



CHAPTER 10

The Jeffersonian Revolution (1800–1820)

IN THIS CHAPTER

Summary: The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 was a critical election in American history; Jefferson's view of America differed greatly from that of the Federalists. Alexander Hamilton and other Federalists envisioned America as a future industrial power. For Jefferson, the independence and pride of the yeoman farmer would guide America into the future. During the time when John Marshall was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the power of the federal courts increased. The overall size of America also increased in this era as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. The War of 1812 was fought over continued tensions between the Americans and the British. Many Americans in this era envisioned massive economic growth in the United States; this was the focus of Henry Clay's "American System."



KEY IDEA

Keywords

Marbury v. Madison (1803): critical Supreme Court decision that established the principle of judicial review, stating that the Supreme Court has the right to review all federal laws and decisions and declare whether or not they are constitutional.

Louisiana Purchase (1803): massive land purchase from Emperor Napoleon of France that virtually doubled the size of the United States.

Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804): expedition that discovered much about the western part of the North American continent and the economic possibilities there.

War of 1812: War between the British and the Americans over British seizure of American ships, connections between the British and Native-American tribes, and other tensions. The British sacked Washington, DC, in 1814. The treaty ending the war merely restored diplomatic relations between the two countries.

American System: Plan proposed by Senator Henry Clay and others to make America economically independent by increasing industrial production in the United States and by the creation of a Second National Bank.

Missouri Compromise (1820): political solution devised to keep the number of slave states and free states equal; Missouri entered the Union as a slave state and Maine entered as a free state. Potential states in the northern part of the Louisiana territory would also come in as free states in the future.

The Election of 1800

John Adams, despite much criticism over the Sedition Act, stood for reelection in 1800. The vice presidential candidate of the Federalists was Charles Pinckney. The candidate for the Republicans was Thomas Jefferson, with Aaron Burr running for vice president. At this point, all candidates were eligible for votes in the Electoral College; Jefferson and Burr each received 73 votes. (The **Twelfth Amendment** of 1804 would change this, stating that the Electoral College could vote for president and vice president separately.) The Constitution in 1800 threw the election to the House of Representatives, where each state received one vote. Federalists supported Burr, and it was only on the thirty-sixth ballot that Jefferson was elected president. Jefferson's victory was only assured when Alexander Hamilton convinced some Federalists to switch their votes to Jefferson, telling them that Burr was "the most unfit man in the United States for the office of president." Some historians term this election the "Revolution of 1800." As previously stated, Jefferson's vision of America had almost no similarity to the views of the Federalists who had been in power since the beginning of the Republic, yet they peacefully gave up power when the balloting was completed in the House of Representatives.

Some historians maintain that Thomas Jefferson was one of the most brilliant men ever to be elected president. Recent biographies and exposés on the life of Jefferson have largely ignored his immense political skills and intellect. Jefferson had been a diplomat, was familiar with European affairs, was a skillful politician, and was a distinguished political philosopher. He implemented Republican policies almost as soon as he took office, with the goal of cutting back on the growth of the federal government that had taken place under Adams. The Alien and Sedition Acts of Adams were not renewed, taxes such as the whiskey tax were eliminated, and Jefferson opposed further expansion of the national debt. On the other hand, Jefferson remained a pragmatist. As a member of Washington's cabinet, he had vigorously opposed the creation of a national bank, yet as president he supported it. (He reasoned that American economic growth was dependent on the existence of the bank.)

Reform of the Courts

When Jefferson was inaugurated in 1801, virtually every justice in the court system was a Federalist, since they had all been appointed by either Washington or Adams. Several weeks before Jefferson took office, the Congress passed the **Judiciary Act**, creating a large

number of new federal courts. In a series of “**midnight appointments**” made just hours before he left office, Adams appointed Federalists to all of these positions.

Jefferson’s Republican allies in the Congress repealed the Judiciary Act almost immediately and also impeached two Federalist judges. John Marshall was a Federalist who had been appointed chief justice of the Supreme Court by Adams and continued in office during Jefferson’s presidency and beyond. Marshall served as chief justice from 1801 to 1835 and served to dramatically improve the prestige and functioning of the federal court system.

