

Thomas jefferson vs. alexander hamilton

[History](#), [American History](#)



Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were two very influential people with very different ideals. With land inherited from his father, Jefferson set himself up as a Virginia tobacco farmer. Once established as a planter, Jefferson entered Virginia politics. As a politician, he did not have the ability to make rousing speeches. Instead, Jefferson spoke eloquently through his writing. His words in the Declaration of Independence and other writings are still admired today. Since Hamilton had no money or family connections to help him rise in the world, he made his way on ability, ambition, and charm.

George Washington noticed Hamilton's talents in the early stages of the Revolutionary War. Washington made Hamilton his " aide-de-camp", also known as a personal assistant. Near the end of the Revolution, Hamilton helped his cause by marrying Elizabeth Schuyler. She was born into one of New York's most powerful families. With her family's political background, after the war was over, Hamilton was elected to represent New York in Congress .

Later, he served as a delegate from New York to the Constitutional Convention . Although they had different upbringings, the two had huge influences on the upbringing of the United States.

Jefferson and Hamilton had two very different views on politics. Many clear thinking Americans could tell you at least some facts about Thomas Jefferson. Far fewer would likely have an idea of who Alexander Hamilton was and what he provided as a Founding Father. Yet his idea of an American government was just as important as that of Jefferson. Both Jefferson and Hamilton foresaw the new nation as a future power, and both had very

different ways to get it there. Jefferson believed the nation's strengths lay in its agricultural roots.

He favored an agrarian nation with most powers reserved for the states. He was very opposed to a sturdy central authority and believed that the citizens were the final authorities in government. Jefferson also encouraged support for the French Revolution. Hamilton favored a strong central authority. He believed a strong government was important to provide order so that business and industry could develop. He envisioned America becoming an industrial power. Until his death, he sought to establish a national bank and fund the national debt in order to establish a solid base for national credit . Hamilton believed that the government should be controlled by those who were educated and wealthy rather than by “ the mob,” otherwise known as the lower class. He opposed involvement in the French Revolution and worried Jeffersonians by appearing, and maybe even being, too self-serving with Britain .

The two men also had a different view of the ideal economy. Like most Americans in the 1790s, Jefferson was a man of the country. He believed that the nation's future didn't lay with Federalist bankers and merchants, but with plain, Democratic-Republican farmers. “ Those who labor in the earth,” he wrote, “ are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people.” Democratic-Republicans favored an economy based on agriculture.

They contested any measures designed to positively influence the growth of business and manufacturing . Hamilton's dream of national greatness was dependent upon the United States growing and maintaining a strong economy. In 1790, the nation's economy was still based primarily on <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-jefferson-vs-alexander-hamilton/>

agriculture. Hamilton sought to expand the economy and increase the nation's wealth by using the power of the federal government to encourage business, manufacturing, and trade. In 1790, Hamilton presented Congress with a plan to pay off all war debts as soon as possible. Hamilton claimed that if the debts were not promptly paid the government would lose respect both at home and abroad. Hamilton's plan for repaying the debts was combatted by many Americans, especially in the South. Most southern states had already paid their war debts. They saw little or no reason to help states in the North pay off what they still owed .

Jefferson and Hamilton had varying views on foreign policy. During Jefferson's time in office, France declared war on all of Europe while Britain declared war on France. With all of this war, the amount of trade was lowered. This caused oppression in the United States. Napoleon formed a blockade of Great Britain, and then Great Britain initiated a blockade of all of Europe. These blockades were not sufficient, but during the process 1500 American ships were abducted and all of the sailors were forced into the British navy. From this happening, Jefferson ordered the Embargo Act, which terminated the trading with foreign countries from U. S. merchants.

This act was passed in order to hold the U. S. out of war by concealing American ships away from the blockades. This act was not obeyed completely because many Americans would smuggle goods to different ports. From 1804-1809, the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts were passed. These acts were passed to avoid America from entering the war with France and the British. The Embargo Act didn't allow any trade between America and any foreign countries in order to prevent American ships from being

abducted in the blockades being formed. Many people disobeyed this act, so Jefferson chose to pass the Non-Intercourse Act in 1809. This act permitted American merchants to trade with ports other than British. In 1809, the act was discarded, but was later replaced by the Non-Intercourse Act, which stated that Americans could trade with foreign nations other than the European nations.

This act also failed to keep American ships out of the European ports . In the first decade of the republic, Hamilton played a decisive role in shaping domestic and foreign policy. In 1790, as Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington, he presented a far-reaching financial program to the first Congress. He proposed that the debt accumulated by the Continental Congress be paid in full, that the federal government assume all state debts, and that a Bank of the United States be commissioned. For revenue, Hamilton advocated a tariff on imported goods and a series of excise taxes. He hoped by these measures to bolster the national government at the expense of the states and to tie government to men of wealth and prosperity .

