The **Whiskey Rebellion** (1791–1794) was a significant uprising in early U.S. history, triggered by a federal excise tax on distilled spirits. It tested the new federal government’s authority under the Constitution and demonstrated its ability to enforce laws.

**Background:**

1. **The Excise Tax on Whiskey (1791)**:
   * To reduce the national debt and fund the government, Treasury Secretary **Alexander Hamilton** proposed an excise tax on whiskey as part of his financial plan.
   * The tax disproportionately affected small frontier distillers, particularly in western Pennsylvania, who often used whiskey as a barter item in the cash-poor economy.
2. **Frontier Resistance**:
   * Farmers and distillers saw the tax as unfair and reminiscent of British taxation before the Revolution.
   * Many refused to pay the tax, harassed tax collectors, and organized resistance.

**The Rebellion:**

1. **Escalation of Violence**:
   * By 1794, protests had turned violent. Rebels attacked federal officials, burned property, and intimidated those who complied with the tax.
   * The rebellion culminated in the **Battle of Bower Hill**, where insurgents confronted federal forces.
2. **Government Response**:
   * President **George Washington**, with Hamilton's support, viewed the rebellion as a direct challenge to federal authority.
   * In an unprecedented move, Washington personally led a militia force of **13,000 troops** to suppress the uprising, though most of the rebels had already dispersed by the time the army arrived.

**Outcome:**

1. **Rebellion Dissolves**:
   * The show of federal strength ended the rebellion without major bloodshed.
   * Some leaders of the rebellion were arrested, but most were pardoned by Washington to foster reconciliation.
2. **Significance**:
   * The federal government established its authority to levy taxes and maintain order, proving the Constitution’s effectiveness compared to the weaker Articles of Confederation.
   * The peaceful resolution reinforced the importance of legal, democratic processes for addressing grievances.

**Legacy:**

* The Whiskey Rebellion marked the first major test of federal power under the Constitution.
* It solidified the federal government's ability to enforce laws while showcasing Washington’s leadership and commitment to the rule of law.
* It also deepened political divisions, contributing to the rise of **political parties**:
  + **Federalists**, who supported the strong government response.
  + **Democratic-Republicans**, led by Thomas Jefferson, who sympathized with the grievances of frontier farmers.