Marshall also dramatically increased the power of the Supreme Court itself in the 1803 *Marbury v. Madison* decision. John Adams had appointed William Marbury to be justice of the peace for the District of Columbia in one of his final appointments before leaving office. James Madison, secretary of state under Jefferson, refused to issue the appointment letter signed by Adams. Marbury sued, demanding that the Supreme Court force Madison to release the appointment letter.

Marshall ruled that the Supreme Court did not have the power to force Madison to act. However, the ruling also stated that the Supreme Court did have the right to judge the constitutionality of federal laws and decisions. This began the principal of **judicial review**, making the judiciary an equal branch in every way with the executive and legislative branches.

Westward Expansion

As previously mentioned, Thomas Jefferson had a very different vision for America than had been held by Alexander Hamilton and many other Federalists. While Hamilton had envisioned America as evolving into a mighty industrial power, Jefferson’s view of an ideal America was one made up largely of yeoman farmers, who would possess a spirit of fierce independence and pride. To accomplish this end, Jefferson encouraged further expansion westward (into the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River). Over 1 million settlers lived there in 1800; in 1804, it became even easier to purchase land in this territory when it became possible to buy 160 acres of land for a down payment of \$80. New settlers streamed into the area, sometimes settling on land legally owned by Native-American tribes.

Jefferson publicly stated that the best approach to Native Americans would be to show them the benefits of farming. He felt that if Native Americans could be turned into farmers, they would not need all of their forestlands and they might incorporate themselves as citizens of the United States. However, Jefferson’s desire for western settlement far outweighed his desire for fair treatment for Native Americans. The pattern that began under Jefferson and continued for decades was one in which Native Americans were forced to sign treaties in which they gave up more and more of their lands with virtually nothing given in return.

The Louisiana Purchase

In secret treaties between France and Spain signed in 1800 and 1801, France regained the Louisiana territory. Americans did not hear of this until 1802 and were worried that Napoleon’s France might attempt to reassert its power in the Americas. Napoleon also expressed his desire to place Haiti back under French control. Concerns increased when, in the last two months of their control there, the Spanish refused to allow American ships to store products in New Orleans (which had been common practice).

Jefferson feared war with France and sent Virginia governor James Monroe to France to see if France would sell part of the territory to the United States. Napoleon had been unable to recapture Haiti and needed money to finance his army for his European conquests, so he offered to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for \$15 million. The **Louisiana Purchase** doubled the size of the United States; for Jefferson this was the perfect opportunity to expand the “empire of liberty.” Many Northeastern Federalists were opposed to the Louisiana Purchase, fearing it would decrease their economic and political power. Nevertheless, the purchase was overwhelmingly ratified by Congress in late 1803. Jefferson’s pragmatism was also displayed when he approved the Louisiana Purchase. The Constitution did not mention that the federal government had the right to acquire new territory; Jefferson had always interpreted the Constitution strictly, and normally stated that the federal government had no powers that were not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. However, in Jefferson’s eyes, the acquisition of the Louisiana territory was absolutely essential for the continued growth of the United States.

Jefferson and many others in America wanted more accurate information about the geography, the peoples, and the economic possibilities of the rest of the continent. In 1804, the **Lewis and Clark Expedition** began. This expedition of nearly 50 men took two years to complete; despite hardships, they crossed the Rockies and eventually made it to the Pacific Ocean. The information they brought back about the possibilities of further expansion in the West intrigued many.

Political Tensions and the Strange Case of Aaron Burr

Federalists feared that the country was being debased by virtually every move that Jefferson made. A group of Federalists called the **Essex Junto** existed in Boston and loudly campaigned against the “decline in public virtue” they saw personified in Jefferson. Thomas Pickering, senator from Massachusetts, saw Jefferson as a “Parisian revolutionary monster.” A younger group of Federalists tried to improve the image of the party, although the Federalist candidate, Charles C. Pinckney, received only 14 electoral votes in the 1804 election.

