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Author(s): ANDREW J. B. FAGAL

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ANDREW J. B. FAGAL

ON 3 May 1813 the British burned Maryland's Principio Iron Works to the ground. Within six months, however, the foundry's owner had the furnace back in blast and had entered into a new contract with the federal government to produce cannon for the U.S. Navy.¹ Rear Admiral George Cockburn reportedly said of his short-lived victory, "the Americans know better how to make guns than to use them."² His comment opens up a line of inquiry into the onset of the War of 1812 that has not been adequately explored by scholars.

Almost as soon as the United States declared war on Great Britain, contemporaries began hotly debating its origins.³ Historical assessments have been no less divided. Scholars have alternately offered up impressment, trade restriction, Indian war, western expansion, economic depression, national honor, the breakdown of diplomacy, and, more recently, the publication of John Henry's mysterious dealings alongside a pervasive "conspiratorial Anglophobia" as the primary

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¹For owner Samuel Hughes's contract to supply the federal government, see the Baltimore *Federal Gazette*, 15 July 1814.

²Ralph E. Eshelman, Scott S. Sheads, and Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812 in the Chesapeake: A Reference Guide to Historic Sites in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 178.

³See, e.g., the Republican response by "Messala" in William Duane's *Aurora General Advertiser* (18 February 1813) to Governor Caleb Strong's message to the Massachusetts legislature. Strong had incorrectly pegged the war's origin to the British Orders in Council, "Messala" claimed, while the Royal Navy's impressment of American seamen was the true cause. For the Federalist interpretation of impending war as a ploy to conquer Canada, see *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), 23 January 1812, and as a way to bolster manufacturing, 10 and 28 January 1812.

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causes for the conflict.⁴ None of these issues, however, was new in 1812; each dated back to the Revolution. Perhaps a more pertinent question, then, is the one Bradford Perkins raised fifty years ago: why did Americans not go to war earlier than they did?⁵ What conditions, in other words, allowed the United States to assert itself on the world stage in 1812 but not before? The resilience of the Principio Iron Works offers a clue.



Nearly forty years prior to the 1812 declaration of war against Great Britain, American policymakers and government officials struggled to meet the demands of securing the country's newfound independence. During the early years of the American Revolution, the new states

⁴Henry Adams questioned the maritime explanation of impressment but did not offer an alternate explanation (*History of the United States of America During the Administrations of James Madison* [1890; New York: Library of America, 1986], chap. 7). In the early twentieth century, historians of the progressive school began to associate Western expansionism with the fear of a pan-Indian confederacy armed and funded by Great Britain: see Louis M. Hacker, "Western Land Hunger and the War of 1812: A Conjecture," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 10 (March 1924): 365–95, and Julius W. Pratt, *The Expansionists of 1812* (1925; Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1957). In the early 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, scholars emphasized the breakdown in Anglo-American diplomacy: see Albert Z. Carr, *The Coming of War: An Account of the Remarkable Events Leading to the War of 1812* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1960), and Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805–1812* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961). Great Britain's maritime policies and the failure of American economic coercion was advanced by Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), while Norman K. Risjord pointed to national honor in "1812: Conservatives, War Hawks, and the Nation's Honor," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 18 (April 1961): 196–210. Roger Brown posited a multicausal interpretation in *The Republic in Peril: 1812* (1964; New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971). Thereafter, most studies found themselves consigned to particular case studies to either prove or disprove existing theories: see, e.g., Victor Sapio, *Pennsylvania & the War of 1812* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970). With the advent of cliometric methods, Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler and Robert L. Ivie propounded an econometric model showing that the Republican Party had formed a cohesive voting bloc in support of its leaders: *Congress Declares War: Rhetoric, Leadership, and Partisanship in the Early Republic* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983). Recently the Canadian expansion theory alongside maritime issues has been revived by J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783–1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 31–47; Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 25; and Lawrence A. Peskin, "Conspiratorial Anglophobia and the War of 1812," *Journal of American History* 98 (December 2011): 648–49.