Both of these men played major roles in the formation of political parties. During the formative years of our nation's history, the attentions of north and south, rich and poor, and industry and agriculture were tossed into the same pressure cooker of dissent until two extremely different visions for the country were brought forth. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton believed that our new country's federal government should be more centralized. Hamilton particularly advocated the creation of a national bank that would establish financial policy, institute credit, and homogenize a nationwide

currency. Opponents dreaded that a stronger federal government would function more like a monarchy and wipe out the new idea of democracy.

However, Hamilton created the Federalist Party. Such opponents, such as Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and House Representative James Madison, believed it was more important to provide more power to separate states. Jefferson also believed the creation of a national bank was not allowed by the Constitution. Finding the distance separating their visualizations only growing, Hamilton created the Federalist Party and Jefferson developed the Republican Party, it was later called the Democratic-Republican Party. Both parties emerged during Washington's second term, and Washington was not happy. Washington believed that such parties would only rupture our nation and "render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection." Washington wrote these words in his farewell address, asking Americans to set aside their differences and remain unified .

The political parties that Jefferson and Hamilton developed are not quite the same as they once were. The first two political parties to emerge during Washington's term of office were the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists . The major problem in the beginning was the ratification of the Constitution, with the Federalists standing by it and the Anti-Federalist wanting guarantees of individual freedoms and rights that were not included in the original document. The issue was sorted out with the addition of the Bill of Rights, but the parties did not depart with the issue. The Federalists were guided by Alexander Hamilton, the Secretary of the Treasury, and represented urban, business-oriented men who preferred elitism and a

strong central government. The Federalists supported Hamilton's formation of the Bank of the United States because they saw it as advancing their interests and beliefs. The Anti-Federalists came to be acknowledged as the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson.

They favored stronger state governments, rural interests, and a weaker central government. They contested the bank as a foe of state control. With Hamilton's death and John Adams' disapproval as president, Jefferson emerged as the most admired leader at the turn of the nineteenth century. As president he progressively became more accepting of a strong central government, and the two parties' points of view appeared to merge notably in the "Era of Good Feeling" presided over by James Monroe, one of Jefferson's prodigies. The Democratic-Republicans arose as the only party, and their dominance continued until the mid-1800's, though under a new name, the Democrats. The two-party system reemerged with the appearance of Andrew Jackson, who appealed to the expanding country, in which newer states found much in common with the rural, southern states but little with the developed northeast.

A new party later emerged, the Whigs. They represented many of the interests of the old Federalist Party. Jackson's election in 1828 was achieved with a coalition between South and West, creating the new Democratic Party. Jackson's Democrats were a simpler sort than Jefferson's, who were mainly gentlemen farmers from the South and Middle Atlantic states. With the Jacksonian era's worldwide manhood suffrage, practically all men could vote. This meant that rural, anti-bank, small farmers from the South and West molded the backbone of the Democratic Party. During this era the

Democrats started the tradition of holding a national convention to elect a presidential candidate. Delegates elected from state and local parties could vote for the candidate, rather than the chosen party leaders who met in secret.

The Whigs were left with not only the old Federalist interests, but other groups, much like wealthy rural Southerners, who had absolutely nothing in common with other Whigs. The party was not ideologically coherent, but found success by nominating war heroes, such as William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor. As the Whigs were falling apart, a new Republican Party emerged from the issue of expansion of slavery into other territories. In 1860, the first Republican, Abraham Lincoln was sworn into office setting off the secession of southern states, and with them, many advocates of the Democratic Party. The Civil War ended the era of dominance of the Democrats, and marshaled in a new Republican era. Voters realigned according to regional differences and conflicting points of view regarding the expansion of slavery and state rights.

During the Reagan presidency, Democrats began to adopt some of the Republican strategies and principles, including computerized mailing lists, opinion polls, and paid consultants. The party managed to lead their candidate, Bill Clinton, to presidency in 1993, a position he held for eight years, two terms. However, government continued to be divided because the Republicans won both houses of Congress in 1994 and held them up until 2001, when the Senate resumed a Democratic majority.

By this time, George W. Bush, a Republican, had been elected President, so the tradition of a separated government, developed in 1969, continued.

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However, Republicans regained hold on the Senate in the 2002 elections; they swept the presidency and both houses of Congress in the elections of 2004. These recent events have led some observers to reason that a new Republican era is beginning, and that divided government as a recurring phenomenon may be coming to an end .