

CHAPTER 4

Implementing Principles of the New Constitution

DOCUMENTS AND LAWS

Alien and Sedition Acts (1798) • Twelfth Amendment (1804) • Monroe Doctrine (1823)

EVENTS

Whiskey Rebellion (1794) • French Revolution (1789–1799) • XYZ Affair (1797)
Election of 1800 • Napoleonic Wars (1804–1815) • War of 1812 (1812–1815)
Hartford Convention (1814) • Election of 1824

PEOPLE/GROUPS

John Adams • John Quincy Adams • Alexander Hamilton • Andrew Jackson • Thomas Jefferson
Democratic-Republicans • Francis Scott Key • Henry Knox • James Madison • James Monroe
Napoleon • Edmund Randolph • Tecumseh • George Washington • National Republicans
Democrats • War Hawks

OBJECTIVES

- To identify important policies of early presidents and evaluate their effects.
- To understand Hamilton's financial plan.
- To investigate the unwritten constitution under Washington, Adams, and Jefferson.
- To evaluate early obstacles to a stable political system.
- To analyze early U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. Constitution was only a framework for government. The first five presidents worked out practical details necessary to the systematic operation of government.

Unwritten Constitution Under Washington, Adams, and Jefferson

During his two terms as president (1789–1797), George Washington influenced U.S. government more than any other president. John Adams, the second president, and his successor, Thomas Jefferson, also made major decisions that became part of the unwritten constitution.

First Cabinet (1789)

Officials of a president's Cabinet meet to advise the chief executive. This group is not mentioned in the Constitution. Washington established the Cabinet as a permanent executive institution when, in 1789, he appointed a secretary of state (Thomas Jefferson), a secretary of the treasury (Alexander

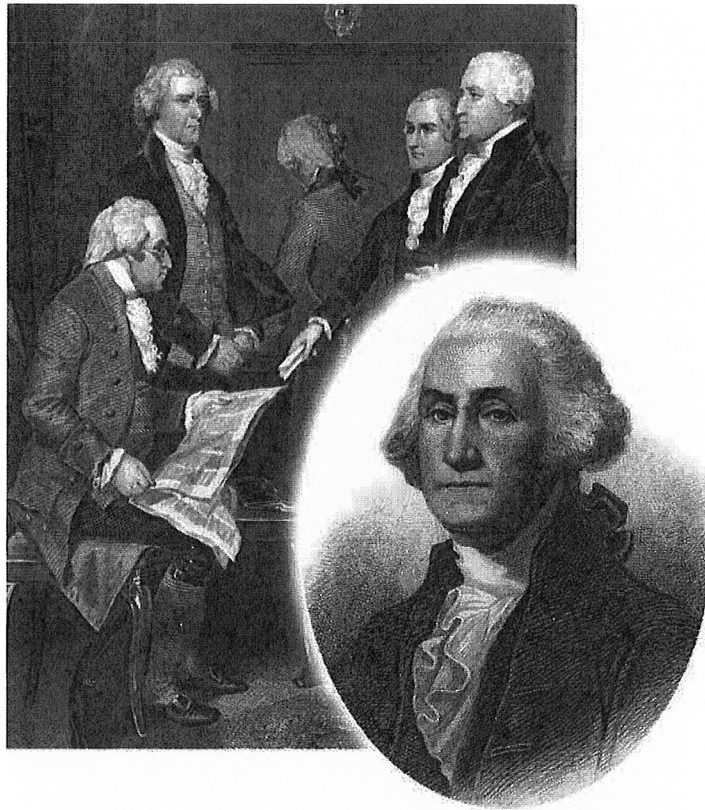
Hamilton), a secretary of war (Henry Knox), and an attorney general (Edmund Randolph).

Hamilton's Financial Plan

Alexander Hamilton immediately drew up plans to strengthen the new country's economic position and finances:

- a system for repaying debts of the states and national government
- establishment of a national bank in which to deposit tax revenues and private loans to the U.S. government
- **tariffs** (taxes on imports) to protect new American industries from foreign competition.

