

People within the new United States had differing viewpoints on many issues. Personal rivalries among political leaders also created divisions in the new nation. Trying to limit dissent in the country, the federal government passed several unpopular laws.

### The Election of 1796

The election of 1796 began a new era in U.S. politics. For the first time, more than one candidate ran for president.

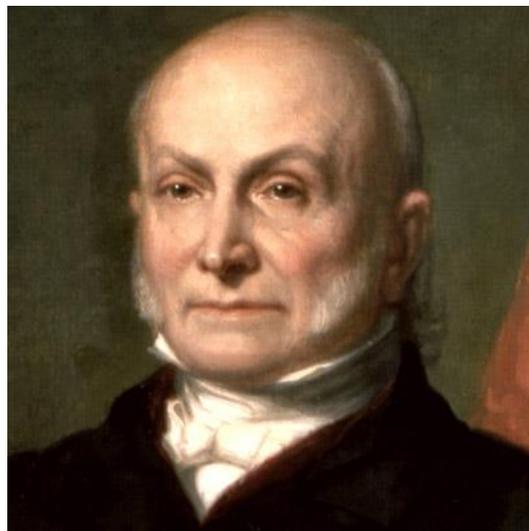
- **Political parties**, groups that help elect people and shape policies, had begun to form during Washington’s presidency. Despite Washington’s warnings about political parties, the rivalry between two parties dominated the election.
- Alexander Hamilton helped found the **Federalist Party**, which wanted a strong federal government and supported industry and trade.
  - The Federalists chose John Adams and Thomas Pinckney as candidates. Adams knew he was not well liked in the South or the West, but he hoped people would support him after they thought about his years of loyal public service.
- Thomas Jefferson and James Madison founded the **Democratic-Republican Party**.
  - Its members, called Republicans, wanted to limit the federal government’s power.
  - They chose Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr as their candidates.
- Party differences were based partly on where and how people lived.
  - Businesspeople in the cities tended to support the Federalists.
  - Farmers in more isolated areas generally favored the Democratic-Republicans.
  - Both sides attacked each other. Republicans called Adams a royalist – an insult to a man so involved in the Revolution. The Federalists accused the Republicans of favoring the French.

- In the end, Adams defeated Jefferson.
- At the same time, the person who came in second in the voting became vice president. This happened to be Jefferson.
- So after months of campaigning against one another, Adams and Jefferson took office together.

| FEDERALISTS VS. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICANS             |   |
|--|---|
| Federalists  | Democratic Republicans                              |
| Led by Alexander Hamilton                          | Led by Thomas Jefferson                             |
| Thought rich, educated people should lead nation   | Thought more people should have political power     |
| Wanted strong federal government                   | Wanted strong state governments                     |
| Wanted to encourage manufacturing and trade        | Wanted to encourage farming                         |
| Supported loose interpretation of the Constitution | Supported strict interpretation of the Constitution |

### President Adams and the XYZ Affair

John Adams had the challenging task of following Washington as president. The people had adored Washington. Adams would have to work to win the people's trust.



## **A New President**

At first glance, John Adams did not appear well suited for the presidency.

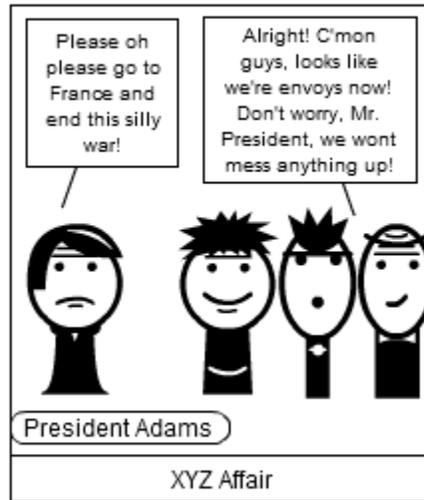
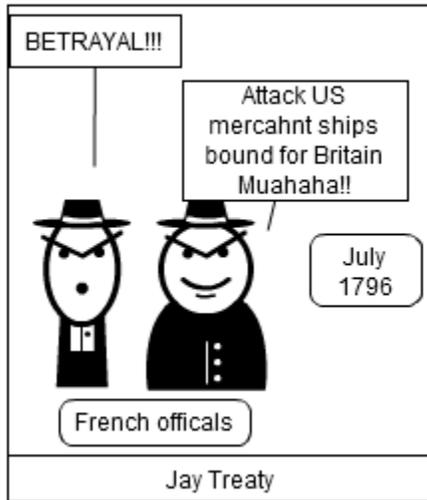
Although Adams had been a leading Patriot during the American Revolution and had later served as a foreign diplomat, he lacked Washington's dignity, and most people saw him as a cold and distant person.