Aaron Burr was vice president, but after the fiasco of the 1800 election, he had no meaningful role during Jefferson’s first term. Some New England Federalists had spoken of leaving the Union after the Louisiana Purchase and forming a Northern Confederacy. The group tried to get Alexander Hamilton to join them. After he refused, they tried to recruit Aaron Burr, who, seeing no future role in a Washington run by Thomas Jefferson, was trying to become governor of New York. Hamilton accused Burr of attempting to ruin the United States. At this point, Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel (a practice that had been outlawed in the United States). Hamilton died in the duel, and Burr was indicted for murder.

After ending his term as vice president, Burr moved to the West (probably to avoid jail). While in Louisiana, he met up with General James Wilkinson, the military governor there. The two plotted to turn Louisiana into an independent nation, with Burr as its leader. Burr was betrayed by Wilkinson and arrested. Burr was acquitted, but his actions and the actions of other Federalists demonstrated the deep divisions that were developing in the United States. Federalists had plotted secession, President Jefferson wanted a conviction of Burr at all costs, and Federalist John Marshall, who presided over the trial, made several rulings that helped Burr (possibly to discredit the efforts of Jefferson).

European Wars Spill Over to America (Again)

The Napoleonic Wars of Europe that lasted from 1802 until 1815 had a powerful impact on the United States. America viewed its role in these wars as neutral, yet came into conflict with both France and Great Britain. According to the terms of the Continental System, American ships that traded in Britain were sometimes stopped and seized. British ships also seized ships trading with the French West Indies, made merchants pay heavily to get special licenses to send their ships through the British naval blockade of the continent, and practiced **impressment** (forcing deserted British sailors but also American citizens into the British navy). Jefferson banned British warships from American ports, yet impressment and the stopping and seizing of American ships continued.

Many in America wanted war, but Jefferson thought that economic pressure would cause the British and the French to respect the rights of America as a neutral. He declared the **Embargo of 1807** by which American ships could not enter the seas until England and France stopped their harassment of American shipping. Predictably, the effect on the American economy was disastrous. Exports dropped dramatically, with Northeastern merchants, Southern plantation owners, and even farmers dramatically affected.

The Embargo of 1807 was by far the most unpopular act championed by Jefferson. In the 1808 presidential election, Congressman James Madison was elected president, even though he was one of the architects of the embargo bill.

Seeing that America had actually fallen into economic depression, Madison in 1808 introduced the **Non-Intercourse Act**, which opened trade with all countries except England and France. An 1810 act again threatened to cut trade with any nation that interfered with American ships, which England and France continued to do.

The War of 1812

Reasons for the War

Frustrated by the continued British policies of impressment and seizure of ships, Madison formally asked Congress for a Declaration of War against Britain in June 1812. Many Federalists opposed the war. They regarded Great Britain as a potential trading partner and viewed British citizens as people "like themselves." To many Americans, Madison's argument that the country's political and economic rights as a neutral power had been violated was convincing. A younger group of Republicans, personified by Henry Clay of Kentucky, were especially supportive of war. This group, called the "War Hawks," felt that war would enable the United States to acquire more territory in the West, leading to greater economic growth.

Another stated cause for war revolved around connections between the British and Native Americans. In 1812, two members of the Shawnee tribe, Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa, decided the time was right to take a stand against further settlement by whites in the region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. Tecumseh joined many tribes together, terrifying settlers in the region. James Madison was convinced by Western political leaders that the Native Americans were being encouraged (and being armed) by the British in Canada. The attack on Tecumseh's village by General William Henry Harrison in late 1811 intensified the conflict that would take place with Native Americans in the region.

The Outbreak of War

The United States was totally unprepared for war against Britain when war was first declared. In 1812, the army consisted of 6,000 men, and the entire navy was made up of 17 ships. The first military effort was a three-pronged attack against Canada, with the intent of destroying Indian villages, defeating British troops, and taking Montreal. Military efforts were largely unsuccessful, and American troops soon retreated.