Southerners Thomas Jefferson and James Madison opposed these policies as favoring Northern business interests over Southern agrarian interests. In addition, Jefferson believed that Hamilton's plan would give the federal government too much power. Over such objections, Congress enacted the plan, which proved successful.



President Washington (inset) and his first Cabinet: (left to right) Henry Knox, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Edmund Randolph

Stabilizing the Political System

Political Parties While expecting differences of opinion within the Cabinet, Washington hoped to avoid the formation of political parties, which the Constitution does not mention. Nevertheless, they soon came into being and form the basis of the current U.S. political system. Over time, the president came to be viewed as the head of his party as well as the official head of state.

Federalists Conflict over Hamilton's financial plan was one reason why two political parties emerged in the 1790s. Hamilton and Jefferson each became a leader of a party. The policies of Hamilton's party, the Federalists, favored Northern merchants and, to a lesser extent, large plantation owners in the South. The merchants, in particular, liked Hamilton's plan:

- It would stabilize and strengthen the national government.
- A national bank would be a source of loans for new businesses.
- Tariffs would protect new domestic industries from foreign competition.

Concerning interpretation of the Constitution, the Federalists argued for **loose construction**: Government had many powers implied by the elastic clause.

Democratic-Republicans The policies of Thomas Jefferson's party, the *Democratic-Republicans*, favored the interests of small farmers and the common people. It opposed Hamilton's financial plan:

- Full payment of the national debt, achieved by buying back government bonds would benefit **speculators**. Many of them had bought government bonds at a reduced rate and would make a fortune if the government bought them back at full value.
- A national bank would more readily give loans to Northern merchants than to Southern and Western farmers.

The Democratic-Republicans argued for **strict construction** of the Constitution: Government should do no more than what the Constitution specified. Jefferson, as president, softened this position when he purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France (see the map on page 67).

Whiskey Rebellion (1794) To raise revenue, Congress placed a federal **excise tax** (one made on the sale of a domestic product) on the distilling of whiskey. When whiskey-producing farmers in western Pennsylvania organized an armed revolt, Washington sent troops to put down their rebellion. He thus demonstrated that a federal government was more effective than a confederate government, which had been helpless during Shays' Rebellion.

Alien and Sedition Acts (1798) During the presidency of John Adams (1797–1801), a Federalist majority in Congress enacted two laws to intimidate

supporters of the Democratic-Republicans. The *Alien Act* authorized the president to deport foreigners thought to endanger public safety. The *Sedition Act* authorized the government to fine and imprison newspaper editors who printed “scandalous and malicious writing” about the government.

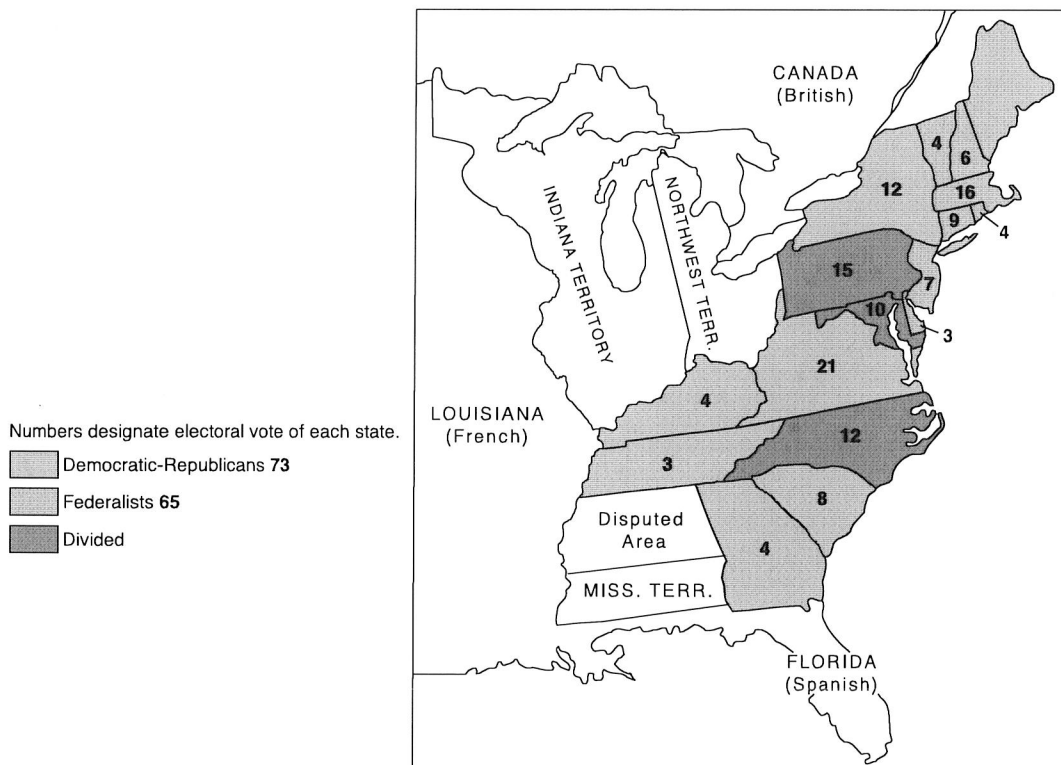
The Virginia and Kentucky legislatures passed resolutions protesting these acts, claiming the right to **nullify** (disregard) them as unconstitutional. These resolutions expressed the views of Thomas Jefferson, who argued that the Alien and Sedition Acts violated citizens’ basic rights.

