

Alexander Hamilton's Cabinet

Welcome Delegates!

My name is Alexandria Murphy and I will be your DUMUNC chair. I am a sophomore majoring in public policy and minoring in history at Duke and I am super duper excited to spend the weekend hearing your ideas about 17th century US politics. This is my fifth year doing model UN and my first time chairing. As is the case with many historical committees in MUN we will be doing a bit of historical revisionism. In this committee we will be making a handful of changes to the historical record.

The biggest change is that Alexander Hamilton decides to run for president in 1800 and wins the election. Thomas Jefferson comes in second to become the Vice President and Aaron Burr comes in third, so Hamilton appoints him as Attorney General. Hamilton had Machiavellian tendencies and thought the best structure of government required a powerful cabinet. This committee will do just that. Though early presidential cabinets were quite small (Washington's included only our men besides himself) in the interest of a full committee we are using the term cabinet loosely to refer to the people that would have had the greatest influence on Hamilton and including both people who shared his opinions and those that didn't. Another major revision in the structure is including various officials from congress and the Supreme Court in the cabinet, though this would never be considered in the modern era political norms were less entrenched in 1800 and Hamilton in wanting to maximize the power of the executive would want to have connections to both Congress and SCOTUS advising him.

The structure of topics in committee will be as follows, I have chosen two, what to do on the issue of slavery in the new United States and how to further centralize the government. In the committee we will have both pro-slavery and abolitionist members as well as states rights and federal rights advocate. I would strongly encourage you to research the positions of your character beforehand. I want this committee to be led by the delegates as much as possible so if there are other topics you would rather debate I encourage you to come to the first day of committee prepared to present those to your fellow

delegates. I will open the floor to topic suggestions before taking motions to set the agenda so come prepared and on time for the first day of committee.

If you would like to suggest a new topic it might be a good idea to write about it in your position paper. Your papers should not exceed one page per topic. Papers longer than that will not be considered for awards.

During committee you will also have the opportunity to communicate with a third party known as “crisis” this third party can be used to gather information, and to take individual action during committee. If you have never participated in a Crisis committee I have included a link to a Best Delegate article you might like to check out. <http://bestdelegate.com/how-to-write-a-crisis-directive/>

Crisis will also periodically give the committee updates on what is happening in the the fictional world outside of committee. These could range from slave insurrections, to offers from foreign diplomats etc. they will usually require the committee to respond via a directive.

This background guide is mostly just a condensed biography of Alexander Hamilton’s life and should only be the starting point for your research. If you have never taken an American History class I would recommend doing some light research into the time period from 1750-1810. Since the topics we will be covering were also prevalent through the 1860s a bit for cursory research into that time period would also be useful. As a general rule, this committee has taken some dramatic liberties with the historical record so try not to get too caught up in the nitty gritty details and instead focus on big picture phenomenon of the time.

More than anything I want you all to be creative. This period of time was a defining moment in American history, and I want to see what you guys do with it. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, feel free to let me know.

Sincerely,

Alexandria Murphy

alexandria.c.murphy@gmail.com

Topic 1: The issue of slavery in the United States

From the writing of the constitution until the south seceded from the Union most in government understood that the issue was a ticking time bomb. The constitution made compromises to guarantee ratification by southern states including the Fugitive Slave Clause and the 3/5 Compromise but Hamilton may have been willing to overlook those to bring about a faster end to slavery. Hamilton was an abolitionist before it was a common sentiment in the North, he was also rather hostile to southerners having lived in the North for most of his life. At the same time he was committed to the idea of the Union at all costs.

Topic 2: Centralizing the Government

With this topic I am going to be a bit more broad and want some creative approaches to how the government could have been further centralized. At this time debates were still abound about states rights versus those of the federal government and how much interference government should have in the lives of individuals. Within this topic you will need to clearly enunciate the position of the federal government on the role of the national government both as it relates to states rights and its impact on individual citizens.

Early Life

Alexander Hamilton was born on January 11, 1755 on the Danish ruled Caribbean island of St. Croix. His parents came from aristocratic families but had fallen on hard times. His mother's maiden first husband, Johann Levine, was abusive and jailed her for adultery when she refused to continue sleeping with him and threatened to leave him with their son, Peter. Her husband eventually filed for divorce, which under Danish law, secured his rights to all of her property upon her death, allowed him to marry again while preventing her from doing so, and terminated her parental rights to Peter. Alexander's father, James Hamilton, was the fourth son of a wealthy family in Scotland, and due to inheritance laws at the time he received no inheritance from his parents estate. This left him to become a sailor and merchant in the New World.