The American navy had some initial successes, but American ships were soon driven back and blockaded in their own ports. The naval victories of 1812 at least boosted the morale of the American nation. Native Americans, including Tecumseh and the Shawnees, were fighting on the side of the British. The first big victory for the Americans came in the summer of 1813 when William Henry Harrison and his force defeated the British and the Native Americans at the Thames River (east of present-day Detroit), killing Tecumseh. In Tennessee, a militiaman, Andrew Jackson, led many victories over Indian forces.

The Attack on Washington

Napoleon was finally defeated in 1814. Many Americans rejoiced at the defeat of the French, but also realized that the United States was now Britain's only enemy. The British began an offensive in New York, and, in August 1814, a second British army advanced on Washington. Most Washingtonians (including President Madison) left the city before the British arrived, but the British proceeded to sack the city, including the White House and the Capitol.

Ironically, as the British were burning the Capitol, peace negotiations for ending the war were already in progress in Ghent, Belgium. With the European war over, many of the issues that had driven Britain and America apart, such as blockading and impressment, now appeared to be less important. After sustained battles against Napoleon, public opinion in England did not favor continued military action in the Americas. The strange **Treaty of Ghent**, which ended the war, actually said nothing about impressment or neutral trading rights, but simply restored diplomatic relations between Britain and the United States. Two weeks after peace was declared, Andrew Jackson defeated a large British force at the Battle of New Orleans.

Political Effects of the War

Nine days before the Treaty of Ghent was signed, a group of Federalists met at the **Hartford Convention**. They continued to see the war as disastrous to their interests and viewed with extreme suspicion the growing influence of politicians and military leaders from the West. Proposals regarding **nullification**, and even one concerning **secession**, were debated. When the ending of the war and the victory at New Orleans were announced, the actions of the Federalists appeared foolish. Their influence on political life in America was drawing to an end. With the decline of the Federalists, the United States was more united after the War of 1812 than it had been for years. As a result, the years 1816 to 1823 are called in textbooks the **Era of Good Feelings**, with James Monroe taking over the presidency in 1817.

The American System

Henry Clay and other nationalists in Congress proposed the **American System** in the aftermath of the War of 1812. This plan was supported by James Madison and most fully implemented by James Monroe. The purpose of this plan was to make America less

economically dependent on Europe by encouraging the production of goods in the United States that had previously been imported. Important to this economic growth would also be a **Second National Bank**, so that credit would be readily available, and a rather large protective tariff, which would encourage production and interstate commerce.

The **Tariff of 1816** raised tariff rates to nearly 22 percent, providing more than adequate protection for American business interests and revenues for improvements in the internal transportation system of the United States. A second national bank was also chartered in 1816. There was rapid economic growth in the postwar years, as Europeans and others traded for American tobacco, cotton, and grain. Economic growth could not last forever, and a depression gripped America in 1819.

The Missouri Compromise

The issue of slavery was one that grew more urgent as more settlers moved westward: would the territories they were moving into be slave states or free? In 1808, the further exporting of slaves was eliminated. Additional states had joined the Union, some slave and some free. By 1819, there were 11 slave states and 11 free states. The issue came to a head that year when Missouri petitioned to join the Union as a slave state. Debate in the Congress and in newspapers around the country was heated; to many Northerners, to have more slave states than free states was unthinkable. In 1820, Speaker of the House Henry Clay engineered the Missouri Compromise, by which Maine entered the Union as a free state, Missouri entered as a slave state, and, in the Louisiana Territory, any states north of 36 degrees, 30 minutes had to come in as free states. Many at the time realized that this solution would only be a temporary one.

Chapter Review



Rapid Review Guide

To achieve the perfect 5, you should be able to explain the following:

- The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 is called the “Revolution of 1800,” as the new president had a completely different vision of America from the Federalists whom he replaced.
- Thomas Jefferson was one of the most brilliant men ever to serve as president, and he instituted many “Republican” policies during his eight years in office.
- The role of the federal courts was greatly strengthened during the tenure of John Marshall as chief justice of the Supreme Court.
- The Louisiana Purchase more than doubled the size of the United States and allowed the “empire of liberty” to continue to expand.
- The case of Aaron Burr showed the deep political divisions that existed in the United States during this period.
- The Napoleonic Wars greatly impacted the relationship between the United States, England, and France.
- America entered the War of 1812 because President Madison convinced the nation that America’s rights as a neutral power had been violated and because many in Congress felt that the British were encouraging the resistance by Native-American tribes.