⁵Bradford Perkins, ed., *The Causes of the War of 1812: National Honor or National Interest?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 3; see also, Hatzenbuehler and Ivie, *Congress Declares War*, p. 8.

and the national government, saddled as they were with the responsibility of arming and outfitting their militias and the Continental Army, adopted a variety of measures to foster the domestic production of military supplies. They lifted trade embargoes on imported war materiel, offered bounties and contracts to private manufacturers, confiscated loyalist property, and created publicly owned and operated factories. While the Franco-American alliance and the maturation of the army's military supplies department proved adequate to the demands of the Revolutionary War, thereafter doubts lingered about the United States' capacity to repel a military assault. The country's first Secretary at War, Benjamin Lincoln, reflected in a 1783 memorandum to Congress, "The modes which shall be adopted to complete the magazines with a full supply of stores—and the manner of keeping up the supply will, in my opinion, mark the future character of the new Empire."⁶

In his first address to Congress, President George Washington echoed Vegetius' ancient adage, "If you wish for peace, prepare for war." Congress, he advised, "should promote such manufactories, as tend to render [the U.S.] independent of others for essential . . . military supplies."⁷ The next day, the House of Representatives requested that Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the Treasury, draw up a plan to address the president's recommendation.⁸ Although producing domestic military supplies was only one component of Hamilton's "Report on Manufactures," the document embodied two radically different visions for the new nation's future war-making capabilities.⁹ The first was articulated by Tench Coxe, Treasury's assistant secretary and an early drafter of the report. Coxe reasoned that the current "season of profound peace" had lowered demand for war materiel.

⁶Benjamin Lincoln, Memorandum regarding Arsenalns, 3 March 1783, *Papers of the Continental Congress*, reel 45, item 38, p. 289.

⁷"From George Washington to the United States Senate and House of Representatives, 8 January 1790," *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, ed. Dorothy Twohig, 16 vols. to date (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987), 4:543–49.

⁸"House of Representatives Journal," *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America*, ed. Linda Grant De Pauw et al., 20 vols. to date (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 3:265.

⁹For the relationship between the "Report on Manufactures," revenue generating tariffs, and military expansion, see Gerald Clarfield, "Protecting the Frontiers: Defense Policy and the Tariff Question in the First Washington Administration," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 32 (July 1975): 443–64, and Douglas A. Irwin, "The Aftermath of Hamilton's 'Report on Manufactures,'" *Journal of Economic History* 64 (September 2004): 800–821.

To ensure that supplies were available when future needs required, Coxe counseled Congress to protect private, domestic “manufactories of military supplies,” such as arms, cannon, gunpowder, and sail cloth, by imposing high tariffs on imported commodities.¹⁰ For Coxe, the national government should exert its authority to tax to encourage private interests to serve the public good.

Hamilton, on the other hand, believed that the central government should wholly own the means of military production. After the government had succeeded in establishing its public credit, he insisted, securing domestic arms manufactures was “the next great work to be accomplished.” Hamilton did not trust the market. In the short term, perhaps, contracts with private suppliers and modest increases in the tariff rate would suffice. But in the long run, he opined, “there appears to be an improvidence, in leaving these essential instruments of national defence to the casual speculations of individual adventure.” Although in principle “manufactories on the immediate account of Government are to be avoided,” Hamilton conceded, constructing and maintaining the nation’s arms and military equipment “seems to be one of the few exceptions, which that rule admits.”¹¹

In 1794 Congress approved the creation of national armories at Springfield, Massachusetts, and Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and established Treasury Department control over contracting.¹² As Federalist Congressman William Fitzsimmons of Pennsylvania and Secretary of War Henry Knox understood during the 1794 debate over the

¹⁰Tench Coxe, “Tench Coxe’s Draft on the Report on the Subject of Manufactures,” in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 10:17.

