
Growth of Political Parties Document-Based Questions

Historical Context

Today, most people associate the American political system with the ongoing conflict of political parties. Republican Party leaders and Democratic Party leaders carry on a seemingly nonstop debate as they compete for the support and votes of the American public. But in the early days of the American republic political parties did not exist, and our early leaders were generally glad of it. Most of them, including President Washington, feared that the existence of political parties would split the young country into warring groups, undermine our fragile national unity, and weaken public support for the new Constitution. Yet, though Washington and others tried to resist them, political parties nonetheless began to form, and they gradually developed into the party system of today.

Inquiry

What led to the rise of political parties in the 1790s?

Document Analysis

The following documents deal with the rise of political parties during the 1790s. Examine each document carefully, and answer the question or questions that follow.

Source A

This excerpt is from a memo written by Thomas Jefferson in 1790, but published years later.

...Hamilton was not only a monarchist, but [in support] of a monarchy [based upon] corruption.

In your own words, what did Jefferson think of Hamilton? _____

Source B

The untested Constitution raised questions about the limits of the federal government's power. Some argued that the federal government only had the powers explicitly mentioned in the Constitution (express powers), while others argued that some powers were implied. Here, Alexander Hamilton is writing in defense of the constitutionality of the Bank of the United States (1791).

It is not denied that there are implied as well as express powers, and that the former are as effectually delegated as the latter.

It is conceded that implied powers are to be considered as delegated equally with express ones. Then it follows, that as a power of erecting a corporation [such as a bank] may as well be implied as any other thing, it may as well be employed as an instrument or means of carrying into execution any of the specified powers. ... But one may be erected in relation to the trade with foreign countries, or to the trade between the States ... because it is the province of the federal government to regulate those objects, and because it is incident to a general sovereign or legislative power to regulate a thing, to employ all the means which relate to its regulation to the best and greatest advantage.

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According to Hamilton, why does the federal government have the power to establish a national bank?

Source C

Before signing the Bank of the United States into law, Washington solicited the views of his cabinet members. This is Jefferson's response to Washington, February 1791.

I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground – that *all powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited it by the states, are reserved to the states, or to the people* (10th amend.). To take a simple step beyond the boundaries thus specifically drawn around the powers of Congress is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition.

The incorporation of a bank, and the powers assumed by this bill, have not, in my opinion, been delegated to the United States by the Constitution.

How does Jefferson's interpretation of the Constitution differ from Hamilton's?

Source D

These excerpts are from a letter written by Alexander Hamilton to a friend in 1792.

...Mr. Madison, co-operating with Mr. Jefferson, is at the head of a faction, decidedly hostile to me, and my administration; and actuated [motivated] by views ... subversive of the principles of good government, and dangerous to the Union. ...Mr. Jefferson ...[displays] his dislike of ...funding [the] debt. ...In respect to our foreign politics, the views of these gentlemen [Jefferson and his supporters] are ...unsound, and dangerous. They have a womanish attachment to France, and a womanish resentment against Great Britain.

Context – What domestic and foreign policy issues could Hamilton be referring to? (Use your notes)

Why did Hamilton distrust Madison, Jefferson, and their faction (party) and feel that they were dangerous to America's government?

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Source E

When the War of the French Revolution broke out between revolutionary France and Great Britain, Jefferson and Hamilton agreed on the wisdom of staying neutral. However, this open letter by an anonymous author written in 1793 represents the sentiments of many Jeffersonians regarding the Treaty of Alliance with France.

In countries where the people have little or no share in the government (as in Great Britain, for instance), it is not uncommon for the executive to act in direct opposition to the will of the nation. It is to be hoped that the practice of aping [mimicking] the absurd and tyrannical systems of Britain, though already carried to an alarming extent in this country, will never proceed so far as to induce our executive to try the vain experiment of officially opposing the national will ...

... had even no written treaty existed between France and the United States, still would the strongest ties of amity [friendship] have united the people of both nations; still would the republican citizens of America have regarded Frenchmen, contending for liberty, as their brethren; still would they have sympathized with them in their misfortunes, and have exulted in their success.

Why did Jefferson’s supporters argue against neutrality? What parallels did they draw between the United States and France? _____

Source F

Secretary of the Treasury Hamilton’s excise tax on whiskey hit the impoverished Pennsylvania frontiersmen especially hard. The Whiskey Boys formed armed mobs that intimidated would-be tax collectors. Outraged, Hamilton defended the use of law enforcement in the press under the pen name “Tully” (1794).

Let us see then what is this question. It is plainly this: Shall the majority govern or be governed? Shall the nation rule or be ruled? ...

The Constitution *you* have ordained for yourselves and your posterity includes this express clause: “The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts, and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States”... You have done nothing since to reverse or impair that decree. ...

The sovereignty shall not lie with you, but with us. If you presume to dispute the point by force, we are ready to measure swords with you, and if unequal ourselves to the contest, we will call in the aid of a foreign nation [Britain].

Context – How has the power of Congress expanded under the Constitution compared to the Articles of Confederation? _____

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How did Hamilton think the federal government should enforce the excise tax?

Source G

This excerpt is from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to his friend and follower James Madison in December of 1794.

The excise tax is an infernal [hellish] one ...[the public's] detestation [hatred] of the excise tax is universal, and has now associated to it a detestation of the government. ...

In your own words, what did Jefferson think of Hamilton's excise tax?

Source H

These excerpts are from "The Farewell Address", which President Washington released to the newspapers in September of 1796, six months before his retirement from the presidency. The primary purpose of this "farewell" was to announce his decision not to run for a third term as president. But Washington also saw it as an opportunity to provide some valuable advice to the American people.

Let me...warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful [evil] effects of the spirit of party. ...It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against the other; foment[s] [stirs up] ...riots and insurrection.

(Paper 1, Question 1 a)

Why, according to Source H, does Washington oppose political parties? (Answer in your own words)

The first reason given by the source is _____

The second reason given by the source is _____

The third reason by the source is _____

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Source I

This excerpt is from a letter from Vice President Thomas Jefferson (during the administration of John Adams) to Virginia politician John Wise in 1798.

It is now well understood that two political Sects [parties] have arisen within the US. The one believing that the Executive is the branch of our Government which the most needs support: the other that, like the analogous [comparable] branch in the English government [the Whigs], [the Executive] is already too strong for the republican parts of the Constitution, and therefore, in equivocal cases, they incline to the Legislative powers. The former of these are called Federalists, sometimes Aristocrats or monocrats and sometimes Tories, after the corresponding sect in the English government, of exactly the same definition ...the latter are [styled] Republicans, Whigs, Jacobins [radical republicans of the French Revolution]...

(Paper 1, Question 1 b)

What does Source I suggest about the rise of political parties in the United States? (Answer in your own words)

One message conveyed by the source is that

because _____
_____.

A second message conveyed by the source is that

because _____
_____.

Thesis Statement

Formulate a thesis statement that directly answers the question:

What led to the rise of political parties in the 1790s?

