

**Foreign policy, Factionalism, and Chaos in New York, 1790-1815**

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The Republican Party developed in New York during the first Washington administration around the core of George Clinton's anti-Federalists. During the Revolution they provided the leadership of the popular Whigs. Federalist foreign policies during Washington's second term enabled the Republican Party to establish a mass following. "British policy on the high seas and on the frontier, coupled with the Federalist response to them," historian Alfred Young concluded, "created the Republican movement in New York, enabling Republicans to catch full sail the fullest winds of nationalism to blow across the American political waters since the Revolution." The growth of the Republican Party in the 1790s depended on the successful use of public hostility to Great Britain. <sup>1</sup>

In 1794, John Jay negotiated a treaty with the British providing for British evacuation of the frontier posts in the West in exchange for American acceptance of British restrictions on trade with the West Indies, and a promise not to impose discriminatory duties on British goods. While the treaty pleased Federalists because it produced an Anglo-American entente it angered Republicans because the British refused to recognize American maritime rights. "To Republicans the battle against Jay's Treaty, a betrayal of national interest, was a holy crusade; England, a den of iniquity; 'Tory,' the most odious epithet in their vocabulary." Initial public outrage at the treaty's abandonment of neutral rights aided the Republicans. However, Republican Anglophobia soon proved too strong for a majority of New Yorkers. Voters gave Republicans a majority of the state's Congressional delegation in 1794 during the crest of anti-British anger over Jay's Treaty. However, by the spring of 1795 New Yorkers found peace with the British more appealing. New Yorkers elected Federalist John Jay Governor and reelected Federalist majorities in the Assembly and State Senate. <sup>2</sup>

New York Republicans took a more openly pro-French position than the national leadership of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. When the French requested bribes from American negotiators---XYZ Affair---Federalists capitalized on the public outrage in New York and portrayed the Republicans as seditious allies of the French. Federalists manipulated nationalism to their own advantage and seriously undermined the popularity of the Republicans. Adoption of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798 threatening basic civil liberties backfired against the Federalists and allowed the Republicans to regain the political offensive. Thomas Jefferson's successful attack on the foreign policy of President John Adams and the Alien and Sedition Acts aided the Republicans at the state and national level. Thomas Jefferson defeated Adams for the presidency in the 1800 presidential election. Between 1800 and 1801 New York's Republicans won control of the Assembly, State Senate, and the Congressional delegation. In 1801 Republican George Clinton defeated Federalist Stephen Van Rensselaer for governor. For the first time Republicans controlled all branches of New York government.

"A harsh and divisive dialogue pervaded the political atmosphere," historian Paul Goodman observed in Massachusetts, and "men argued not over means but over ultimate ends." In New York, as in Massachusetts, Republicans saw their opponents as aristocrats, British agents, and Tories. For the Federalists, Republicans were Jacobins, anarchists, democrats, and agents of France. Federalists believed Republican rule would lead to the destruction of "the foundations of society." Eventually, "you will see the virtuous brought to the block and decapitated, their property plundered, and divided among the horde of wretches. They especially hated Jefferson

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York* (Chapel Hill, 1967), 572.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 259.

and when his presidency ended, they thanked God for rescuing “us from the fangs of Jefferson.”

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Federalism had been the dominant political force in New York since 1788 when forces in favor of the Constitution defeated the anti-Federalists led by George Clinton. Throughout the 1790s Federalists managed to contain the growth of the Republicans until they stumbled over aspects of the foreign policies of Washington and Adams. By 1801, Federalists lost control of all branches of state government and went into rapid decline into political insignificance. A change in the electoral laws in 1804 led to the loss of one of their last bastions of political power, the New York City Common Council. By 1806, the Federalists held no seats in the State Senate, 19 of 112 Assembly seats, and two of seventeen seats in Congress. In 1804 and 1807, Federalists did not even bother to nominate gubernatorial candidates, hoping they could regain some power by endorsing one of the Republican candidates. The strategy failed so badly that it led to the death of the state’s leading Federalist in 1804, Alexander Hamilton.

By 1801 the majority of New Yorkers, particularly in western New York, considered themselves Republicans. They identified with the principles of the Republican Party and with the state leadership of George Clinton. In the 1790s the Republican Party developed independent of the leadership of Jefferson and Madison, and “there would have been a Republican Party in New York without them.” New York Republicans did not follow the lead of Jefferson and Madison in the Hamilton finance questions of 1789-90, and in the foreign policy crises of 1794-96 they took a more extreme anti-British position than either Virginian. While Republicans backed Jefferson in 1796 and 1800, they did so primarily out of hostility to Federalists, rather than loyalty to Jefferson. According to Alfred Young, “New York Democratic Republicans cannot accurately be called New York Jeffersonians.”<sup>4</sup>