After Rachel's divorce she returned to the island of Nevis where her family's sugar plantation was, she met James Hamilton and they began what would become an informal marital relationship that would last fifteen years. Their relationship was not uncommon in the West Indies and under English law their marriage would have been considered common law after seven years' cohabitation. Together they had two sons, James, born in 1753 and Alexander born in 1755[1]. Together, James and Rachel Hamilton ran a small shop for merchants on the island, James was a terrible businessman so much of the operations fell to Rachel and her sons. Hamilton's father left their family when Alexander was 10 and his mother died when he was 13 Their mother's estate had been willed to her two youngest sons but under Danish law it all went to her oldest Peter after her former husband made a claim for his son's inheritance.

Shortly before his mother's death Alexander went to work for the New York based import house of Beekman and Cruger. Alexander learned business and made numerous connections with important figures on this island. Following Rachel's death Alexander moved to the capital city of Christiansted where he lived with the family of his friend Edward Stevens whose father was a partner of a mercantile trading firm in New York. Alexander's four years at Beekman and Cruger gave him an intimate knowledge of St Croix as well as allowed him to prove himself adept at finance and giving orders regardless of rank or age. For one eighteen-month stretch while his boss was away in New York he managed the firm almost singlehandedly. When his friend Edward left St. Croix to attend medical school at King's College (Columbia University) Alexander began to show an intense desire to move beyond the position of a shipping clerk.

It was at this time that Alexander befriended Reverend High Knox, a Presbyterian minister who would prove crucial for Hamilton's advancement. Knox gave Alexander freedom to use his considerable library and recommended texts on the Scottish enlightenment that had helped fuel revolutionary political writings of the time including those of John Locke. Knox encouraged Hamilton to continue his education in America, specifically at Princeton where Knox himself had received his postgraduate education in Theology. When a massive hurricane struck the island it proved to be the change Alexander needed to escape, he wrote his narrative of the hurricane that Knox circulated to prominent figures on the island

who agreed to provide payment for Alexander to travel to America and receive his education. He would arrive in Boston in the October of 1772 and from thence travel to New York to begin his schooling.

Education

In October of 1772 Alexander met Hercules Mulligan a haberdasher in New York who was to serve as his guardian and manage his scholarship funds. Mulligan was a member of the sons of liberty who would later prove active in the revolution as a spy and was a lifelong friend to Hamilton. Since Hamilton had received minimal formal education he lacked the necessary Greek and mathematics abilities to immediately enter Princeton, as was his intention. Therefore, he enrolled in the Elizabethtown Academy in New Jersey where he completed a single year accelerated course of study to prepare him for university. While at Elizabethtown Hamilton met and befriended William Livingston a retired lawyer from one of New York's wealthiest families and Elias Boudinot, a member of Princeton's Board of Trustees. Both men were avid revolutionaries who shaped many of Hamilton's initial opinions of America. At Livingston's home Liberty Hall, Alexander was introduced to more of the aristocracy centered around the Hudson including the Beeckman family, the Schuylers, the DeLancy's, and John Jay.

At the end of his year at Elizabethtown Mulligan escorted Hamilton to Princeton to take his entrance examination that was administered by the president of the university Dr. Witherspoon. He passed the test easily but conditioned his own acceptance on being "permitted to advance from class to class with as much rapidity as his exertions would enable him to do." Witherspoon denied this request. Following this incident Mulligan took Hamilton to King's College where he himself had attended where Hamilton was accepted and granted permission to complete his studies at his own pace. Hamilton's attendance at King's College put him in the middle of New York at the beginnings of the revolution at a school with Anglican sentiments, which made it a Loyalist headquarters. This arguably developed Hamilton's arguments against England and poised him to be a far more potent revolutionary.

At King's college Hamilton began writing some of the political pieces that would make him stand out to other revolutionaries. He was a common contributor to the Patriot Holt, writing under various pen

names. President Cooper of King's College refused to believe the pieces were Hamilton's work and instead attributed them to the much older John Jay. Hamilton also engaged in public debate on the pages of newspapers with Samuel Seabury, a noted Loyalist. There is also considerable evidence that he was influenced by efforts of Mulligan with the Sons of Liberty during this time. Though Hamilton became a patriot during his time at King's, he was careful to not speak too openly among some of his universities administration and was hesitant to totally support the actions of the Sons of Liberty, having seen the effects of mobs and rioting during his time on St. Croix.

Military Career

Following the battle of Lexington on April 19, 1775 Hamilton began drilling with volunteer militias of young men in New York while simultaneously attending classes. During this time Hamilton began correspondence with John Jay and other members of the Continental Congress to inform them of events taking place in New York. Though Hamilton had previously been known by some of the aristocracy, particular in New York and New Jersey this helped Hamilton receive name recognition in important Congressional political circles.

On March 14th 1776 the New York provincial congress Awarded Hamilton the command of an artillery company whose mission was to defend New York from British attack. Hamilton was uniquely well-qualified to hold this position after he helped Mulligan and other Sons of Liberty members steal British cannons. Hamilton continued his communications with congress advocating for higher troop pay and better equipment for militiamen while simultaneously building and zealously training a large artillery force. Hamilton distinguished himself for brazen courage in battle and meticulous control over his men.

