

The Jeffersonians in Office

1796-George Washington's Farewell
Address; John Adams elected
president

- When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia in 1787. they assumed that the public offices they created and the men who would serve in these offices would advocate no particular political party.
- They assumed that citizens who placed the common good above their own special needs would elect these public officials.

- When the Philadelphia delegates thought about political parties, they thought of them as “factions,” that would divide citizens into hostile camps.
- They felt that government by party was a corrupt and disruptive way to conduct the new nation’s political affairs.
- But within the next decade two great national parties would emerge in the United States.

- This first party system which lasted until about 1815 forged the political life of the new United States.
- The Federalist was one of the two parties that appeared during the 1790s.
- The other party was called the Anti-Federalist or Jeffersonian party.

- Congress convened for the first time in New York early in 1789 and adopted two important tax measures. The Tariff Act of 1789 placed duties on a variety of imported articles and the Tonnage Act taxed foreign vessels entering American ports.
- Congress also established the executive departments of State, Treasury, and War.
- Congress also passed the Federal Judiciary Act which established the structure of the Supreme Court and the federal court system.

- In its second session the First Congress confronted the issue of unpaid war debts. Millions of dollars of state and national obligations were overdue.
- The American government could not pay overseas creditors which made it difficult to borrow from foreign bankers.
- Congress owed most of the debt to American citizens including war veterans, former army suppliers, and people who had loaned money to Congress or the states.

- The public creditors included many businessmen and speculators who had bought securities and debt certificates.

Hamilton's plan for America

- Alexander Hamilton believed that the United States must turn to manufacturing for its future prosperity. He felt industry would free America from foreign dependence and transform it in important ways.
- In his first Report on the Public Credit to Congress he proposed a plan to put national finances on a sound basis. It could use revenue from taxes and duties to pay its own creditors.

- Hamilton issued a new series of federal bonds bearing an attractive interest rate. Holders of the old defaulted debt could exchange it for the new funded debt.
- In part, Hamilton's motives were political. He hoped to strengthen the national government by winning the support of the rich and powerful who were the new nation's chief creditors.

- He believed that a public debt could be used to back a new national money supply that stimulate commerce and provide investment capital for a capital poor nation.
- In his Report on a National Bank, Hamilton said that Congress should charter a commercial bank, the Bank of the United States. He felt that banks could become “nurseries of national wealth.”

- In his final important state paper, the Report on Manufacturers, Hamilton urged Congress to support industry with subsidies, a tariff, and a system of roads, canals, and other “internal improvements.”
- Hamilton felt that government action could help America overcome its high labor costs and shortage of investment capital that made it unable to compete with better developed European countries.

- The Funding Act of 1790 was created to implement the first part of Hamilton's program. Part one of the act allowed all holders of existing national securities to convert them into federal bonds at face value at varying rates of interest. Under the second part, the federal government would "assume" the outstanding state debts.

- James Madison, leader in the House of Representatives disagreed with Madison's program. To Madison and his supporters, the North represented trade and commerce, the South, agriculture.
- Despite Madison's resistance, Congress established the Bank of the United States with a twenty year federal charter. It would handle the nation's financial business.
- President Washington accepted Hamilton's doctrine of implied powers and signed the bill.

The Hamilton plan divided Americans into opposing political camps.

The Federalists

- The Federalists tended to be speculators in government securities, merchants, manufacturers and their employees, merchant seamen, artisans, clerks, bookkeepers and all who worked in trade. They were the “commercial classes.”

- The commercial classes were numerous in New England and the Middle Atlantic States.
- They believed in the power of the national government to regulate commerce. They believed in a strong government.
- Federalists were elitists. They distrusted human nature. Hamilton called the people “a great beast.”

- Republicans or anti-federalists tended to be small farmers and southern planters, especially those of middle rank.
- But advocates for both sides could be found in the North and South.
- Republicans like Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Taylor thought that the Hamiltonian-Federalist dream was misguided and dangerous. They believed in individualism, and limited government.

- Jefferson and the Republicans believed in the intelligence and goodness of “the people.”
- Generally speaking, Federalists had less faith in majority rule. The Republicans in turn, had less confidence in people of wealth and position than in “the people.”

Religion

- In the 1790s the Federalists attracted Congregationalists in New England and Episcopalians in the Middle Atlantic States and the South.
- Federalists often were outspoken defenders of traditional Christian beliefs.
- Republicans won the support of a hodgepodge of Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholics, nonbelievers and deists.