Republicans dominated New York politics after 1800 because they identified their party as the party of the people. They projected an image of democracy, a faith in equalitarianism, As an example, when Daniel Tompkins ran for governor in 1807, he ran as the farmer’s boy, just one of the people he hoped to represent. While many Federalists expected the public to defer to men of superior merit, virtue, or wealth, Republicans emphasized that men of merit were “still only considered as equals.” Republicans cautioned voters against electing Federalists, “men whose aristocratic doctrine teaches that the rights and representative authority of the people are vested in a few proud nobles.” Many Federalists felt ill at ease campaigning. “Saving one’s country” proved “a nauseous piece of business” to Washington Irving, who in 1807 “talked handbill fashion with the demagogues and shook hands with the mob.” As late as 1815, William North complained of “suffering the worst of all evils...to one who hates the manners of the Vulgar, an evil sufficiently great, that of mixing and battling with the herd, all folly, filth, ignorance, and drink.” In spite of the efforts to convey the image of representing the best interests of the people and the state, Federalists could not overcome “the dread of federalism entertained by the great

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Goodman, *The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1964), 72; *New York Evening Post*, 25-30 April 1807; Robert Morris to William Ludlow, 3 June 1809, Box 3, Ludlow Family Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, N.Y.

<sup>4</sup> Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 578.

body of the people.” By combining equalitarianism, nationalism, and Anglophobia Republicans won the support of the majority of New Yorkers.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1790s, the Federalists, as a party in power, discouraged mobilization of public opinion, rejected the use political organization, and frowned upon the expression of public opinion between the elections. Federalists denounced democratic clubs as the work of French Jacobins, as unruly revolutionary cells. The Federalist Party stood for a strong national government and a strong executive. Republicans glorified states’ rights in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and popular protests against Jay’s Treaty, Alien and Sedition Acts, and the undeclared Quasi War of 1798-1800 with France. After 1800 a partial reversal of roles turned New York’s Federalists into states’ rights advocates and into vigorous opponents of the nationalist policies of Jefferson and Madison. Federalists became champions of party organization, public protests, and of constant agitation against the policies of Jefferson and Madison. Embracing new methods of party organization Federalists founded Washington societies, and in the Capital District Trojan Whig societies to get the faithful to the polls and to engage in public opposition to the foreign policies of Republican administrations. Republicans rallied around nationalism and the policies of he Jefferson and Madison administrations, but only if it appeared to give them an edge in New York politics. The various factions within the Republican Party used nationalism and states’ rights as weapons against the Federalists and their political enemies within the Republican Party. While upholding the popularity and democratic nature of their political clubs, like Tammany, Republicans denounced Federalists political clubs as nest of Tories and treason. Ironically, both parties competed over which political organization represented the best expression of the Revolutionary tradition and the legitimate inheritors of the values of 1776.

In the 1790s, the struggle to oust the Federalists from state and national power provided the incentive that kept the faction-ridden Republicans united. With the elimination of the Federalist threat in 1801 Republicans waged a vigorous internecine war for control of the party. During the early 1790s, George Clinton, a popular governor aided by his nephew De Witt Clinton dominated the Republican Party. By the mid-1790s, the Livingstons led by Robert R. Livingston and Aaron Burr emerged to challenge Clinton. “While there was never any love between Clinton, Livingston and Burr” as long as the Federalists remained in power the three major Republican leaders cooperated against their common enemy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John T. Irving, *Oration Delivered Before the Tammany Society, July 4, 1809* (New York, 1809; *Duanesburgh Republican Nomination, March 17, 1810* (Duanesburgh, 1810), Broadside, Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady, New York; George Hellman, *Washington Irving, Esquire* (New York, 1925), 70; William North to William Eustis, 27 April 1815, William North Papers, Manuscript Division, New York State Library ,Albany, New York; William Wilson to Ebenezer Foote, 3 May 1807, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL. Note: Duanesburg today is a rural community about nine miles west of Schenectady.

<sup>6</sup> Young, *Democratic Republicans*, 577. Also, see John Brooke, *Columbia Rising* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 200-203, 305-306. For Federalist political organizing, see, for example, Federal Young Men of Schaghticoke to Trojan Whig Society, 9 February 1810. Whig Society Papers, NYSL.

Jefferson's election in 1800 provided an opportunity for the newly elected president to turn New York's feuding factions into Jeffersonians. By failing to use the power of federal patronage, he left New York's party leaders free to settle their own affairs and continue their internecine struggle. Rank and file Republicans identified with the national leadership of Thomas Jefferson and later James Madison. Local party leaders, especially the Clintons, ran the party independently and with little regard for the wishes of Jefferson. Party leaders identified themselves as Clintonians, Burrrites, Lewisite (Livingston-Morgan Lewis faction) or Martlingmen (Tammany), not Jeffersonians except when it became politically advantageous to do so.

