

Introduction: At the end of the American Revolution, two political philosophies dominated American politics. Some of the nation's founders, like Alexander Hamilton, **believed in a strong central government** while others shared the sentiments of Thomas Jefferson that the **states should dominate the political system**. These two philosophies of government grew further apart and ultimately led to the formation of America's first **political parties**.

A.) The Players

Hamilton and a Strong Central Government

Alexander Hamilton firmly believed in the need for a powerful central government. He had been an officer in the American army during the Revolution, and saw first-hand the results of a weak central authority. While soldiers froze and starved to death, the Continental Congress could only beg for state assistance. Hamilton believed the future of the economy was in manufacturing and business, was loose constructionist, and wanted to start a national bank and mint.

Jefferson and the Power of the States

Thomas Jefferson served as ambassador in France during the American Revolution. He believed the threat of tyranny was ever-present in a strong central government. A **proponent** of the need for state **sovereignty**, Jefferson believed political power should come from the bottom up. Jefferson believed the union of the states was a voluntary one, and if the national government exceeded its **enumerated** powers, the states had the power to nullify federal law. Jefferson believed that agriculture was the future of the economy, was a strict constructionist, and believed that a national bank would give the federal government too much power and wasn't constitutional.

B.) Political Infighting: The First Political Party Division in the U.S. was between...

The Federalists

After the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, those supporting a strong central government realized the challenge of convincing the states to ratify a document that surrendered much of their sovereignty, so Hamilton and Madison wrote a series of argumentative pamphlets called "The Federalist Papers." In his farewell address after serving two terms as the nation's first president, George Washington warned of the danger of political parties. Nevertheless, Alexander Hamilton formed the first political party during Washington's term, called the Federalists. The Federalist Party's only successful presidential candidate was John Adams.

The Democratic-Republican Party

Jefferson and other Anti-Federalists argued against ratification of the Constitution and even suggested a second convention to redraft the document. They published their own series of pamphlets in opposition to the "The Federalist Papers," but offered no practical alternative to the states and lost the ratification debate. Jefferson and Madison, after undergoing a change in political ideology, formed a party to oppose the Federalists called the Democratic-Republican Party. It was not until after Washington's death that the two parties played a major role in the American political system. In an era known by historians as the "First Party System," the Democratic-Republican Party dominated the first quarter century of American politics.

Thomas

JEFFERSON

Profession: Lawyer

Home State: Virginia

Cabinet Position: Secretary of State

Jefferson's Position

Jefferson believed the United States needed a strong central government in foreign relations but that national matters were best left to individual states. Jefferson, originally from a family of wealthy planters, believed in an agrarian republic, in which the nation would thrive with agricultural work by average citizens. Jefferson feared a powerful central government would strip away the individual rights of citizens.



Alexander

HAMILTON

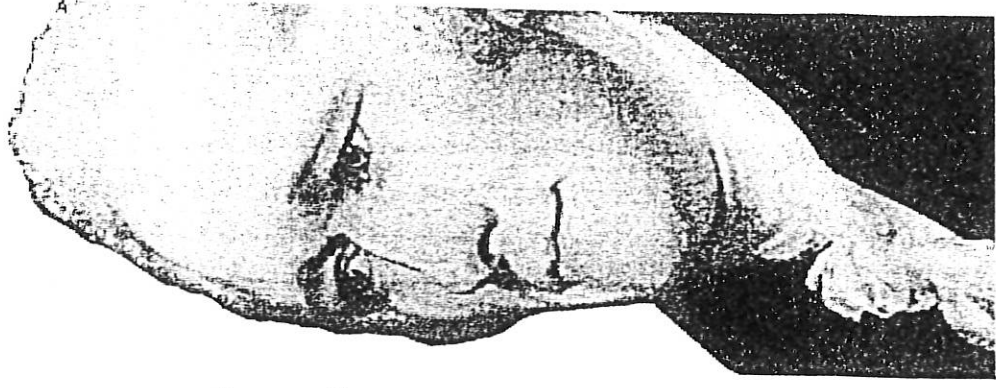
Profession: Lawyer

Home State: New York

Cabinet Position: Secretary of the Treasury

Hamilton's Position

Hamilton believed in the Constitution and the need for a centralized government. As Secretary of the Treasury, he believed that the new nation should have a national mint to produce standardized currency as well as a national bank. This, he believed, would help the young America develop industry and promote business. Hamilton feared a loosely organized central government would lead to disorder in the nation.



Alexander Hamilton Letter to George Washington, 1792 (Modified)

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter of August 26th. I sincerely regret that you have been made to feel uneasy in your administration. I will do anything to smooth the path of your administration, and heal the differences, though I consider myself the deeply injured party.

I *know* that I have been an object of total opposition from Mr. Jefferson. I *know* from the most authentic sources, that I have been the frequent subject of most unkind whispers by him. I have watched a party form in the Legislature, with the single purpose of opposing me. I believe, from all the evidence I possess, that the *National Gazette* (a newspaper) was instituted by Jefferson for political purposes, with its main purpose to oppose me and my department.

Nevertheless, I can truly say that, besides explanations to confidential friends, I never directly or indirectly responded to these attacks, until very recently.

But when I saw that they were determined to oppose the banking system, which would ruin the credit and honor of the Nation, I considered it my duty to resist their outrageous behavior.

Nevertheless, I pledge my honor to you Sir, that if you shall form a plan to reunite the members of your administration, I will faithfully cooperate. And I will not directly or indirectly say or do a thing to cause a fight. I have the honor to remain

Sir, Your most Obedient and Humble servant

A Hamilton

Source: This letter was written by Alexander Hamilton to President George Washington on September 9, 1792. Hamilton was Secretary of the Treasury in Washington's administration.

Thomas Jefferson Letter to George Washington, 1792 (Modified)

DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of August 23rd. You note that there have been internal tensions in your administration. These tensions are of great concern to me. I wish that you should know the whole truth.

I have never tried to convince members of the legislature to defeat the plans of the Secretary of Treasury. I value too highly their freedom of judgment. I admit that I have, in private conversations, disapproved of the system of the Secretary of Treasury. However, this is because his system stands against liberty, and is designed to undermine and demolish the republic.

I would like for these tensions to fade away, and my respect for you is enough motivation to wait to express my thoughts until I am again a private citizen. At that point, however, I reserve the right to write about the issues that concern the republic.

I will not let my retirement be ruined by the lies of a man who history—if history stoops to notice him—will remember a person who worked to destroy liberty. —Still, I repeat that I hope I will not have to write such a thing.

I trust that you know that I am not an enemy to the republic, nor a waster of the country's money, nor a traitor, as Hamilton has written about me.

In the meantime I am with great and sincere affection and respect, dear Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.

Thomas Jefferson

Source: This letter was written by Thomas Jefferson to President George Washington on September 9, 1792. Jefferson was Secretary of State in Washington's administration.

Guiding Questions

Name _____

Using BOTH letters by Hamilton and Jefferson, answer the questions below:

1. **(Sourcing)** When were these letters written? What do you predict they will say?

2. **(Context)** Why are both Hamilton and Jefferson writing to George Washington? Based on both of these letters, what seems to have been happening in George Washington's administration? How can you tell?

3. **(Close reading)** Which letter is angrier? Find a quote to support your claim:

Write one adjective about each man's *personality* and find a quote to support your claim.

In this letter, Hamilton seems to be _____. I'm basing this claim on the following quote:

In this letter, Jefferson seems to be _____. I'm basing this claim on the following quote:

4. **(Corroboration)** Who do you believe "started" the fight? Based on what they wrote, whom do you trust more: Hamilton or Jefferson? Why?