Still, many people – even those who opposed him – respected Adams. They recognized his hard work, honesty, and intelligence.

## **The United States and France**

One of Adam's first goals as president was to improve the relationship between the United States and France.

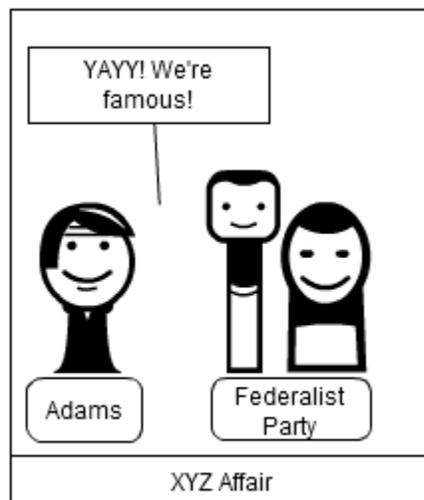
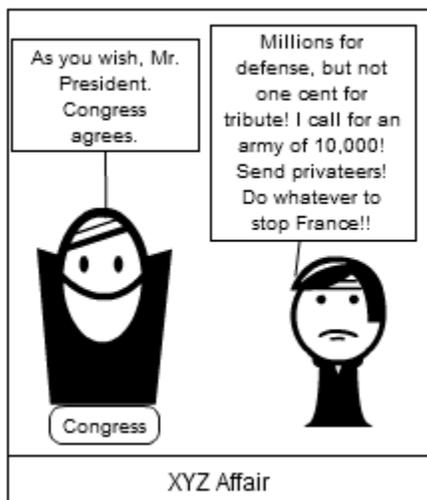
- Adams sent U.S. diplomats to Paris to smooth over the conflict and to negotiate a treaty to protect U.S. shipping.
- When the diplomats arrived in France, they learned that French foreign minister Talleyrand would not speak to them. Instead, they had a strange and secret visit from three French agents.
  - These agents said that Talleyrand would discuss a treaty only in exchange for a \$250,000 bribe.
  - The French government also wanted a loan of \$12 million.
  - The American diplomats refused these demands.
- In March 1798 President Adams told Congress that the peace-seeking mission had failed.
  - He described the French terms, substituting the letters X, Y, and Z for the names of the French agents.
  - Upon hearing the disgraceful news, Federalists in Congress called for a war with France.
- The **XYZ Affair** outraged the American public. "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!" became the rallying cry of the American people.



### Preparations for War

Fearing war, Adams asked Congress to expand the navy to a fleet of more than 30 ships. He thought that war with France might be unavoidable. He also decided that the United States would keep a peacetime army. Congress approved both measures.

- Although Adams had asked Congress for military support, he did not want to go to war with France.
- He was worried about its cost. So he did not ask Congress to declare war. Instead, he tried to reopen peace talks with France.



## Peace Efforts

Adams's decision not to declare war stunned Federalists. Despite intense pressure from members of his own party, Adams refused to change his mind.

- American and French ships, however, began fighting each other in the Caribbean.
- Adams sent a representative to France to engage in talks to try to end the fighting.
- The United States and France eventually signed a treaty.
- Adams then forced two members of his cabinet to resign for trying to block his peace efforts.

## The Alien and Sedition Acts

In 1798 the Federalist-controlled Congress passed four laws known together as the **Alien and Sedition Acts**.

- These laws were said to protect the United States, but the Federalists intended them to crush opposition to war.
- The most controversial was the **Sedition Act**, which forbade anyone from publishing or voicing criticism of the federal government. In effect, this cancelled basic protections of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.
- The two main Democratic-Republican leaders, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, viewed these acts as a misuse of the government's power.
  - Attacking the problem at the state level, they wrote resolutions passed by the Kentucky legislature in 1798 and in Virginia in 1799. Known as the **Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions**, these documents argued that the Alien and Sedition Acts were unconstitutional.
    - They stated that the federal government could not pass these acts because they interfered with state government.
    - Madison and Jefferson pressured Congress to repeal the Alien and Sedition Acts.
    - Congress did not, although it allowed the acts to expire within a few years.

- **The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions did not have the force of national law, but they supported the idea that states could challenge the federal government. This idea would grow to have a tremendous impact on American history in the late 1800s.**