End of the Federalist Era

Election of 1800 During the administrations of Washington and Adams, the Federalists were in control. In 1800, Adams was defeated by two Democratic-Republican candidates, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Because Jefferson and Burr had the same number of electoral votes, the election went to the House of Representatives, where Jefferson emerged the winner with Hamilton’s support.

Congress then proposed the Twelfth Amendment to change the Electoral College system. The original Constitution had provided that each elector cast two ballots, both for president. The Twelfth Amendment (1804)

Election of 1800



First Political Parties

	<i>Federalists</i>	<i>Democratic-Republicans</i>
Leaders	Alexander Hamilton John Adams John Marshall	Thomas Jefferson James Madison James Monroe
Geographic strength	Strong support among Northeastern merchants	Strong support among farmers of South and West
Position on Hamilton's financial plan	In favor of national bank, funding the debt, protecting new industries	Opposed to all these features
Position on constitutional issues	Favored loose construction to maximize federal power	Favored strict construction to limit federal power and safeguard rights of states
Position on foreign policy	Partial to the British but supportive of Washington's Proclamation of Neutrality	Partial to France but supportive of Jefferson's attempts to remain neutral during Napoleonic wars

provided that each elector cast one ballot for president and a second ballot for vice president.

IN REVIEW

1. How did Hamilton propose to increase the economic strength of the new U.S. government?
2. Explain why the Cabinet and political parties are examples of the unwritten constitution.
3. Contrast Hamilton's and Jefferson's views of the Constitution.

Neutrality and National Security

Foreign policies under the first five presidents aimed for the following goals:

- **neutrality** (taking no sides in a foreign war)
- recognition of U.S. **sovereignty** (independence)
- support for Latin Americans struggling for independence.

Washington stated in his *Proclamation of Neutrality* that the United States should remain neutral in European conflicts. In his "Farewell Address" he stated that the nation should "steer clear of permanent alliances." Washington pursued his policy of neutrality in order to allow the country time to develop its economic and military strength. The new nation had a small

army and navy, and was bordered on the north by British Canada, on the south by Spanish Florida, and on the west by the Mississippi River, controlled by Spain.

Washington and the French Revolution (1789–1799)

A revolution in France overthrew the monarchy in 1789. Viewing the French republic as a threat to their own monarchies, Britain, Austria, and Spain sent armies to invade France and crush the republican government there. Although U.S. public opinion was divided, Washington followed a policy of neutrality on this issue, as he did throughout his two terms.