In January 1777 Washington asked Hamilton to join his staff as an aide-de-camp, Hamilton surrendered command of his artillery force to Lieutenant Thompson and worked by Washington's side for most of the remainder of the war. In the winter of 1777 Hamilton proved himself indispensable to Washington by handling the Conway Cabal on Washington's behalf, a political skirmish that could have very well made Washington lose his position as Commander in Chief.

In the winter of 1777 and 1778 Hamilton began to develop feelings about Congress that they were inept and had poor character. He believed that the best politicians were being retained by their states and a strong central government would be necessary for the success of the nation.

Hamilton became a junior delegate to Congress in 1782. He frequently shared his negative opinions of the organization with his fellow members of Congress, this strained the relationship between the young camp-de-aide and the bureaucratic body he would fight against for much of his life.

The Constitutional Convention

After the war in 1787 Hamilton was selected as a junior delegate from New York for the Constitutional Convention. Even though Hamilton had advocated for the Constitutional Convention, being a junior delegate his power was heavily restricted. During the convention he advocated for the President and Senators to serve life long terms. At the end of the Convention Hamilton still saw faults with the Constitution but signed it since he viewed it as an improvement over the Articles of Confederation.

Secretary of the Treasury

Washington appointed Hamilton to serve as his Secretary of the Treasury in 1789. Hamilton was a bit of a Machiavellian and thought that the executive branch, and by extension the cabinet, should be the strongest branch of government. He helped create most of the financial structures of the United States and advised Washington on matters that extended far beyond his position. Hamilton consolidated and organized the debt into foreign and domestic and state and federal. He also lobbied Congress to charter a national bank, this measure was rather contentious and Hamilton negotiated by moving the capital to the Potomac from New York. Hamilton also established the mint based in part of European systems, notably the Spanish peso, but structured it in a way that would guarantee that even the poor would hold money. He also created the Revenue cutter service to deter smuggling, this would later become the Coast Guard.

Hamilton's Congressional opposition could not be overcome when it came to the whiskey tax that was opposed when presented by Hamilton but passed when a similar bill was presented by Madison. This led to the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794.

In 1790 Congress asked Hamilton to submit a report on how to encourage manufacturing in the new United States. He stated that they should utilize protective taxes on goods produced from fledgling industries in the US and not place taxes on raw materials needed for production. He also included a public welfare clause that, like the rest of the document, was mostly ignored by Congress at the time.

Hamilton and Jefferson

Also on Washington's cabinet and serving as Secretary of state at the time was Thomas Jefferson. The ideological differences between the two men would lead to the formation of the first political parties in the United States. The federalists under Hamilton and the democratic republicans under Jefferson. Hamilton's faction promoted industry and a strong central government while Jefferson believed in a weak central government and agrarian principles.

Dossier

1. Thomas Jefferson- Vice President. After a close loss to Hamilton in the race for President Jefferson became Hamilton's Vice President though the feud between the two men regarding the fate of the nation persists.
2. Aaron Burr- Attorney General. After coming in third in the election of 1800, Burr went on to become the US Attorney General making him the chief attorney and law enforcement officer.
3. Marquis de Lafayette- Secretary of War. Responsible for all military affairs
4. John Jay- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Though the supreme court is independent of the executive Jay, a close friend of Hamilton, advises him on legal matters and is the final say on the constitutionality of state and federal laws

5. James Madison- Secretary of State. In charge of foreign affairs and foreign policy
6. Phillip Schuyler-Hamilton's father in law and a close friend and advisor with financial and social connections to New York City
7. John Laurens- Governor of South Carolina and close friend and advisor to Hamilton
8. Eliza Hamilton- wife of Alexander Hamilton, she harbored abolitionist sentiments and cared deeply about social issues of her time.
9. Gouverneur Morris- US senator from New York, more than anything Morris was a professional aristocrat and a fierce abolitionist
10. Nathaniel Macon- House Majority leader and Democratic- Republican from North Carolina
11. Thomas Pickney- Member of the House of representatives from South Carolina
12. Benjamin Stoddert- Secretary of the Navy
13. Rufus King- Ambassador to Great Britain
14. Calvin Candie- Secretary of Agriculture fictional major landowner in South Carolina
15. John Barker Church- Secretary of Industry, brother-in-law of Alexander Hamilton and a prominent banker at the time.
16. Benjamin Franklin- Founding father and prominent academic and statesman of the era
17. Nathaniel Pendleton- New York attorney who served as the US District Court Judge for Georgia and was a close friend to Hamilton with extensive political and legal connections
18. George Clinton- Governor of New York
19. William Bayard Jr.- Prominent New York City banker with a large financial network
20. Theodore Sedgwick- Speaker of the House of Representatives

[1] Some sources list Alexander's birth year as 1757 because once he arrived in America he eventually began stating his age as two years younger to highlight his accomplishments.