After 1801 these factions fought for control of the Republican Party. In 1804, George Clinton accepted the Vice-Presidential post under Jefferson. Aaron Burr, former Vice-President of the United States, tried to succeed Clinton as Governor. The Clintonians, in cooperation with the Livingston faction, backed Morgan Lewis, Livingston's son-in-law. Lewis won and Burr blamed his defeat on Alexander Hamilton killing New York's most prominent Federalist in a duel. Burr's defeat and disgrace removed him from New York politics. His supporters tended to merge with the Martlingmen in New York City. George Clinton's assumption of the Vice-President's office left control of the Clintonians to De Witt Clinton. By 1806, Clinton and the Livingston-Lewisite faction split, and the 1806 and 1807 state elections turned into a contest for power between the factions. In 1807, Clinton challenged the reelection of Morgan Lewis by nominating Daniel Tompkins, the farmer's boy, as the challenger. The death of Hamilton further undermined the Federalists, and as in 1804 they were reduced to supporting one of the two Republican candidates. In 1804, most Federalists backed Burr, but switched to Lewis in 1807. Tompkins' victory left the Clintonians in total control of the Republican Party and New York State, but only temporarily.

The internecine political struggle within the Republican Party did not end with the triumph of the Clintonians in 1807 or the resurgence of Federalism in 1808. When Clintonians formed a coalition with part of the Burrrites in 1806, supporters of Morgan Lewis objected to the alliance and the Livingston-Lewisite faction reached out to the Martlingmen who met at Abraham Martling's Tavern in New York City. Since Martling served as sachem of the Tammany Society, the Martlingmen soon became synonymous with Tammany. Ironically, Tammany's leaders included a number of former close associates of Aaron Burr, including Mathew L. Davis, Burr's closest political associate. Hatred of the Clintonians, especially De Witt Clinton united this strange coalition. By 1811 they successfully challenged Clinton's control of the Republican Party in New York City but failed to generate much support upstate. During the 1811 race for Lieutenant-Governor, Tammany backed Marinus Willett only polled five percent of the vote when he challenged De Witt Clinton and Federalist Nicholas Fish. Clinton easily defeated Fish and Willett. In 1812 members of Tammany moved into their new headquarters near Martling's Tavern, Tammany Hall, further cementing the identification of the Tammany name with the Martlingmen. Tammany added to the divisions and confusion in Republican ranks by expressing deep hostility to immigrants fresh from the bogs of Ireland. Leaders of the Tammany faction refused to nominate Irish Catholic candidates. The anti-Irish, anti-Catholic nativism lasted until the flood tide of Irish immigrants forced Tammany to relent in 1815. Members of Tammany

belatedly realized they needed the votes of this growing immigrant population in New York City, especially since De Witt Clinton developed strong bonds to the Irish American community.<sup>7</sup>

Trying to outflank the Clintonians, upstate Lewisite leaders Morgan Lewis, Robert Livingston and John Nicholas joined with Tammany's stalwarts portraying themselves as champions of Jefferson and his successor James Madison. They described themselves as Madisonian when George Clinton appeared to challenge Madison for the presidential nomination in 1808. Later, in 1812 they backed Madison against De Witt Clinton's bid for the presidency. By vigorously endorsing Jefferson and Madison and their major foreign policies---the embargo, non-intercourse, and war---Lewisites and Tammany hoped to win the endorsement of Presidents Jefferson and Madison in their efforts to destroy the political power of the Clintons.

Realizing the potential political danger the embargo posed, the Clintons initially criticized the embargo because of its negative impact on the economy of New York. However, De Witt Clinton's public attack on the law angered many Republican Party activists and provided an issue for anti-Clinton Republicans to use in their efforts to capture control of the party. De Witt Clinton's handpicked gubernatorial candidate, Daniel Tompkins, solidly supported the presidential measure. After realizing his opposition to the embargo jeopardized his control of the party, Clinton backtracked and endorsed the law. This prevented a rebellion of pro-embargo Clintonians but drove his close political associate and editor of the Republican leaning *New York American Citizen* James Cheetham into the political wilderness. He was no longer a spokesman for the Clintons and his past positions alienated him from the Lewisites and Tammany. Cheetham tried to form his own faction, consisting of Irish Americans, and he used his newspaper to harass both the Clintonians and Tammany in New York City.

In spite of the resurgence of Federalism produced by the embargo, Republicans continued to fight for control of the party. After the 1809 Federalist victory, warring factions in the Republican Party negotiated a compromise in the summer of 1809 and during the spring elections in 1810. Federalist success drove them together, but their deep hostility prevented a lasting reconciliation. Compromise did not come easily. Tammany's organizing chairman, Mathew L. Davis, expecting Clintonian opposition to Tammany's pick for Assembly candidates swore "an eternal war against every mother son of them." Caught between the Clintonians and the Federalists, Lewisites described themselves as a "poor set of true Republicans between Hawk and Buzzard." Warring Republicans managed to strike a deal. Clintonians in New York City backed the Tammany slate for the Assembly. All Republicans supported the reelection of Daniel Tompkins for governor and the Clintonians endorsed Morgan Lewis for State Senator. For the

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<sup>7</sup> Jerome Mushkat, *Tammany: Evolution of a Political Machine, 1789-1865* (Syracuse, 1971), 25-40. For further background on Republican divisions, see Craig Hanyan, *De Witt Clinton: Years of Molding, 1769-1807* (New York, 1988); Steven Siry, *De Witt Clinton and the American Political Economy, Sectionalism, Politics, and American Ideology, 1787-1828* (New York, 1990); Craig and Mary Hanyan, *De Witt Clinton and the Rise of the People's Men*, (New York, 1996); Also see Tammany Society Toasts, Box 25, Tammania, Kilroe Collection, Special Collections, Columbia University, New York City; Gustavus Myers, *History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917, reprint 1968), Chapters six and seven.