¹¹Alexander Hamilton, “Report on Manufactures,” *Hamilton Papers*, 10:291, 317. Many historians, although they do not deal with the military aspects of Hamilton’s report, have noted Hamilton’s general ambivalence about directly fostering American domestic manufacturers. See John R. Nelson Jr., *Liberty and Property: Political Economy and Policymaking in the New Nation, 1789–1812* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 42–48; Lawrence Peskin, “How the Republicans Learned to Love Manufacturing: The First Parties and the ‘New Economy,’” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (Summer 2002): 235–37; and Andrew Shankman, “‘A New Thing on Earth’: Alexander Hamilton, Pro-Manufacturing Republicans, and the Democratization of American Political Economy,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Autumn 2003): 323–26.

¹²“An Act to provide for the erecting and repairing of arsenals and magazines, and for other purposes,” *Statutes at Large*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1794), p. 352; “An Act prohibiting for a limited time the Exportation of Arms and Ammunition, and encouraging the Importation of the same,” *Statutes at Large*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1794), pp. 369–70; “An Act to establish the Office of Purveyor of Public Supplies,” *Statutes at Large*, 3rd Congress, 2nd Sess. (1794), p. 419.

national armories, the cost of arms in the domestic market was high.¹³ Therefore, protecting the arms industry was not in the nation's best interests, and so they and their fellow Federalists invited overseas competition to safeguard a steady flow of military hardware.¹⁴ During the Washington and Adams administrations, to secure current supplies within the country and to augment them with materiel from abroad, all "cannon, muskets, pistols, bayonets, swords, cutlasses, musket balls, lead, bombs, grenados, gunpowder, sulphur or saltpetre" were barred from export and exempted from the tariff.¹⁵ Republican James Madison, in contrast, courted American manufacturing interests in his 1794 pamphlet *Political Observations*. The Republican Party "were as ready as any, to fortify our harbours, and fill our magazines and arsenals," he announced. "[T]hese were safe and requisite provisions for our permanent defence."¹⁶ While the Federalists sought to nationalize the arms industry by establishing arsenals and, until they were up and running, relying on imports to stabilize the cost of domestic military supplies, the Republicans favored policies designed to help private producers.

The Republican Party continued to court military manufacturing interests in the late 1790s. During the Quasi-War with France, Republican Congressmen Samuel Smith of Maryland and Matthew Lyon of Vermont both objected to the Federalist-backed renewal of the export ban and tariff exemption because they believed that these measures would harm cannon and shot manufacturers in their states.¹⁷ With the Springfield and Harpers Ferry armories established, however, and Navy Secretary Benjamin Stoddert's initiatives to acquire land for shipyards and islands for timber as well as to build a national

¹³*American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, Military Affairs*, 7 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832) 1:65.

¹⁴John Beale Bordley, *Sketches on Rotations of Crops, and other Rural Matters. To which are annexed, Intimations On Manufactures; on the Fruits of Agriculture; and on new Sources of Trade, Interfering with Products of the United States of America in Foreign Markets* (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1796), p. 71; Evans microfiche no. 30103.

¹⁵"An Act prohibiting for a limited time the Exportation of Arms and Ammunition, and encouraging the Importation of the same," signed 22 May 1794, *Statutes at Large*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1794), pp. 369–70.

¹⁶James Madison, *Political Observations* (Philadelphia, 1795), p. 11; Evans microfiche no. 29017. In his pamphlet, Madison referred to Republican support for "An act to provide for the Defence of certain Ports and Harbors in the United States," *Statutes at Large*, 3rd Cong., 1st Sess. (1794), pp. 345–46.

¹⁷*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 5th Cong., 1st Sess. (1797), pp. 248–50.

cannon foundry underway, Federalist policymakers could be reasonably confident that the national government would eventually produce all the war materiel it needed.¹⁸ Meanwhile, prominent Republicans such as George Logan of Pennsylvania lamented, “We are dependent on Great Britain for almost every Article of Clothing we wear, for a great part of the Furniture of our Houses, for the Instruments of our amusements, and for the means of our Defence.”¹⁹