John Adams and the XYZ Affair (1797)

John Adams adopted Washington's policy of neutrality. During his presidency, the French navy seized American ships and France sent diplomats (identified as X, Y, and Z) who demanded bribes to stop the French abuses. Angered by the *XYZ Affair*, many Americans called for retaliation. Adams avoided war, but in 1798 French and U.S. warships clashed. Adams and Napoleon, the new head of the French government, then reached a temporary settlement.

Jefferson and the Napoleonic Wars (1804–1815)

Jefferson as president (1801–1809) also chose neutrality. In 1804, Napoleon ended the French republic and crowned himself emperor. France was soon at war with Britain. British warships searched U.S. merchant ships, removed cargo, and forced American sailors into British service by **impressment**. Since the French navy thus also violated U.S. rights as a neutral nation, Congress in 1807 placed an **embargo** (trade ban) on shipping American goods to all of Europe. The purpose of the *Embargo Act* was to help maintain U.S. neutrality and avoid going to war. New England merchants and shipbuilders, whose businesses were damaged, protested. Thus, the embargo was lifted in 1809.

War of 1812

The fourth president, James Madison (1809–1817), also tried to defend U.S. rights at sea without going to war. But U.S.-British tensions increased. As settlers took over Native-American lands near the Great Lakes, the leader Tecumseh led his people in 1811 against the settlers, who complained that Britain was arming the Native Americans. Moreover, a congressional faction of Southerners and Westerners—the “War Hawks”—argued that the

United States could gain Canada if it went to war against Britain. Congress declared war in 1812.

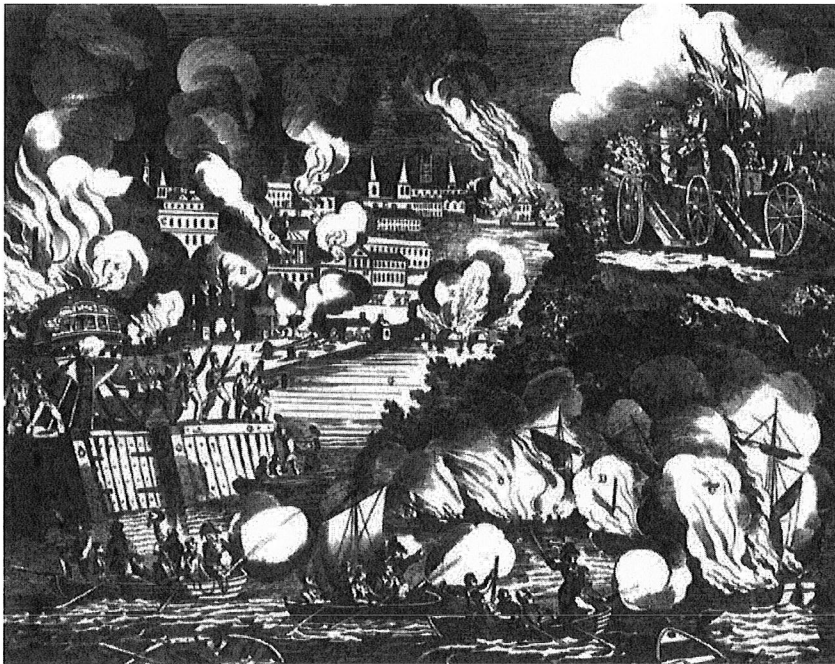
Protest in New England

In December 1814, however, members of the Federalist Party met in Hartford, Connecticut, to protest the continuing war. The delegates to this *Hartford Convention* discussed New England's **secession** (withdrawal from the Union) but took no action.

Consequences of War

An 1815 treaty ending the war said nothing about U.S. neutrality rights and awarded no territory or money to either side. Great Britain, however, stopped seizing American cargoes, and the United States emerged as a respected sovereign nation.

The War of 1812 boosted **nationalism** (loyalty to and support of one's country). Inspired by watching a battle at Fort McHenry near Baltimore in 1814, Francis Scott Key wrote the poem "The Star-Spangled Banner," which was later set to music as the national anthem. For his 1815 victory at New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson became a hero. Historians have found out much about the War of 1812 through their study of primary sources, such as battle plans, letters, and presidential documents.



The British burned Washington, D.C., during the War of 1812.