first time since 1801 Republicans waged a political campaign united by their mutual hostility to the Federalists.<sup>8</sup>

With the Republican comeback in 1810, open warfare broke out anew. The 1811 race for Lieutenant-Governor provided an opportunity for a test of strength. Clintonians easily defeated Tammany's Marinus Willett and Federalist Nicholas Fish by reelecting De Witt Clinton. However, when Clinton ran for the presidency in 1812, opposed he war and sought an alliance with the Federalists he split his followers. Prominent Clintonians, like Governor Tompkins and Martin Van Buren abandoned Clinton. Many of his Irish American supporters who hated the British favored the war and rejected Clinton. By 1813, his opponents within the Republican Party seized control as Madisonians, and Clinton's quixotic and foolish attempt to block Governor Tompkins' reelection in 1813 backfired destroying his credibility for the remainder of the war. President Madison got his revenge against Clinton by dismissing Clintonians from all federal offices in New York. Politically isolated, Clinton depended on the Federalists to retain the Mayor's office in New York City. Just as Burr in 1804 and Lewis in 1807, De Witt Clinton discovered that political alliances with Federalists alienated Republican voters.

While Republicans fought each other Federalists faced their own internal disputes. Between 1798-1800 Federalists split into pro-Adams and Hamiltonian factions. The defeat of Adams and death of Hamilton ended this division. Younger members of the party disagreed with their more deferential bound elders and proved quite willing to reach out to the masses and politic with the same vigor and democratic rhetoric of their rivals in the Republican Party. In Albany County a repeated conflict developed between the Dutch Americans who controlled nominations and the desire of more recent arrivals from New England for a share of political positions. Disagreements also surfaced over allocation of patronage appointments when Federalists won in 1809 and 1812-13. An especially bitter battle developed in 1810 because a nationalist faction emerged in New York City that endorsed the foreign policies of President Madison. Led by Oliver Wolcott, Jr and Peter Radcliff a faction within the Federalists wanted the party to adopt a more "American" stance and expel the Tories from the party. Other Federalists, like Robert Troup and Gouverneur Morris, strongly disagreed with endorsing foreign policies promoted by Madison, a man of "not only reprehensible but impeachable conduct." Historian Lee Benson's research into Jacksonian New York asked for other historians to look for the ethno-social conflict in political loyalties. Within the Federalist and Republican parties this appeared in the Yankee Dutch conflict among the Federalists in Albany County and Yorker Irish split in the New York City Republican Party. In 1814, a group of Federalists led by Oliver

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<sup>8</sup> Mathew L. Davis to William P. Van Ness, 2 January 1810, Mathew L. Davis Papers, Misc. Mss., New-York Historical Society (N-YHS), New York City; Jonathan Thompson to John Gardiner, 20 April 1810, Malcolm Wiley Collection, University of Minnesota; Also, see Mushkat, *Tammany*, 39-40; Henry Rutgers to Daniel Tompkins, 21 March 1810, Derek Brinckerhoff to Daniel Tompkins, 9 March 1810, Box 6, Daniel Tompkins Papers, NYSL; Martin Van Buren to De Witt Clinton, 9, 19 April 1810, De Witt Clinton Papers, Columbia University; John Kaminski, *George Clinton; Yeoman Politician of the New Republic* (Madison, Wisc., 1993), 270-74.

Wolcott and Gulian Verplanck broke with the Federalists in New York City and organized the pro-war American Federalist Party, nicknamed the Coodies.<sup>9</sup>

As an example of the generation gap between younger Federalists and the older members of the party the Federalist Party pamphlet of 1808 in Schenectady County revealed the fundamental differences. Federalists in Schenectady articulated in greater detail the rights of the citizens to dissent from government policies and throw out of office men who betrayed the public trust. American government was formed “for the people, and not the people for the government.” In the United States, “all power emanates from the people.” Schenectady Federalists articulated a vision of people’s role in government similar to the Republicans. While many of the older Federalists believed in a speaking elite and silent democracy---deferential politics, Schenectady Federalists expressed a commitment to the popular will and veneration of popular sovereignty. Older Federalists, like John Jay and Gouverneur Morris, complained of the Republicans courting popular opinion and flattering the multitude. Schenectady’s Federalists willingly courted public opinion. They encouraged the public to criticize the government and vote. By encouraging the public to participate in the political process, Federalists speeded the democratization of New York’s political structure.<sup>10</sup>

