

Differences between hamilton and jefferson

Countries, United States



Both Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were prominent members of society during the era after the revolution. Yet while these two men came from similar backgrounds and both believed in liberty and independence, neither of the two men could stand each other. This was mainly due to the fact that the two men had radically different views on various subjects, and neither was willing to give up or alter their view. Alexander Hamilton, one of the most important people of the time, was the first Secretary of the Treasury. Utilising federal power to modernize the nation, he convinced Congress to use an elastic interpretation of the Constitution to pass laws that Jefferson deemed unconstitutional. These laws included federal assumption of the state debts, creation of a national bank, and a system of taxes through a tariff on imports and a tax on whiskey. Hamilton was also the creator of the Federalist party. In contrast, Thomas Jefferson was born to a wealthy family but was nonetheless an anti-federalist. He was sympathetic towards the poor people and advocated state's rights. Yet, although Jefferson often showed a strong dislike for the Federalist laws and programs, when Jefferson took the office, he left many of the Federalist programs intact, and except for revoking the excise tax, the Hamiltonian system was mostly left as it was. However, this act of Jefferson's went against many of the political beliefs held by his party and himself. Jeffersonian philosophy and Hamiltonian philosophy differed greatly in that Jeffersonian philosophy adhered to a weak central government, with most of the power in the hands of the states. It believed that the federal government's power should be restrained and limited, so that it would not be able to become tyrannical or try and undermine the power of the states and the people. Also, Jeffersonian

philosophy advocated a strict interpretation of the Constitution. They took the words of the Constitution at face value, and did not try to interpret any hidden connotation of the Constitution. For instance, when it came to the National Bank of the United States of America, Hamilton believed that it was constitutional to authorize it because what the " Constitution did not forbid it permitted" (Pageant 195). Yet Jefferson believed the opposite, since " there was not specific authorization in the Constitution" (Pageant 195) for the bank, the bank should not be authorized. Hamilton's view on this was based on the " elastic clause", which stated that Congress would receive the power " to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof. " The elastic clause allowed for Hamilton's loose-constructionist views, which allowed the judiciary to determine the meaning of the something not only in terms of law, but also in the intent. The opposing view was of Jefferson's strict-constructionist stance which allowed only for a judicial interpretation according to the law. However, Hamiltonian philosophy advocated a strong central government that could put down edcesses of democratic actions like Shays's Rebellion. Hamilton's philosophy also favored the rich and tried to protect the purses of the wealthy. Thus, there were many supporters for Federalists amongst the wealthier classes, and especially amongst the merchants on the seaboard. On the other hand, Jefferson's policies favored the farmers and the poor people, and thus Jefferson found his supporters in the poorer areas, such as the west. There was not only political tension between Jefferson and Hamilton, but also

economical tension as the two men found their different political beliefs influencing their economical viewpoints. Hamilton favored a very aggressive approach to taking care of the financial burdens of the US. He urged the central government to take upon itself all the debts of the various states and to fund the national debt at par, which meant that the federal government would pay the entire national debt at face value. This saddled the government with an enormous debt of 75 million dollars, which Hamilton believed would raise the public credit. Then, to get the money to pay for this action, Hamilton got Congress to pass an excise tax on some domestic products; the most important was whiskey. However, this action on the part of Hamilton angered Jefferson, which he viewed as an infringement of the Federal government. All of the Hamilton's schemes were evident encroachments into state's rights. Since Hamilton was a staunch supporter of a powerful central government, he had no real problem with his actions, yet it was very troubling to Jefferson, who believed that Hamilton's aggressive economic actions were draining away the power of the states. Another problem was that Hamilton's economic policy favored the rich, which Jefferson himself was a staunch supporter of the poor people, especially the farmers. Jefferson believed that agriculture was a decent position as it kept people away from wicked cities, in the sun, and close to God when they farmed. Also, Jefferson believed that agriculture would be able to support a nation at war and make sure that its supply lines would not be cut off and leave the US vulnerable. While Hamilton and Jefferson both tried to give the new nation what they thought was best, it was inevitable that their views would clash. Due to sharp differences in their political and

economical thoughts, Hamilton and Jefferson more often than not found themselves fighting over issues they should have been in agreement with. Hamilton's Federalism and Jefferson's anti-Federalism all served to create different movements that would affect the nation both economically and politically as the years after the Revolution played out.