**CHAPTER 8**

**Securing the New Nation, 1789–1800**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Describe the creation of the federal government under the new Constitution.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the first issues to arise under the new Constitution, and explain how the new Congress dealt with them.
2. Describe the presidency of George Washington, and explain the events that led him to set a number of precedents concerning the office of the President.
   1. Show how disagreements over how the United States should be governed led to political divisions, and discuss some of the individuals who took strong stands on each side.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the financial situation of the new nation, and explain how the financial plan of Alexander Hamilton proposed to get the country on a sound footing.
2. Discuss the situation between the two developing political groups over the issue of a national bank.
3. Explain the significance of the Whiskey Rebellion.
4. Describe America’s problems with foreign countries during the early years of the Republic.
5. Explain America’s attempts to deal with the native Indian populations under the early Republic.
   1. Outline the country’s development of a two-party political system.

**Objectives**

1. Explain the differences between the Democratic-Republicans and Federalists.
2. Discuss how these differences were illustrated in two major questions: How much power should the central government have? What should America do about slavery and slave rebellions?
   1. Discuss the issues of John Adams’s presidency, and explain how he and the country dealt with them.

**Objectives**

1. Describe the election of John Adams and explain the problems brought on by the outcome.
2. Explain and discuss the XYZ Affair.
3. Explain the Alien and Sedition Acts, and assess their significance to the United States.
   1. Explain the convoluted political process that made Thomas Jefferson president in 1800.

**Objectives**

1. Explain the problem that emerged in the election of 1800, and describe how it was finally settled.
2. Give the reason for the passage of the Twelfth Amendment.

**Chapter Summary**

For the second time in a decade, Americans began to operate under a new federal government. While it is true that the changes between the Articles of Confederation and the new Constitution were not radical, they were taking the country in a different direction. Therefore, the first order of business was to get the Congress into session. With political power reserved solely for white men, the First Congress quickly passed the Bill of Rights, followed by laws supporting the judiciary and executive branches and regarding the collection of revenue. As the new Constitution began operations in 1789, it became clear that, although the Constitution outlined a framework of government, the exact roles of its three branches were not clearly defined.

The first federal election under the new Constitution was held in 1788. The Electoral College chose George Washington as the first president. His stature as an honest war leader made him the obvious choice to lead the new government. Washington established several important precedents while in office. He picked an outstanding group of individuals for his cabinet and communicated the state of the nation yearly to Congress.

Fiscal and foreign affairs posed problems for the new government. Hamilton’s plans for a strong, centralized government proved distasteful for an opposing political faction, the Democratic-Republicans led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In one rare instance, the Pinckney Treaty of 1796 (also called the Treaty of San Lorenzo) was an accomplishment everyone could celebrate. The tax on whiskey remained after the Whiskey Rebellion, but opposition to the policy cooled when this treaty with Spain gave Pennsylvania farmers an easier way to get their crops to market. The Pinckney Treaty was popular, a notable foreign policy achievement in a decade of political controversy.

Meanwhile, the Americans had issues with French diplomats and the British impressments of sailors, although a popular treaty with Spain allowed cheap passage down the Mississippi River, alleviating some of the tensions over the whiskey tax. Washington’s administration sought to push back Indians who were attacking the advancing settlers (or invaders, from the Indian perspective) who streamed into the Ohio River Valley. There was no desire on the part of the new nation to share lands east of the Mississippi with any Native Americans. The resulting Treaty of Greenville (1795) forced the Indian nations of the old Northwest westward across the Mississippi River.

The two groups that had differed from the beginning over how much power should be vested in the federal government now moved toward a two-party political system which, while it dismayed Washington, did make the electoral process more interesting. The Democratic-Republican and the Federalist factions differed over the role of government, and, less so, the long-term existence of slavery. Each party considered itself the inheritor of America’s revolutionary ideology and viewed its opposition as bastardization of the cause. However, in the South the growing fears over slave rebellions in Haiti and back home hardened the resolve of the local elite to maintain their system of control.

John Adams, the second president and the first one-term president, took control as relations soured with France. After trying to extort the Americans, the U.S. and France engaged in a naval quasi-war. Adams overstepped his authority with the creation of the Alien and Sedition Acts that curtailed free speech during war.

The election of 1800 between Adams and Thomas Jefferson was made easier for the challenger after reports of the President engaging in discussions with the French surfaced. Using his influence among the Federalists, Hamilton helped his old rival Thomas Jefferson to victory on the thirty-sixth ballot. To ensure that the shenanigans of the 1800 election would never be repeated, in 1804 the United States adopted the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, allowing electors to vote for president and vice president separately.