From 1801-1807 the Federalists remained confined to their areas of political strength, St. Lawrence County, and parts of the North Country; Southern Tier, Upper Hudson Valley, parts of the Mohawk Valley, especially Oneida County, and the lower three wards of New York City. By making deals with Aaron Burr in 1804 and Morgan Lewis in 1807 they tried unsuccessfully to play Republican factions off against one another. Their coalitions with the Burrties in 1804 and Lewisites in 1807 failed to win them political power. Between 1801 and 1808, the Federalists were a party in search of an issue. In 1807, Federalists turned to nativism. They hoped native New Yorkers’ hostility toward Irish Catholics would provide the catalyst for a political resurrection. The Federalist campaign of 1807 combined nativism with criticism of the foreign policies of President Jefferson. For the Federalists, the Irish symbolized the worst evils of Republican rule. To the Federalists the Irish were anti-British and would embroil the United

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<sup>9</sup> David Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism* (New York, 1965); Ronald Formisano, “Deferential-Participant Politics: The Early Republic’s Political Culture, 1789-1840, *American Political Science Review*, 68(1974): 473-87. Rudolph and Margaret Pasler, *New Jersey’s Federalists* (Cranbury, N.J., 1975); Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Frederick Wolcott, 7 December 1809, Alice Wolcott Collection, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield Connecticut; Robert Troup to Nathaniel Pendleton, 23 January 1810, Rufus King Papers, N-YHS; Gouverneur Morris to Abraham Van Vechten, 6 January 1810, Vol 19, Reel 3, Gouverneur Morris Papers, Library of Congress; Abraham Van Vechten to Ebenezer Foote, 13 January 1810, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL; Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy; New York a Test Case* (Princeton, 1961)

<sup>10</sup> Schenectady County Federalist Party, *A Report* (Schenectady, 1808), 3,4, 6,7, 10, 11, 14. Schenectady City Federalist Committee to Timothy Pickering, 25 May 1808, No. 329, Reel 28, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; John Winne to Abraham Ten Broeck, 15 April 1808, Ten Broeck Family Papers, Albany Institute; Robert Troup to Rufus King, 7 March 1808, King Papers, N-YHS.

States in a second war with Great Britain. To stress their Americanism and opposition to immigration, Federalists became the American Party for 1807. Privately, Federalists expressed the same concerns about the Irish as they did publicly during the 1807 campaign. David Ogden, a lawyer, and son-in-law of Gouverneur Morris, feared the Federalists could not carry New York City, because “this city is completely ruled by Irishmen.” During the 1807 campaign Irish Republicans and Federalists fought each other on the streets of the Seventh Ward. Street brawls were not unusual in the sometime chaos of politics in New York City. Ironically, the Lewisites joined on the anti-Irish bandwagon in 1807. Supporters of Governor Lewis accused the Irish of brawling, drunkenness, crime, and clannishness. Federalist William Van Ness optimistically reported that “the conduct of the Irish and French raised [the party] beyond all former example” Van Ness could not count. Federalists only picked up five seats in the Assembly from 1806, and the Clintonian Republicans won a decisive victory over the Lewisites and Federalists. Federalist William Wilson blamed the Federalist defeat on the “United Irishmen and French Jacobins.”<sup>11</sup>

President Thomas Jefferson’s foreign policy decisions turned around the fortunes of New York’s Federalists and gave the Federalists the first real chance in a decade to limit Republican domination of the state. The deterioration in Anglo-American relations after the *Chesapeake Affair* in June 1807 led the President to ask Congress to adopt the embargo on trade. Duplicating the tactics of the Jay’s Treaty fight, Republicans campaigned on Anglophobia, American nationalism, and the legacy of the American Revolution. In 1806, during the *Leander Affair*, Republicans successfully manipulated American hostility toward the British, but the adoption of the embargo on trade in December 1807 proved a Republican foreign and domestic policy blunder. The economic hardship produced by the embargo was more important to New Yorkers than appeals to Anglophobia, the Revolution, or patriotism. Farmers in upstate New York engaged in widespread smuggling of produce and livestock to Canada for shipment via Montreal to Europe. Even in New York City and Long Island farmers and merchants managed to smuggle goods aboard British ships off New York Harbor or in Long Island Sound. Profit proved more persuasive than patriotism. In upstate, smuggling became so widespread that President Jefferson declared the Lake Champlain region of New York and Vermont in a state of insurrection on 19 April 1808 and authorized the use of the militia and federal troops to stop the smuggling. Jefferson also wanted to declare the Oswego region and neighboring communities on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence in a state of insurrection, but Governor Tompkins fearing the political consequences of a second proclamation of insurrection persuaded Jefferson to refrain from issuing the proclamation.

Fearing that the embargo would lead to an Anglo-American war Barent Gardenier urged fellow Federalists to create a public outcry against war in the state legislature “to catch the public ear.” Federalists introduced an amendment to the Assembly’s reply to the speech by Governor Tompkins assailing the embargo and the President’s handling of Franco-American relations. Then, on 28 March 1808, at the Albany meeting of the state’s Federalists, the party

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<sup>11</sup> *New York People’s Friend*, 2 May 1807; *New York Evening Post*, 1 May 1807; David Ogden to William Meredith, 6 May 1807, Meredith Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Robert Troup to Rufus King, 24 April 1807, King Papers, N-YHS; Daniel Hale to Ebenezer Foote, 7 April 1807, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL; William Van Ness to Ebenezer Foote, 11 April 1807, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL; William Wilson to Ebenezer Foote, 3 May 1807, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL.