- The American System of Henry Clay and others was proposed after the War of 1812 and outlined a plan for broad economic growth for the United States.
- The Missouri Compromise temporarily solved the issue of the number of slave states versus the number of free states.

Time Line

- 1800: Thomas Jefferson elected president in "Revolution of 1800"
- 1801: John Marshall named chief justice of the Supreme Court
Alien and Sedition Acts not renewed
- 1803: Louisiana Purchase
Marbury v. Madison established federal judicial review
- 1804: Alexander Hamilton killed in duel with Aaron Burr
Thomas Jefferson reelected
Twelfth Amendment ratified (separate voting for president, vice president)
Beginning of Lewis and Clark expedition
- 1807: Embargo Act greatly harms foreign trade
- 1808: James Madison elected president
Further importation of slaves into the United States made illegal
- 1812: Beginning of the War of 1812
- 1814: British army sacks Washington
Treaty of Ghent formally ends the War of 1812
Indian removal from Southern territories begins in earnest
- 1814–
- 1815: Hartford Convention (meeting of Federalists)
- 1815: Victory of Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans (after the War of 1812 was officially over)
Henry Clay proposes the American System
- 1816: James Monroe elected president
- 1816–
- 1823: Era of Good Feelings
- 1820: Missouri Compromise

› Review Questions

1. The *Marbury v. Madison* decision
 - A. gave powers to the president that the Republicans of Thomas Jefferson claimed he didn't have
 - B. gave broad judicial power to the state courts
 - C. declared that the Alien and Sedition Acts were constitutional
 - D. established the principle of judicial review
 - E. legalized the removal of Native Americans from western lands
2. As a result of the election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800,
 - A. more assistance was given to the commercial sector
 - B. politicians in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia gained power
 - C. American foreign policy became more pro-British
 - D. the federal debt rose dramatically
 - E. federal excise taxes were eliminated

3. All of the following are reasons why America entered the War of 1812 *except*
 - A. the impressment of American naval crews
 - B. the existence of a strong American navy ready to demonstrate its capabilities
 - C. the relationship between the British and Native-American tribes in the western territories of North America
 - D. the violation of America's rights as a neutral power
 - E. the desire of American leaders to acquire additional western territories
4. The Hartford Convention demonstrated that
 - A. the Federalist party had remained a dominant party in American political life
 - B. the War of 1812 brought political union to the United States
 - C. the concept of nullification was not exclusively a Southern one
 - D. the legacy of John Adams was large
 - E. the Treaty of Ghent was a controversial treaty
5. The American System of Henry Clay
 - A. favored strong economic growth and a Second National Bank
 - B. wanted to make the United States the military equivalent of Great Britain or France
 - C. wanted to place a ceiling on the national debt
 - D. favored lowering tariffs, so that more goods could be purchased from abroad
 - E. advocated the elimination of slavery

> Answers and Explanations

1. **D.** The decision stated that the Supreme Court had the right to decide on the constitutionality of federal rulings and laws.
2. **E.** All of the remaining answers would have been true if a Federalist had been elected president. Jefferson favored lessening the power of the federal government, and eliminating federal excise taxes was one way in which he did so.
3. **B.** The United States had an army of 6,000 men and 17 ships when war began. All the other choices are reasons why Americans supported the War of 1812.
4. **C.** Kentucky and Virginia spoke of nullification after the Sedition Act; New England Federalists saw the War of 1812 as a disaster and at the Hartford Convention also spoke of nullification.
5. **A.** The American System favored American economic growth, a National Bank, and increased tariffs to protect American businesses and finance new transportation systems within the United States.