

Political parties in the american revolution

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



By the beginning of American Revolution, the 13 Colonies already had a profound experience of own political living. Such brilliant personalities as Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams and Thomas Paine, later becoming Founding Fathers of a new nation were known as original philosophers, lawyers and politicians far behind the Colonies. Each of them, naturally, had his own idea of principles, upon which a State should be grounded and this led to many years of debate, in which modern American political system was born. Most of them were followed by groups of supporters, who formed that, what later became factions and political parties. In this paper I will investigate the origins of political parties in American Revolution and how their political concepts have been influenced by the views of their founders.

The first matter, which has been debated by political factions regarded the most basic question: whether to struggle for independence or not. On this grounds the colonists separated themselves into the Revolutionists (Patriots), the Loyalists and the Neutrals. Patriots included a wide range of social groups, united by the idea of independence. The minority, estimated about 15-25% of the population kept supporting the British rule[1]. They were typically older, than the Revolutionists and were known for their conservatism, as well as recent immigrants from Great Britain. After American victory in the War of Independence, some of the Loyalists moved to the neighboring British colonies of Quebec or Nova Scotia. However, Patriots and Loyalists can not be yet called "real" parties.

Associated essay: What Led to the Rise of Political Parties in the 1790s Essay

The first separation of the Founders themselves to distinct groups, struggling against one another, has happened at the ratification of the Constitution. The basic division was into Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Articles of Confederation were signed separately by representatives of each State and initially nothing, but a broad confederation of independent states was meant as a form of state structure for the USA. However, the most influential Founding Fathers, including military leaders, such as George Washington and politicians, such as Franklin, quickly came to understanding, that confederacies is a too weak form of state system, which would likely lead to further conflicts between separate states. After Shays' Rebellion Washington came to understand, that the Government can not be effective under Articles of confederation.

Those could not satisfy their demands, and the federalists believed, that a new document, specifying basic grounds for a State must have been introduced. So, the Federalists started advocating a closer union with stronger powers of central government. And these were the Federalists, who proposed a project of the Constitution. To gain public support the Federalists issued that, what is now known as "Federalist Papers" and has been actually called simply "Federalist". The writing included a series of 85 articles in support of Federalism with philosophic, politic and legal explanation of it's benefits, authored by Madison, Hamilton, Burr and John Jay[2].

The Anti-Federalists included much less known representatives of lower classes, fearful, that stronger government would lead to hegemony of rich plantation owners and wealthy people. They pointed, that Articles of

Confederation was a sufficient and effective document and the Constitution was simply unnecessary and dangerous for principles, upon which the American Revolution has been grounded.

Under their opinion, that centralization would lead to abolition of freedom and corruption. Notably, Patrick Henry opposed the Constitution in his speeches, accusing Federalists of intention to make President an actual King. As he noted: " The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government -- lest it come to dominate our lives and interests." [3]

Anti-federalists also strongly opposed the idea of Federal Court, declaring, that it will turn into a body of oppression and make local governments dependant on the will of the centre. Same as Federalists, the Anti-federalists tried to influence public opinion by their articles, issued under pseudonyms such as Brutus or Federal Farmer. Contemporary historicists gathered them into a collection, sometimes referred as " Anti-Federalist Papers".

Opposition appeared to be so strong, that in North Carolina and Rhode Island it managed to take over the public opinion and block ratification of the Constitution. Only the establishment of new governments allowed to adopt Constitution in those states. However, the opposition has not put up with the victory of Federalists, and their massive protests, led by Judge William West almost resulted in a civil conflict [4]. However, victory was on the side of Federalists, to a great extent due to Washington's authority. As the first President said: " Constitution is a guide, to which I never will abandon"

After weeks of fierce debate an accord, known as "Massachusetts compromise" has been signed between Federalists and Anti-Federalists and a recommendation has been included to the Constitution, that it must have been amended by a Bill of Rights.

As the Constitution has been passed and became operative, both movements were so exhausted, that they started to decay. A new wave of Federalism emerged, based on the based policies of Alexander Hamilton, who stressed the necessity of strong national government and protectionist economy. Together with his allies Hamilton organized a national Federalist Party, which lead John Adams to be elected President. Nevertheless, with defeat of Adams at elections in 1800, the second Federalist party also felt into disfavor, until it took exit in 1821. The Anti-Federalists continued to advocate strict-constructionism and popular rights and was finally transformed into the Democratic-Republican Party of Thomas Jefferson[5].

The adoption of Constitution and early political of America has been characterized by sharp discussion and struggle of opinions. From the historic perspective, it is impossible to say, that Federalists were winners and Anti-Federalists were losers. Both parties made an outstanding contribution to the legal base of the USA - the Federalists by the Constitution, and the Anti-Federalists by the Bill of Rights. Therefore, it is possible to speac of normal democratic process, where every opinion is taken into account.

Sources used

1. 1. Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present, Harper Perennial (Reprint edition), 2003

2. 2. T. H. Breen, George M. Fredrickson, and R. Hal Williams, *America, Past and Present*, vol. 1 (until 1865), 8 ed. Longman, 2006