adopted an election address attacking the embargo and the foreign policies of President Jefferson. Their attack worked and Federalists doubled their seats in the Assembly, jumping from twenty-four to forty-seven, and increased their share of the Congressional delegation from two in 1806 to eight in 1808 (8 of 17). For the first time since 1800 Federalists elected a State Senator. Jefferson's foreign policy and the impact of the embargo on the lives of New Yorkers brought back the Federalists from political oblivion. As one example, the embargo destroyed the prosperity of Hudson, "sounding the death knell to a booming economy." As Martin Van Buren and other Republicans, like former governor Morgan Lewis admitted "the embargo and the idea of French influence produced a most extraordinary effect."<sup>12</sup>

Events during the 1808 election suggest the chaos of New York politics during the early national period. Political emotions ran high in Columbia County in April 1808. Federalist Elisha Williams challenged Martin Van Buren to a debate on the embargo. To insure a sympathetic audience Van Buren brought Republicans from Claverack and Hudson. When Van Buren arrived with his Republican legion Williams refused to debate him. Republicans took control of the meeting hall and held a pro-embargo meeting while Williams and the Federalists regrouped in another part of the building. Van Buren told De Witt Clinton that the "Federalists feared a debate." During the first party system political opponents rarely debated and showed up at meetings to heckle or silence the political opposition.<sup>13</sup>

A typical incident took place in New York City in late April when a donnybrook broke out at a meeting of pro-Federalist sailors. When Federalist Cadwallader Colden delivered an anti-embargo speech, a group of Republican sailors downed him out. In reaction to "the tumult and confusion," pro-Federalist sailors left while the Republicans took over the hall adopting pro-embargo resolutions. In retaliation, a mob of Federalists marched into the heavily Republican Sixth Ward carrying an American flag, shouting "no Republicans, down with Jacobins." Two days of post-election rioting by Republicans incensed the Federalists against the Irish. On 28 April 1808, a mob of 600 Irish Americans and Irish immigrants marched down the Sixth Ward shouting kill the Federalists. Rioting on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> led to the deaths of two men. William Coleman, the Federalist editor of the *New York Evening Post*, blamed "the tribe fresh from the bogs of Ireland."<sup>14</sup>

Many Federalists did not understand the nature of their political resurrection. Most of their votes came from citizens rejecting the foreign policies of Thomas Jefferson and the embargo, not embracing the principles of Federalism. Optimistic about the future Federalist

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<sup>12</sup> Barent Gardenier to Rufus King, 26 January 1808, Rufus King to Barent Gardenier, 24 January 1808, King Papers, N-YHS; *Journal of the Assembly*, 31<sup>st</sup> Sess., 1808, 45-7; Federal Republican Party, *Address to the Electors* (Albany, 1808); Francis Adrian van der Kemp to John Adams, 17 March 1808, Reel 405, Adams Family Papers, MHS; Robert Troup to William Jones, 27 February 1808, Pulteney Estate Letter book, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York; Brooke, *Columbia Rising*, 330; Morgan Lewis to James Madison, 16 May 1808, Reel 10, James Madison Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Van Buren to De Witt Clinton, 16 April 1808, De Witt Clinton Papers, Columbia University; Also, for Van Buren's vigorous defense of the embargo, Donald Cole, *Martin Van Buren, and the American Political System* (Princeton, 1984), 32

<sup>14</sup> *New York Evening Post*, 26-30 April 1808; *New York American Citizen*, 28 April 1808.

Henry Van Schaack predicted we “shall do much better than we have done now.” Jefferson’s reliance on the embargo in 1808-09 turned Van Schaack’s prediction into reality. Republican appeals revealed a siege mentality. Failure to support the embargo warned New York City Republicans, “*threatened the existence of our Republic.*” Republicans portrayed the embargo as a test between the free republican government in America and the tyrants of Europe. As David Gardiner argued, “we have asked for nothing but justice...which our independence and honor will never allow us to relinquish.” They blamed the failure of the embargo to successfully pressure the British into respecting American neutral rights on the Federalist traitors in league with the British. Republicans demanded the expulsion of the Tories from the United States, and some advocated invading Canada and driving out the Tories who settled in British North America after the Revolution. Once again, Republicans wrapped themselves in the legacy of the Revolution and Anglophobia to motivate voters to ignore the economic consequences of the embargo and counter the upsurge in support for the Federalists. Tammany could not put aside its hostility toward the Irish and refused to nominate Irish Catholics which amused the Federalists. “A deadly animosity seems to have arisen,” Federalist John Foote noted “between the imported and home-made Jacobins.”<sup>15</sup>