In the wake of his success in the presidential election of 1800, Thomas Jefferson officially repudiated Alexander Hamilton’s political economy of war.²⁰ Although he did not decommission the armories at Springfield and Harpers Ferry, he accepted Tench Coxe’s recommendation that the federal government could, and should, use its coercive tax power to shape private interests, which in turn would benefit the public good. In 1779 Jefferson believed that “to make [arms] within ourselves then as well as the other implements of war, is as necessary as to make our bread within ourselves,” but the president’s former experience as governor of Virginia had revealed the limitations of Hamilton’s vision for a state-run military industry.²¹ During the Revolution, Virginia had built its own arms factory in Fredericksburg, but it quickly fell into disarray and never met the state’s need for arms. In response, Jefferson contracted with Peter Penet of Nantes, France, to construct a munitions works in Richmond.²² Penet’s failure to fulfill

¹⁸Merritt Roe Smith, “George Washington and the Establishment of the Harpers Ferry Armory,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 81 (October 1973): 415–36, and Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert’s War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798–1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 125–27.

¹⁹George Logan, *A Letter to the Citizens of Pennsylvania, On the Necessity of Promoting Agriculture, Manufactures, and the useful Arts* (Philadelphia: Patterson & Cochran, 1800), p. 16; Evans microfiche no. 37841.

²⁰For Jefferson’s dismantling of the Federalist military establishment, see Theodore J. Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson’s Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801–1809* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), and Samuel Watson, “Trusting to the ‘Chapter of Accidents’: Contingency, Necessity, and Self-Constraint in Jeffersonian National Security Policy,” *Journal of Military History* 76 (October 2012): 973–1000.

²¹Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Harrison, 30 October 1779, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd et al., 40 vols. to date (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 3:126.

²²The factory’s woes are revealed in a series of letters between November 1780 and April 1781: see *Jefferson Papers*, 4:119, 4:327–28, 4:304–5, 4:430–31, 4:549–50, 5:11, and 5:355. The “Contract between the State of Virginia and Peter Penet, Wendel & Company,” 22 July 1779, is in *Jefferson Papers*, 3:49. Penet failed to recruit workmen from France, as promised; see Peter Penet to the War Office, Philadelphia, 20 May

the contract did not alter Jefferson's view about the rightness of the private option.²³ Two decades later, now-president Jefferson asked Congress whether "the idea of establishing works for the fabrication of cannon and other military articles by the public" was preferable to "purchasing at market, where competition brings every thing to its proper level of price and quality."²⁴ The market to which Jefferson alluded in 1802 was not *laissez-faire*; it was protected. In encouraging private domestic producers to compete with one another for government patronage, Jefferson alerted members of his party that his administration would continue to reverse the military and economic policies favored by the Federalists.

In 1803, when John Rutledge Jr. of South Carolina spearheaded a Federalist attempt to remove tariffs on arms and munitions imports, a coalition of Republicans from Massachusetts, Virginia, and the mid-Atlantic states supported their president and narrowly defeated the bill.²⁵ Opposing the measure, Republican Congressman John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, favored "encouraging manufactures" instead, as did William Eustis of Massachusetts, Madison's future secretary of war, who predicted that if the resolution passed, "the manufacturers of arms must become manufacturers of horse shoes."²⁶ In a petition to Congress, arms manufacturers in Lancaster County warned that with a vote in the affirmative, "the government of the United States will crush this manufacture in its infant establishment."²⁷ In late 1805, the House revisited the 1790s ban on exporting arms and munitions, but the corresponding tariff duties were not on the table. When Federalist Josiah Quincy questioned the process, Republican Jacob Crowninshield responded that lifting the protective measure "might . . . injure our manufactures in a degree not

1780, *Papers of the Continental Congress*, reel 100, item 78, vol. 18, p. 291, and Penet to Jefferson, 20 May 20 1780, *Jefferson Papers*, 3:385.

²³See Jefferson's communications with Patrick Henry, John Jay, and Henry Knox in *Jefferson Papers*, 8:68, 8:213, 8:507, 8:455, 9:214, and 15:422.

²⁴Thomas Jefferson, "To the Senate and the House of Representatives," 2 February 1802, *Jefferson Papers*, 36:499.