**Chapter Outline**

I. Creating a New Government

1. The First Citizens
2. The First Congress
3. Courts
4. The Bill of Rights
5. Executive Department
6. Revenues
7. The First President
8. The Presidential Manner
9. The Cabinet
10. Relations with Congress

II. Political Divisions

1. The Problem of Finance
2. Hamilton’s Financial Plan
3. Opposition to Hamilton’s Plan
4. Congressional Impasse and Washington, D.C.
5. The Whiskey Rebellion
6. The Problem of Foreign Policy
7. The French Revolution and the Citizen Genêt Affair
8. U.S. Neutrality and Jay’s Treaty
9. The Pinckney Treaty
10. Indian Relations
11. Indian Resistance in the Northwest
12. The South
13. A New Policy

III. The Rise of Two-Party Politics

1. The Democratic-Republicans
2. The Federalists
3. Slavery
4. The Haitian Revolution
5. Gabriel’s Conspiracy

IV. Adams’s Presidency and Dealing with Dissent

1. Adams’s Election
2. The XYZ Affair
3. Result—The Quasi-War
4. The Alien and Sedition Acts

V. The “Bloodless Revolution” of 1800

1. The French Again
2. The Election
3. Results

VI. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. George Washington: The Perfect Choice for the Country’s First President
2. Washington’s Farewell Address: Advice to the Nation
3. Congress is Now in Session! Starting from Scratch
4. Alexander Hamilton: Architect of America’s Financial System
5. The Development of the Two-Party Political System in America
6. Did Thomas Jefferson Out-Federalize the Federalists? A Look at His Actions as President
7. The Presidency of John Adams and America’s First Taste of First Amendment Abuses
8. The Alien and Sedition Acts: Free Speech during War

(8-2a). The Democratic-Republicans had three problems with Hamilton’s plan:

* 1. Speculators would benefit
  2. Some had already paid off their debts
  3. A fear that financiers were given preferential treatment

Strict constructionism is a belief in the literal interpretation of the Constitution, contrary to the tenet held by Alexander Hamilton that the founding document “lived,” being adaptable and open to interpretation. Have students debate on which view is preferable. Have students speculate on what parts of the Constitution today would be changed had its creators had knowledge of current events.

**The Reasons Why…**

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Instructors could also assign the topic to the students. Below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

* 1. What else might have been in the Bill of Rights? Research the other seven amendments that James Madison proposed to Congress along with the ten that became a part of the Bill of Rights. Discover the reasoning behind the selection of those seven items, and also the main reasons why each one was defeated. Discuss the findings in class.
  2. Each student should look up quotations by George Washington about his time as president. Bring them to class and take turns reading the quotes he or she has selected. Note the ones that appear most often. Instructors can share with the class some of their favorite quotes.
  3. Investigate the practice of “impressments” as used by the British on American sailors. What was the usual outcome for such men? Try to find a first-hand account by someone who was actually impressed by the British and lived to write about the experience.
  4. Compile information on some of the people who were arrested and/or deported under the Alien and Sedition Acts. Look for newspaper accounts, editorials for or against these acts, and first-hand accounts from those who became “victims” of these acts. Prepare a folder of the findings.

**Additional www Resources**

“The Kentucky Resolution, 1799 (Author: Thomas Jefferson).” Liberty! Online.

<http://libertyonline.hypermall.com/KentuckyRes.html>

“The Whiskey Rebellion.” Friendship Hill Historical Site, National Park Service.

[http://www.nps.gov/frhi/learn/historyculture/whiskeyrebellion.htm](http://www.nps.gov/frhi/learn/historyculture/whiskeyrebellion.htm%20)

Battin, Richard. “Mad Anthony’ Wayne at Fallen Timbers.” Archiving Early America.

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/fall96/anthony.html>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: The Naturalization Act of 1790**

*Introduction*

Immigration and naturalization continue to be topics of interests even in the twenty-first century. The Naturalization Act of 1790 was only the first of several acts regarding nationalization. If you refer to the footnote below the main text, you will note that this act was replaced with a more detailed but fairly similar one, in 1795, and that other changes have been made through the years. The 1790 Act, however, is especially significant, arising as it did out of the second session of the country’s First Congress. The Act begins near the bottom of page 103 and continues to the next page, and footnote a provides additional information.

[Read the Naturalization Act of 1790](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=226) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions*:

* 1. What provisions for naturalization included in this first congressional act would not be allowed to be included in our own time?
  2. If you were dating a Naturalization Act for the United States today, what would you include in it?
  3. There has been much discussion in recent years about changing the law that says you must have been a U.S. citizen at birth to serve as president.

**Assignment Name: Washington’s First Inaugural Address**

*Introduction*

When the new United States was formed, it was clear that the people wanted to be more involved than they had been, either in England or later, in the American colonies. Thus the Constitution stipulated that the president would report to the Congress annually. Washington’s first address to Congress, however, was his Inaugural Address in 1789. Only the barest form of government was yet in place. No one was even sure where the capitol would be. The new president knew that many debates lay ahead, but he chose to contain his remarks to general issues.

[Read Washington’s First Inaugural Address](http://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/gw-inauguration/) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Question*:

1. How had Washington planned to spend the remainder of his days after retiring from government? How do you think he would have felt if the Congress had actually respected his wishes?