of what the castaways felt. If the viewer was not sympathetic to the raw emotion in the painting, then he or she would at least notice how different the work was compared to past exhibition pieces. Géricault was a Romantic artist who was able to have his daring works presented before those who would debate and contemplate on the compositions and subjects. Influenced and influencing, The Raft of the Medusa represents emotion, ambition, and French society.
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Book Review I

Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington
By Peter Henriques

Reviewed by John Prendergast ‘10

In *Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington*, Peter Henriques attempts to “humanize Washington without diminishing him” (Preface xii). After all, much has been written about our first President over the past two-hundred and thirty-three years. In this vein, authors have often portrayed Washington in a gloomy light, noting his dry personality and his inability to handle criticism. While these portrayals do hold some water, it is unfair to ignore the rest of the facts which shed light on Washington’s insurmountable character—as a soldier, as a president, and as a husband. Thus, Henriques offers a comprehensive examination of Washington’s private and public life to prove that our first President was truly a “realistic visionary” who was designing a nation for the “millions unborn” (xii).

At the outset, Henriques examines the young, athletic Colonel Washington during his service under General Braddock in the French and Indian War. Washington was an ambitious young man and his desire for honor and glory is a theme which stretched throughout the course of his life. In search for honor and glory, however, Washington sometimes displayed an extreme lack of judgment. In one such example, Washington ordered an assault on the French diplomatic party known as the Jumonville Affair which spurred many to call Washington a murderer; this event also led to the outbreak of the war and is best summed up by Voltaire’s famous quotation: “a shot fired in the wilderness set the world ablaze.” Washington’s lack of judgment continued when he gave Braddock bad advice at the Battle of the Wilderness by splitting the advancing British army into two divisions—this decision turned out to be “one of the great British disasters of the eighteenth century” (9). Despite these unforeseeable results, Washington went on to show tremendous leadership on the battlefield as evident when General Braddock fell prey to enemy fire. This display of character led Washington to request the King’s commission and a promotion in rank, a request which was denied countless times. Feeling extremely unappreciated, Washington chose to retire from military life at the age of twenty-six.

Washington became further angered with Great Britain a few years later when laws were passed which hindered his ability to advance his agricultural business. With a
rapidly growing discontent toward Great Britain, George Washington began to delve into the Radical Whig message of Britain’s evident tyrannical plans to enslave the colonists. In light of these developments yet acting visibly reluctant, George Washington ended his retirement and accepted the nomination to be the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. However, Henriques claims Washington would not have worn his military uniform when he showed up to Congress if he really did not want the nomination. Additionally, Washington neither suggested to Congress other possible candidates for the job nor did he accept a stipend for his services. By doing this, Washington demonstrated that he could handle power and authority in a responsible manner.

Washington emerged from the Revolutionary War as the “unrivaled hero and savior of his country” (45) and in 1789 he was unanimously elected as the first President of the United States. In terms of assessing his Presidency, Henriques acknowledges that Washington had very limited resources at his disposal yet he made do and got the country headed in the right direction. With that said, Washington’s Presidency contained many crises which directly impacted various people within his administration. For one, the country was suffering extensively in terms of finances as there was a mounting war debt, and thus Washington relied heavily on Alexander Hamilton, a fellow Federalist who also sought honor and glory. Washington made Hamilton his Secretary of the Treasury, a job through which Hamilton successfully assumed states’ war debt and established a powerful national bank. Henriques brilliantly refers to Hamilton as “the indispensable man to the ‘Indispensable Man.’” Without Hamilton, Washington’s Presidency very well may have ended differently. Unfortunately, Washington did not have the same outgoing relationship with his Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson. Although both men maintained a mutual respect for one another, Jefferson was furious over Washington’s support of the 1795 Jay Treaty which essentially acted as an appeasement toward Great Britain—Jefferson saw the treaty as treason that shut down any attempt at a Franco-American alliance. This, along with the 1796 “Mazzei letter” where Jefferson bashed Washington’s old age and even more senile advisors, led to the complete rupture in relationship between Washington and Jefferson.

Moving away from the military and political spectrum, Henriques studies Washington’s triangular love relationship with Sally Fairfax and Martha Custis. Washington was engaged to Martha but, according to various letter correspondences, was deeply in love with Sally, a black-haired beauty who tended to Washington when he fell severely ill in 1757. Henriques’ quotation best describes Washington’s feelings about the situation: “George Washington was many things, but one thing he was not, and would not be, was a Puritan” (74). Washington was in love with someone other than his fiancée and he was not afraid to proclaim that to Sally. With that said, Martha was truly the love of Washington’s life and he understood this. His marriage to Martha in 1759 not only provided Washington with financial security but also provided him with psychic security—“[Martha] gave him the type of unconditional support and love that his personality, perhaps in part because of his difficult childhood, seemed so desperately to need” (91). After all, she kept her husband company during the grueling winters at Valley Forge, tended to Mount Vernon while her husband was absent for long periods of time, and reluctantly relocated with her husband when he accepted the Presidency because she understood his duties to the country. None of this went unrecognized by Washington as
Henriques claims that “few men...are fortunate enough to have had such a loving and devoted wife” (104).