Public hostility to the embargo and Republican divisions encouraged Federalists to increase their organizational activity. Beginning in July 1808, Gulian Verplanck, Richard Varick, and Isaac Sebring established a chapter of the Washington Benevolent Society in New York City. In Stillwater in Saratoga County younger Federalists joined the United Brethren of Washington. Younger Federalists created the Whig Society in Troy, because younger Federalists wanted to preserve “everything dear and sacred” from corrupt Republican rule. In New York City, a split temporarily developed between younger Federalists led by Gulian Verplanck who wanted to exclude former Tories and adopt a more nationalistic expression for American neutral rights. Accepting the advice of William Coleman and Robert Troup Federalists buried their differences and united to defeat the Republicans. Federalist organizational activities brought voters out to condemn the embargo and the foreign policy of President Jefferson and later President James Madison. Federalist organized meeting throughout the state attacked the embargo and the new enforcement act as unconstitutional danger to American liberties. Using the discontent created by the embargo induced depression Federalists turned that state election into a referendum on Jeffersonian foreign policy. Their strategy worked winning five of the eight contested State Senate seats and 63 of the 112 Assembly seats. Federalists won a majority in the Assembly for the first time in ten years. In the 1809 state elections in New York a majority of voters repudiated the foreign policy of President Jefferson. Surviving evidence suggests that the embargo increased voter turnout. Political competition between Federalists and Republicans over the wisdom of the

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Van Schaack to Stephen Van Rensselaer, 2 May 1808, #2180, NYSL. Also, see Dirck Ten Broeck to Abraham Ten Broeck, 9 September 1808, Box 1, Ten Broeck Family Papers, Albany Institute and Henry Glen and the Schenectady Federalist Committee to Timothy Pickering, 27 May 1808, Reel 28, Timothy Pickering Papers, MHS; *New York American Citizen*, 9. 12 July 1808; *Kingston Plebian*, 22 November 1808; New York City Republicans, *Address of the Republicans of the City and County of New York, September 15, 1808* (New York, 1808); David Gardiner to John L. Gardiner, 18 July 1808, Malcolm Wiley Collection, MnU; John Foote to Ebenezer Foote, 14 April 1809, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL.

embargo brought voters to the polls. In 1809, the increase in voter participation benefited the Federalists because of their opposition to the embargo <sup>16</sup>

New York's 1810 election showed the importance of foreign policy issues in local and state politics. President Madison's foreign policy dominated the Federalist controlled Assembly and Republican Governor Daniel Tompkins. Federalists and Republicans debated foreign policy over the summer of 1809 and in the November Common Council elections in New York City. Madison's foreign policy became the main issue for Federalists and Republicans in the spring 1810 elections for the state legislature, governor, and Congress. Republicans called the Federalists Tories, lackeys of the British, and claimed the Federalists wanted war with France. Their opponents viewed continued Republican rule as a disaster that would lead to more embargoes and war with Great Britain. The 1810 elections revealed the connections between foreign policy and local and state politics.

In November 1809 New York City voters went to the polls to elect the Common Council. Federalists and Republican ran their campaign not on local issues but on foreign policy. Editor Zachariah Lewis predicted that Federalists would have the support of "of all who deprecate a useless embargo and unnecessary war." Republicans described their political opponents as Tories and agents of Great Britain. Both parties claimed to inherit the Revolutionary legacy. Ninth Ward Federalists reminded voters "they remembered the plains of Lexington and the bloody field at Monmouth, where Federalists" led our patriots to victory. Republican divisions between Tammany and Clintonians aided the Federalists who won fifteen of the twenty Council seats. Federalists interpreted their victory as evidence the people would reject men who are "advocates of embargoes, non-intercourse, and war." <sup>17</sup>

The 1810 campaign began with a direct confrontation between the Federalists in the Assembly and Governor Tompkins over supporting or condemning the foreign policy of President Madison. During the 1810 election campaign Republicans denounced former British Minister Francis Jackson for "his vile attempts...to evade...the just claims of our government." To the Republicans, Federalists put the interests of Great Britain first, ahead of American neutral rights. Federalists argued that Republicans followed the orders of the Jacobin clubs of France. Republicans retook a majority in the Assembly and Federalist congressional seats dropped from eight to five. Federalists won 41 Assembly seats. Their only surprise gain was six of the eleven

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<sup>16</sup> Albany Federalist Committee, to Ebenezer Foote, 17 January 1809, Ebenezer Foote Papers, Library of Congress; Fischer, *American Conservatism*, 60-61, 83, 118-20; Dixon Ryan Fox, "Washington Benevolent Society," *Columbia University Quarterly*, 21 (January 1919): 31; Stillwater United Brethren, of the Washington School to the Trojan Whig Society, 5 April 1809, Jacob Houghton to Waterford Federal Young Men, 15 April 1809, Broadside, Trojan Whig Society, Albany Federal Young Men to the Trojan Whig Society, 20 March 1809, Oneida American Whig Society to Trojan Whig Society, 20 April 1809, Whig Society Papers, NYSL; Robert Troup to Rufus King, 4 April 1809, King Papers, N-YHS; William Coleman to Timothy Pickering, 14 January 1809, Reel 29, Pickering Papers, MHS; Cadwallader Colden to Ebenezer Foote, 11 April 1809, Ebenezer Foote Papers, NYSL.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 21-24. 1809; *New York American Citizen*, 26 November to 1 December 1809; Muskat, *Tammany*, 39; George Newbold to n.n. 24 November 1809, BV Newbold, N-YHS.

