

# The Critical Period

*The Presidencies of  
Washington and Adams*

# Force of Public Opinion

- Federalists (Hamiltonians) stress national economy to preserve U.S. independence
- Republicans (Jeffersonians) prefer government small, local, responsive

# Principle and Pragmatism: Establishing a New Government

- George Washington unanimously elected president, 1789
- Dominant assumptions
  - all will work together for the common good
  - voters will defer to "betters" in political affairs

# Conflicting Visions: Alexander Hamilton

---

- Secretary of the Treasury
- Believed strong central government preserves national independence
- Envisioned U.S. as an industrial power
- Feared democracy would lead to anarchy

# Conflicting Visions: Thomas Jefferson

- Secretary of State under Washington
- Believed limited government preserves liberty
- Envisioned U.S. as an agrarian nation
- Trusted the common people

# Hamilton's Plan for Prosperity and Security

- A plan to get America solvent:
- pay off a federal debt of \$54 million, additional state debt of \$25 million
  1. Proposed "funding," "assumption" of debt
  2. Proposed national bank
  3. Proposed tariffs to raise revenue, aid manufacturing

# Funding and Assumption

- Assumption: federal government purchases states' debts
  - Initially defeated, salvaged through payments to Virginia, location of new capital on Potomac

# Interpreting the Constitution: The Bank Controversy

- National bank privately owned, Federally chartered to regulate finance
- Madison & Jefferson oppose as unconstitutional
- Hamilton defends constitutionality through doctrine of “implied powers” (Art. 1, Sec. 8, “necessary and proper” clause)
- Congress charters Bank, 1791



# Setback for Hamilton

- Report on Manufacturing (1791) seeks Federal encouragement for manufacturing
- Madison warns program will strengthen federal government at state expense
- Jefferson warns that the rise of cities will destroy agriculture and agrarian civic virtue
- Hamilton's recommendations defeated

# Charges of Treason: The Battle over Foreign Affairs

- European context
  - French Revolution
  - War in Europe
- Jeffersonian Republicans favor France
- Hamiltonian Federalists favor England

# The Peril of Neutrality

- Franco-British War breaks out 1793
- England violates American sovereignty, neutrality on high seas
  - Jefferson: punish England by cutting off trade
  - Hamilton: appease England because too strong
- French diplomat Edmond Genet challenges American neutrality repeatedly in public

# Jay's Treaty Sparks Domestic Unrest

- John Jay to England to demand:
  - removal of the English from American soil
  - payment for ships illegally seized
  - better commercial relations
  - acceptance of United States' neutrality
- Hamilton informs English U.S. not firm
- Jay's Treaty wins no concessions
- Washington dislikes, but accepts, treaty

# Whiskey Rebellion: Charges of Republican Conspiracy

- Excise tax on whiskey imposed 1791
- 1794--Pennsylvania farmers protest
- Republican governor refuses to act
- Federalist interpret as Republican conspiracy
- Jefferson sees crisis as Federalist invention

# Washington's Farewell

- Washington not limited to two terms
- 1796--announces decision to retire
- Warns against political parties
- Announcement timed to prevent Republican organization of presidential campaign

## THE ELECTION OF 1796

Candidate	Party	Electoral Vote
J. Adams	Federalist	71
Jefferson	Republican	68
T. Pinckney	Federalist	59
Burr	Republican	30

# The Adams Presidency

- 1796-1800--Federalists control government
- Attempt to suppress Republicans
- Federalist division thwarts suppression



# The XYZ Affair and Domestic Politics

- Jay's Treaty prompts France to treat U.S. as unfriendly nation
- Quasi-War: French fire on U.S. ships
- Diplomatic mission fails when three French officials (X, Y, and Z) demand bribe
- Provokes anti-French outrage in U.S.
- Federalists attempt to crush Republicans by branding as pro-French

# Crushing Political Dissent

- Federalists begin building up the army
  - ostensible purpose: repel French invasion
  - actual intention: stifle internal opposition
- Hamilton commands army, controls officers
- Hamilton seeks declaration of war against France to begin operations against dissent
- Adams refuses to ask Congress for war

# Silencing Political Opposition: The Alien and Sedition Acts

- Alien Enemies Act, Alien Act gives the president power to expel any foreigner
- The Naturalization Act requires U.S. residency of fourteen years for citizenship
- Sedition Act criminalizes criticism of the government
- Federalist appointees in federal courts enforce Sedition Act in absurd ways

# Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions

- Republicans see Alien and Sedition Acts as dire threat to liberty
- Jefferson's Kentucky Resolutions--states may **nullify** unconstitutional federal law
- Madison's Virginia Resolutions--urge states to protect their citizens
- Purpose of resolutions: clarify differences between Republicans and Federalists

# Adams's Finest Hour

- 1799--Adams breaks with Hamilton
- Negotiates settlement with France
- War hysteria against France vanishes
- Hamilton's army seen as a useless expense
- Adams' action costs him election in 1800

# The Peaceful Revolution: the Election of 1800

- Hamilton's High Federalists lead campaign to replace Adams with Pinckney
- Federalists unpopular
- Republican Thomas Jefferson wins
- Attempts to unite nation by stressing values shared by each party

## THE ELECTION OF 1800

Candidate	Party	Electoral Vote
Jefferson	Republican	73
Burr	Republican	73
J. Adams	Federalist	65
C. Pinckney	Federalist	64

# Danger of Political Extremism

- Election of 1800 one of the most important
- Transfer of power from Federalists to Republicans achieved peacefully
- Nation averted ideological civil war