²⁵*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 7th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1803), p. 425.

²⁶*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 7th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1803), pp. 391, 394.

²⁷*Memorial of Sundry Gun Manufacturers of the Borough of Lancaster, in the State of Pennsylvania* (Washington, D.C.: William Duane & Son, 1803), p. 4; Shaw & Shoemaker no. 5349.

contemplated. We certainly manufactured a great quantity of gunpowder and muskets." In other words, the industry was producing military supplies in such quantities that surpluses might be sold overseas, but tampering with market protections threatened to disrupt the industry's healthy growth.²⁸

The Republicans' political economy of war received a significant boost when Jefferson appointed Tench Coxe to be Purveyor of Public Supplies in 1803. The position gave Coxe, the Republicans' primary theoretician of peacetime war preparation, the power and responsibility to contract for all goods on behalf of the army, a role of uncharacteristic power within the early republic's limited structures of governance. As Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin tersely commented, "several hundred thousand dollars pass annually through his hands."²⁹ In years of peace, the purveyor was free to disburse between one-quarter and one-third of the War Department's budget without congressional interference.³⁰ Federal patronage, in the form of military contracts, would eventually play a defining role in leading the country toward a second conflict with Great Britain as Coxe used his official influence to promote domestic military manufacturers.³¹

In 1806, Republican Congressman Joseph B. Varnum of Massachusetts reported on behalf of a committee tasked with completing the "arming of the militia of the United States." He had tabulated militia returns and found that only about half the country's militia was armed, with the North far outpacing the South.³² Historian Robert Churchill has questioned the dependability of Varnum's statistics, but accurate or not, they motivated the Republicans to redouble their efforts toward the national defense.³³ On 20 January 1807, only months before the *Chesapeake* affair moved the country toward its second war with England, Coxe sent Jefferson a memorandum proposing

²⁸*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 9th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1805), pp. 269–71. Meanwhile, the Atlantic port cities carried on a thriving trade in arms and munitions as the Caribbean militarized in response to the Haitian Revolution.

²⁹Albert Gallatin to Thomas Jefferson, 21 June 1803, *The Writings of Albert Gallatin*, ed. Henry Adams, 3 vols. (1879; New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), 1:123–25.

³⁰Jacob E. Cooke, *Tench Coxe and the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), pp. 426–27.

³¹Tench Coxe's journals, ledgers, and correspondence, collected in *The Papers of Tench Coxe*, microfilm ed. (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1977), document the extent of his patronage.

³²*American State Papers, Military Affairs*, 1:198–203.

³³Robert H. Churchill, "Gun Ownership in Early America: A Survey of Manuscript Militia Returns," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 60 (July 2003): 615–42.

that the federal government issue contracts to private suppliers to arm the whole body of the militia.³⁴ Instead of relying upon indirect tariff protections, Coxe recommended that the administration take a more active role in the market. Jefferson approved Coxe's plan in principle, but given the numbers involved, he thought it unfeasible without the aid of imports.³⁵ Coxe, however, had not been idle. He replied, "The cost of rifles, when I came into office was \$13"; by negotiating with gunsmiths throughout Pennsylvania, he had "gradually reduced them to \$9.50 and 10 for which they cannot be imported."³⁶ Coxe had the will and, with the considerable patronage at his disposal, the ability to strengthen the United States' war-making capacity.

In June 1807, off the coast of Virginia, the British warship HMS *Leopard* fired upon the USS *Chesapeake*. While Jefferson and his secretary of state, James Madison, sought to coerce the British to give up impressment through trade embargoes, they also prepared the country for war. The administration sketched out, and Congress approved on paper, a relatively large army of regulars, volunteers, and militia as well as improved coastal fortifications and an expanded gunboat navy.³⁷ Arming a mobilized militia was central to the Republicans' strategic vision of a well-managed political economy of war.³⁸ Opening debate on the issue, Virginia Representative John Randolph asked, "What manufacture were the United States more interested in cherishing and extending, than the manufacture of arms for the public defence—for arming the whole body of the militia?"³⁹ While Randolph and other "Old Republicans" objected to standing armies during times of peace, they supported annual disbursements from a sinking fund to ensure that domestic manufacturers produced a steady supply of arms. With such legislation in place, Randolph estimated

³⁴Tench Coxe, January 1807, Opinions, Dated Received July 24, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ser. 1, General Correspondence, Library of Congress, American Memory, at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbibo16880>, accessed 10 January 2011.