- Again, generally speaking, members of long established churches that had received financial support from state governments voted Federalists.
- The other churches tended to prefer Jeffersonian-Republicans.

Relations with Europe

- In 1790 Spain controlled the mouth of the Mississippi River and denied Americans the right of free deposit at New Orleans.
- Great Britain continued to restrict American trade with their empire and refused to abandon the military posts it occupied in the Northwest.
- France had begun to limit American trade with its colonies.

- The French Revolution breaking out in 1789 made American relations with Europe even worse.
- The Federalists tended to condemn the French Revolution.
- Jefferson, Madison, and other Jeffersonian Republicans admired the Revolution and some even approved the execution of King Louis XVI and saw virtue in the reign of terror.

- When war broke out in 1793 between the new Revolutionary French Republic and England, Spain and Holland, the new American Republic had an uncomfortable ally.
- After some argument between Secretary of Treasury Hamilton and Secretary of State Jefferson, President George Washington issued a proclamation of neutrality in April 1793.

- United States relations with England deteriorated during this time over the issue of the right of the United States to trade with France and the issue of neutral rights on the high seas.
- Britain began to impress American sailors into the British Navy.
- In the Northwest British garrisons had remained on American soil and British fur trading companies continued to monopolize business with the Indians.

- In the spring of 1793-1794 Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers.
- In 1795 the Indians signed the Treaty of Greenville, surrendering all of Ohio except for a strip along Lake Erie.
- Soon white pioneer farmers began to move into the Northwest.

The Jay Treaty

- In the fall of 1793 Britain passed an order in council or an executive proclamation that authorized English naval commanders to seize neutral vessels trading with the French Caribbean islands.
- The outcry in American resembled a second American Revolution.

- In 1794, President Washington sent Chief Justice John Jay to London to negotiate a settlement.
- In part the British agreed to surrender the western posts and pay for the recently confiscated American ships. They made some trade concessions, but in most other matters refused to negotiate.
- The British rejected American demands for full commercial equality with British subjects.

- They denied liability for the slaves they had confiscated from the South during the Revolution.
- In return for surrendering the Northwest posts, Britain retained the right to exploit the resources of the region south of the Canadian border.
- For a time the unpopularity of the Jay Treaty cast its confirmation in doubt, but the Senate's strong Federalist majority passed the Treaty and Washington endorsed it.

The Whiskey Rebellion

- Since the western Pennsylvania farmers couldn't sell their grain to urban centers because of high transportation costs, they converted it into whiskey that could easily be carried to market in barrels.
- In 1791, the new American government levied a tax on distilled liquors.

- The western farmers defied the tax and threatened the tax collectors with physical harm.
- In 1794 these rebellious farmers closed down the federal courts and stole the mails.
- President Washington ordered out the militia of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

- With Hamilton second in command, the Army marched on the rebels and the rebels surrendered without firing a shot.
- The outcome of the Whiskey Rebellion convinced westerners that the Federalists were trigger happy and proved to the Federalist government that the westerners had clout.

The Pinckney Treaty

- The Westerners also threatened to take matters in their own hands and negotiate with Spain directly unless the government did something about the Spanish refusal to let the United States trade at New Orleans.
- President Washington ordered Thomas Pinckney to Spain to arbitrate the differences between the United States and Spain.

- Pinckney and the Spanish foreign minister negotiated a treaty granting the United States free navigation of the Mississippi River and the right of tax free deposit at New Orleans for three years.
- The treaty also set the boundary between the United States and Florida and conceding the Yazoo Strip of southern Georgia and Mississippi to the Americans.

The Election of 1796

- In 1796 George Washington retired to his plantation home at Mount Vernon on the Potomac after two terms in office.
- John Adams won the presidency and Thomas Jefferson the vice presidency.

The XYZ Affair

- This incident ignited a naval war between the United States and France.
- President John Adams was pressured to formally declare war on France, but he refused, being well aware of American unpreparedness.

- Late in 1799 President Adams sent three new emissaries to Paris to reopen negotiations.
- President Adams wanted the French to compensate America for their recent “spoils” of American commerce and insisted that France formally accept nullification of the 1778 Treaty.
- Napoleon Bonaparte who now led France refused the first condition, but accepted the second.

- The United States and France signed the Convention of 1800 and the United States again avoided war.
- The Alien and Sedition Acts
- The Alien Act gave the president power to expel from the country any alien considered dangerous or suspected of treasonable acts.
- Passing and forcing the Alien and Sedition Acts proved to be a tremendous political blunder for the Federalists.