seats from New York City. Republicans blamed the eight hundred African American voters and made plans to restrict their right to vote. Governor Tompkins easily won reelection. Without the embargo the efforts of the Federalists to put the blame President Madison for the failure of Anglo-American relations failed. This time, attacking England proved more effective than censuring President Madison and Republican foreign policy.<sup>18</sup>

An apparent improvement in Franco-American relation in September 1810 and the continued stalemate in Anglo-American relations troubled New York's Federalists. After President Madison declared on 2 November 1810 that the French had repealed their decrees that negatively impacted American neutral rights Federalists worried about a further deterioration in Anglo-American relations. In the state elections of 1811, both parties attempted to use foreign policy against their opponents. Anglophobia worked better for the Republicans and the Federalist critique of Madison's foreign policies with France and Great Britain failed to move the voters. Republicans retained control of the Assembly and De Witt Clinton won election as Lieutenant-Governor.<sup>19</sup>

When Anglo-American relations continued to deteriorate President Madison opted for a new embargo and war in the spring of 1812. A new embargo allowed Federalists to take power winning a majority of seats once again in the 1812 spring state elections. Foreign policy dominated the campaign. In the spring of 1812, Congress approved a new ninety-day embargo. When news reached New York City on 3 April 1812, fifty ships rushed to leave port and as Jonathan Ogden noted "a like confusion I have never seen." The embargo and threat of war became the major issue in the election. Thanks to the foreign policy decisions of President Madison, the Federalists were back in power winning three Senate seats and a majority (60 seats) in the Assembly. Results of the election suggested a majority of New York voters rejected renewed commercial restrictions and war. Divisions about the war, and initially splits within Republican ranks became apparent when eleven of the fourteen Congressmen present during the war vote along with one of the state's U.S. Senators voted against war. Clintonian Republicans initially opposed war. Four Federalists and seven Republican congressmen voted against war. Later, at the end of the year when New Yorkers went to the polls to elect members of Congress they selected 19 anti-war Federalists, one anti-war Republican, and seven pro-war Republicans. New York sent the largest anti-war delegation of any state to Congress suggesting that a majority of the electorate in New York rejected President Madison's decision to go to war.<sup>20</sup>

While Governor Tompkins won re-election in 1813 his vote totals were half of 1810 and the Federalists campaigning against the war retained their majority in the Assembly in the spring

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<sup>18</sup> *Albany Balance*, February-March 1810; Samuel L. Mitchell to Catherine Mitchell, 13 February 1810, Samuel Mitchell Papers, Museum of the City of New York; Hugh Hastings, ed., *The Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of New York State, 1807-1817* (Albany, 1898-1902), Volume II, 238-40; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 7 May 1810; *New York Public Advertiser*, 8 May 1810.

<sup>19</sup> See Harvey Strum, "The 1811 Election in New York," *National Social Science Journal*, 57:2 (2022): 78-85.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Ogden to Holsons and Bolton, 4 April 1812 and Jonathan Ogden to Robert Ogden, 4 April 1812, Jonathan Ogden Letterbook N-YHS; Nathaniel Griswold to Captain H Smith, 6 and 7 April 1812, War of 1812 folder, Box 1, Hurd Papers, Yale University Library.,

1813 state elections. Public sentiment changed in the winter of 1813-14 because of British raids on the Niagara Frontier forcing thousands of New Yorkers to flee eastward to the comparative safety of Batavia to avoid the British and their Native American allies. Reacting to the reality that New York had become a major battle ground of the war, voters elected twenty-one pro-war Republicans to Congress in the spring of 1814, and Republicans won two-thirds of the Assembly seats. However, the less than glorious outcome of the war allowed Federalists to make one more political comeback denouncing the war and the foreign policy of President Madison. Federalists picked up twenty seats and almost tied the Assembly at 64 Republicans to 62 Federalists. Republican 1814 majority of thirty-two seats dropped to two in 1815, hardly a ringing endorsement of the War of 1812. In looking at New York politics between 1790 and 1815 four themes dominate---impact of foreign policy on state and local politics, the factionalism of the two political parties, especially among Republicans, chaos in the election process and afterward, as the 1808 election demonstrated, and high voter turnout due to the increased competition between the Federalists and Republicans.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For some Republican opposition to war see Thomas Sammons to John Lansing, 8 May, 17 June 1812, Thomas Sammons Papers, Fort Johnson Historical Society, Fort Johnson, New York; Samuel Mitchell to Tibbits and Lane, 19 May 1812, Tibbits Family Papers, NYSL; Pierre Van Cortlandt to Edmund Genet, 1 June 1812, Reel 9, Edmund Genet Papers, Library of Congress. For 1815 see the pro-war Republican Members of the Legislature, *Address to the Electors of the State of New York, April 10, 1815*, (Albany 1815; *Poughkeepsie Republican Herald*, March-April 1815; For Federalists, see *Onondaga Register*, February-March 1815; *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 22 February-1 March 1815; *New York Evening Post*, February-March 1815.