³⁵Jefferson to Coxe, 27 March 1807, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbibo17077>.

³⁶Coxe to Jefferson, 6 April 1807, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbibo17111>.

³⁷Crackel, *Mr. Jefferson's Army*, pp. 176–79; Spencer C. Tucker, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Navy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 31–33; and Gene A. Smith, "For the Purposes of Defense": *The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), pp. 70–72.

³⁸"An Act making provision for arming and equipping the whole body of the Militia of the United States," *Statutes at Large*, 10th Cong., 1st Sess. (1808), vol. 2, pp. 490–91.

³⁹*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 10th Cong., 1st Sess. (1808), vol. 2, pp. 2175–76.

that only “five or six years” would be required to arm the citizenry. Without delay Coxe, who had been granted an appropriation of two hundred thousand dollars per year, entered into agreements with seventeen domestic manufacturers, many of which he had dealt with previously.⁴⁰ He also distributed start-up funds of nearly one hundred thousand dollars to help arms manufacturers make the necessary capital improvements to ramp up production quickly.

Although northern representatives fretted that they were subsidizing states that had not adequately armed their own militias, in fact, the Jefferson administration’s military contracts disproportionately benefited New England.⁴¹ Massachusetts, for example, built the greatest number of gunboats.⁴² While Eli Whitney’s factory in New Haven, Connecticut, was already doing a brisk business with the federal government and the state of New York, Coxe’s contracts spawned additional arms industries. Supplied with power from the Blackstone River and a \$6,450 start-up loan from the federal government, Stephen Jenks, of Providence, Rhode Island,

built a convenient shop 30 feet by 40 feet, four stories high including the lower room where the boring and grinding of the barrels is done their boring machine bores six barrels at a time they have two forging shops which go by water with hammers convenient for drawing skelps and to weld barrels with and one other wheel which carries two grindstones convenient for grinding mountings and bayonets. All standing on a good mill privilege and a durable stream of water.⁴³

With the assistance of a federal loan, Jenks had built a modern arms factory. He incorporated new technology, such as trip-hammers, which allowed for a stronger weld on gun barrels, and by introducing techniques of mass production, he sped up his deliveries.⁴⁴ In November 1810, the sureties of the Jenks & Sons arms contract reported to Coxe that the factory was producing an average of four muskets

⁴⁰“Purveyor of Public Supplies Ledgers, 1803–1812,” *Coxe Papers*, vols. 26–28.

⁴¹For a broad overview of the New England arms industry during the early republic, see Felicia Johnson Dreyup, *Arms Makers of the Connecticut Valley: A Regional Study of the Economic Development of the Small Arms Industry, 1798–1870* (Northampton: Smith College Studies in History, 1948).

⁴²Smith, *The Jeffersonian Gunboat Program*, pp. 83–84.

⁴³Charles Williams (U.S. Inspector of Arms) to Tench Coxe, 3 July 1810, transcribed in Peter A. Schmidt, *U.S. Military Flintlock Muskets and Their Bayonets: The Early Years, 1790–1815* (Woonsocket: Andrew Mowbray Inc., 2006), p. 256.

