

Name: _____
Social Studies 7

Date: _____
A New Nation



The First Political Parties: How Americans Divided Over Political Issues

The American people generally admired Washington and his service to the nation. Still, harsh attacks appeared from time to time in the newspapers. Most of the attacks came from the supporters of Thomas Jefferson. They hoped to weaken the support of Alexander Hamilton's policies, which President Washington generally supported. By 1796, the supporters of Jefferson and Hamilton had begun to form the nation's first political parties.

At that time, many Americans believed that political parties were harmful to the nation. The Constitution made no mention of parties because the authors saw no good use for them. Washington strongly disapproved of political parties, or "factions." He warned that they would divide the nation. To others, though, it seemed natural that people would disagree about issues. They also knew that people who hold similar views tend to band together.

Washington's cabinet was clearly divided on many key issues. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had very different views. They disagreed on economic policy and foreign relations. They didn't share the same views on the power of the federal government or the meaning of the Constitution. Washington believed he was **non-partisan**, or not biased toward either group, but in reality he often favored Hamilton's views.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Thomas Jefferson</i>	<i>Alexander Hamilton</i>
<i>U.S. Economy</i>		
<i>Federal or State governments?</i>		
<i>The Constitution</i>		
<i>Alliances</i>		

Political Parties Emerge

The differences found in Washington's cabinet also existed in Congress and among the public. They formed the basis for two distinct political groups, which became America's first political parties.

One party was the **Federalists**. Led by Alexander Hamilton, this group favored a strong federal government. They believed the Constitution gave government "implied" powers, not listed clearly in the document. Federalists believed that Congress could make laws that were "necessary and proper" to carry out its delegated, or specific, powers. This was called a loose interpretation of the Constitution. Federalists also believed that educated, wealthy men should hold public office- they didn't trust ordinary people to make good political decisions.

The **Democratic-Republicans**, also known as the Republicans, stood against the Federalists. Jefferson and Madison led this faction. They believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution. They rejected the idea that there are implied powers and believed that Congress should be limited only to what is specifically written in the Constitution. Republicans feared a strong central government and believed that a loose interpretation of the Constitution would create a central government that abused its powers. They also believed that limiting decision-making to only the wealthy and educated wasn't democratic- that ordinary people must take part in government. Jefferson wrote, "I am not among those who fear the people. They, and not the rich, are our dependence for continued freedom."

Debate over the national bank highlighted these differences. The Constitution gave Congress specific powers to do such things as issue and borrow money. To Hamilton, this implied that the federal government could also create a bank to help with these tasks. Jefferson strongly disagreed. The disagreements between Jefferson and Hamilton were so significant that Jefferson eventually left his position in the cabinet. Soon afterward, Hamilton resigned as Secretary of Treasury, too. Both men began working on gaining control of the nation as the election of 1796 drew near.

1. Why did Washington dislike the idea of political parties?

2. Explain the difference between a strict interpretation of the Constitution and a loose interpretation.

3. Who emerged as the leaders of each political party (be specific)?

4. Identify 2 major differences between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans.