- The 1800 Presidential contest ended in a peaceful, orderly transfer of power from the Federalists to the Republicans.
- Thomas Jefferson became third president of the United States.

Conclusions

- In a little more than ten years Americans laid the foundation of a modern political party system.
- Americans were also divided by Constitutional biases. The Federalists favored a broad interpretation of national powers. The Jeffersonians favored protection of the state's authority.
- By 1800 the country had acquired two great national parties and Washington D.C. became the first national capital.

Chapter 8
The Jeffersonians in Office
How Did Power Affect Republican Ideology?

- President Thomas Jefferson vowed to instill Republican principles in the new country by breaking with the Federalist past.
- He worked to contract the role of the national government and he was partially successful.

The Secretary of treasury, Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania reduced the national debt by cutting appropriations for the army and the navy.

- During his first two years in office, President Jefferson replaced almost 200 Federal officials with members of his own party.
- Jefferson tried to revamp the Federalist dominated court system.
- The court case Marbury vs. Madison established that the members of the Supreme Court were beyond easy reach of popular opinion was to be the final judge of constitutionality.

Jefferson Buys Louisiana

- In 1800 France and Spain signed a treaty allowing France to resume sovereignty of Louisiana.
- Immediately President Jefferson sent Robert R. Livingston to Paris to buy West Florida and New Orleans from Napoleon. On April 11, 1803, told his minister of finance that he renounced Louisiana.

- On May 2, 1803, American negotiators signed the treaty transferring Louisiana to the United States for \$15 million.
- Before Napoleon had made his offer, President Thomas Jefferson had engaged his private secretary Meriwether Lewis and a former soldier William Clark, to explore the Louisiana region.
- His motives were political and commercial. He directed Lewis and Clark to make careful observations of the flora, animal life, minerals, soils and geography of the regions.

- The Lewis and Clark party left St. Louis in the spring of 1804 and arrived at the shores of the Pacific. They returned to St. Louis in September of 1806.
- They had established relations with several important Indian nations, discovered usable passes through the Rockies, and provided important botanical, zoological, geological and anthropological data about western North America.
- Their expedition helped to open the trans-Mississippi West.

- Impressments, blockades, neutral rights, contraband, and Indian incitements continued to define America's relations with Britain and France leading European powers after 1803.
- The Chesapeake-Leopard Affair
- In 1809, President Jefferson left Washington for Monticello. He had successfully guided the United States through a transition from the rule of one party to the rule of another. He had doubled the physical size of the country. He had brought a new, more democratic tone to the nation's political culture.

- James Madison, Jefferson's successor faced many challenges. The continued presence of British-Canadian fur traders in the Northwest created antagonisms and suspicion of British intrigue.
- In April 1812 Congress gave President James Madison power to call up the state militias for six months.
- The Congressional declaration of war against Britain was not unanimous.

The War of 1812

- American military and naval forces were feeble. Congress provided for a 35,000 man regular army in January 1812, but it consisted of only 6,700 officers and men.
- The Americans were worse off on the high seas. In June 1812 the American navy consisted of only seven seaworthy frigates and over 100 almost useless gunboats.
- America was unprepared for war financially.

- The charter of the United States Bank had not been renewed and without a central bank to make loans to meet the government's wartime needs, the treasury was in difficulty.
- President Madison also faced the problem of poor communications within the country. Roads were few. Bad communications imposed serious handicaps on military commanders who had to move supplies and men along crude trails hacked out of the forest.

- In 1814, after seeing their commerce virtually swept off the seas by the British Navy, antiwar Yankees called a convention at Hartford, Connecticut.
- The delegates discussed how to deal with the war and whether or not they should secede from the Union. The moderates prevailed and the Convention took no action except to endorse the right of states to nullify federal acts.

- Americans won the War of 1812 and in 1817 24 British and American negotiators concluded a peace treaty at Ghent in what is now Belgium.

Conclusions

- Jefferson's election in 1800 represented an endorsement of a less activist national government and a repudiation of the strong centralizing bent of the Federalists.

- The confrontations with France and England invoked a more active central government. This created a new sense of national priorities, especially among southerners and westerners and the entire country united against her enemies.
- The Battle of New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent marked the end of 50 years of American entanglement in European affairs. Now for the next 100 years the United States would be spared the clash of empires and could turn inwardly and grow.