⁴⁴Merritt Roe Smith, *Harpers Ferry Armory and the New Technology: The Challenge of Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 114.

a day, or at least twelve hundred per year.⁴⁵ By May 1811, despite some problems associated with his deliveries, Stephen Jenks informed Coxe that his factory had just delivered 650 stands of arms to Captain James House at the Springfield Armory and would continue to deliver more.⁴⁶

Writing to Tadeusz Kosciuszko in early 1810, Jefferson boasted about the success of his war policies, which James Madison had largely continued after he was inaugurated president in 1809:

From the moment that the affair of the *Chesapeake* rendered the prospect of war imminent, every faculty was exerted to be prepared for it, & I think I may venture to solace you with the assurance that we are in a good degree prepared. Military stores for many campaigns are on hand, all the necessary articles (sulphur excepted) & the art of preparing them among ourselves abundantly, arms in our magazines for more men than will ever be required in the field, & 40,000 new stand yearly added, of our own fabrication, superior to any we have ever seen from Europe; heavy artillery much beyond our need, an increasing stock of field pieces, several foundries casting one every other day, each.⁴⁷

Jefferson was not alone in his enthusiasm for how quickly American industry had matured in the in the first decade after his election. In his 1810 “Report on American Manufactures,” Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin, who served in both the Jefferson and Madison administrations, announced that gunpowder and arms manufacturers were so “firmly established” that supplies currently exceeded domestic consumption. Both the public and private armories, he observed, “may if wanted, be immediately enlarged.” E. I. du Pont’s gunpowder mill, as well as others in Maryland and Pennsylvania, could easily triple their production “if there was a demand for it.”⁴⁸ In the fall of 1811, responding to the queries in Madison’s war message regarding the country’s weapons supply, Republican Congressman Adam Seybert of Pennsylvania claimed that “the manufacture of cannon and small arms, and the stock and resources of all the necessary munitions, are

⁴⁵William Daggett, Ezekiel Carpenter, Pardon Jenks, Jabez Jenks to Tench Coxe, 20 November 1810, in Schmidt, *Flintlock Muskets*, pp. 257–58.

⁴⁶Stephen Jenks to Coxe, 8 May 1811, in Schmidt, *Flintlock Muskets*, p. 258.

⁴⁷Thomas Jefferson to Thadeusz Kosciuszko, 26 February 1810, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney, 10 vols. to date (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2:257–58.

⁴⁸Albert Gallatin, *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on American Manufactures, Prepared in Obedience to a Resolution of the House of Representatives* (Brooklyn: Thomas Kirk, 1810), pp. 3, 16–18; Shaw and Shoemaker microfiche no. 21859.

adequate to emergencies.” The rapid and dramatic advances of the military industry, Seybert crowed, “demonstrate the great resources of this Republic.”⁴⁹ In the years preceding the War of 1812, then, the leaders of the Republican Party were convinced that, through their extensive patronage of domestic manufacturers and a favorable tariff regimen, *they* had solved a critical problem that had beset the United States during the Revolutionary War: a ready domestic supply of arms and munitions.

As Donald Hickey has shown, the decision to declare war on Great Britain in 1812 was complex and arose from numerous grievances.⁵⁰ But in 1812, the United States was not just willing, it was *ready*, to go to war. While both major parties clearly understood the state’s obligation to protect its citizens by being prepared for war, the Federalists and Republicans advocated vastly different policies to achieve that end. Alexander Hamilton thought that the federal government should manufacture its own munitions, while Tench Coxe promoted government contracts and protected market incentives. When Republicans gained control of the government in 1800, they acted on Coxe’s recommendations. As he observed after hostilities began, “*The difference in the situations of the United States, at the respective commencements of hostilities, in the year 1775, and in the year 1812, is greater, in respect to the various manufactures necessary to defence, than it is in respect to any other matter in the whole circle of its national industry.*”⁵¹ The young nation had armed itself for war, and contrary to warnings from Republicans and Federalists alike regarding the country’s preparedness, to war it would go.

⁴⁹*Annals of Congress, House of Representatives*, 12th Cong., 1st Sess. (1811), p. 524.

⁵⁰Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 26–28.

⁵¹*American State Papers, Finance*, 2:676.

Andrew J. B. Fagal is currently a visiting assistant professor at Binghamton University, State University of New York, where he recently completed his dissertation, “*The Political Economy of War in the Early American Republic, 1774–1821.*”