As Henriques nears the end of his biographical account, he examines Washington’s views on slavery and religion. Washington was born in Virginia, a slave society where 40% of the population were slaves for life (146). He had many slaves on his estate at Mount Vernon and he worked them hard. However, Washington referred to his slaves as his family and he recognized that they were emotional beings just as whites were. If a slave was ill, Washington would not force them to work but rather, he would supply the slave with medical attention. Over time, Washington slowly grew to see problems with slavery because the concept violated basic constitutional principles and, therefore, Washington freed his slaves in his final will. In terms of religion, many groups try to claim George Washington as their own. However, the truth is Washington was not a very religious person; granted, he believed in a higher-being which he called “Providence” and he believed in a form of afterlife. Still, Washington lacked religiousness on his deathbed. Washington was not afraid to die—it was something which he readily embraced. For Washington, it all came down to secular immortality—he wanted to be remembered for what he accomplished in life. As long as he would be remembered by the “millions unborn,” he would gracefully and willingly pass on into the afterlife.

In his work, Peter Henriques fittingly uses many themes throughout Washington’s life as a way to understand his character. A Professor of History Emeritus at George Mason University, Henriques avoids a blow by blow, chronological account of Washington’s life and, by doing so, effectively allows the reader to see and comprehend Washington’s character among varying avenues of interpretation. At the outset, Henriques states that he wants “to humanize Washington without diminishing him.” To a great extent the author accomplishes this feat—Henriques makes many concessions along the way but that is because he wants the full truth to be known; sometimes the truth can hurt, sure, but in doing so the reader is made available to the greater picture. For example, George Washington was almost certainly a racist. Henriques acknowledges that he was “an elitist by temperament and upbringing...no doubt, he had an engrained sense of racial superiority” (155). With that said, Henriques uses this foundation to establish that Washington was most impressive in how his attitudes changed over time as evident when he freed his slaves. Moreover, Henriques demonstrates that he is not afraid to use evidence from other scholars’ works, along with his own knowledge, to corroborate many of the points he makes throughout his account. His range of reference spans among great minds such as Joseph Ellis, Ron Chernow, and Paul Longmore to name a few. After all, “humanizing” Washington with evidence from only one author is an unbelievable task and, thus, Henriques successfully avoids any kind of egotistical trap by citing authors who are able to convey a certain detail more effectively or succinctly than he.

Unfortunately, there are some students of history who maintain that George Washington was solely a dry personality who could not handle criticism. Peter Henriques successfully establishes, through his work Realistic Visionary, that claims such as these are erroneous. Washington was a man of exponential character who resisted power’s temptation on many instances. He proved early on that he could handle responsibility and, by reluctantly accepting nominations, he implicitly asserted that he had no interest in establishing a dictatorship. He was dedicated to the experiment of republican government
and he set the precedent for term limits by engaging in the peaceful exchange from one presidential administration to the next. William Shakespeare once said “he was a man, take him for all in all...I shall not look upon his like again.” Shakespeare’s carefully chosen words emulate the sentiment created by our first President. And arguably most essential founding father. He was the “Indispensable Man” who combined reason and emotion to contribute to the fabric of what we can now call the most powerful, democratic nation in the world—the United States of America.

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As the new editor of *The Histories*, I was extremely worried about upholding the high standards of my predecessor, Victoria Valusek. She helped me learn how to create this amazing journal, which is not as easy job! I would like to thank her for being a mentor to me during her years at La Salle University.

In this edition, you, the reader, will find a plethora of works that straddle the span of world history. Included also are two honors theses that go in depth on very interesting subjects, the Newburgh Conspiracy and the artist Géricault. I think that this journal shows the wide range of interests of students here at La Salle. I would like to thank those students who took the time to write such amazing works and contribute them to my first edition.

I would like to especially thank Dr. Michael McInneshin, the new moderator of *The Histories*. He has always been available to listen and help me whenever I needed it. I would also like to thank Dr. Stuart Leibiger, the Chair of the department. These two faculty members, along with the entire department, are integral in the creation of this publication because they taught these student writers how to research and write about history. I would also like to thank the department secretary, Jen Smith, for assisting with the technical problems that arose while creating this edition. Without them, this edition would be impossible.

Lauren De Angelis

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