

Day 33, Captioning History – Washington and Adams Presidencies

You have been given several uncaptioned political cartoons along with background information on the political issue or topic each cartoon represents. Reading the background information, complete the table below and add appropriate captions to each cartoon.

Cartoons	Issue or topic if represents	What symbols in the cartoon make you think this	What is the opinion of the artist on the event of topic
1			
2			
3			
4			

The strong steps that Adams took in response to the French foreign threat also included severe repression of domestic protest. A series of laws known collectively as the ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS were passed by the Federalist Congress in 1798 and signed into law by President Adams. These laws included new powers to DEPORT foreigners as well as making it harder for new IMMIGRANTS to vote. Previously a new immigrant would have to reside in the United States for five years before becoming eligible to vote, but a new law raised this to 14 years. Charles Willson Peale was one of the great artists of early America. Here, John Adams is captured by Peale's paintbrush. Clearly, the Federalists saw foreigners as a deep threat to American security. As one Federalist in Congress declared, there was no need to "invite hordes of Wild Irishmen, nor the turbulent and disorderly of all the world, to come here with a basic view to distract our tranquillity." Not coincidentally, non-English ethnic groups had been among the core supporters of the Democratic-Republicans in 1796.

The most controversial of the new laws permitting strong government control over individual actions was the SEDITION ACT. In essence, this Act prohibited public opposition to the government. Fines and imprisonment could be used against those who "write, print, utter, or publish . . . any false, scandalous and malicious writing" against the government.

Under the terms of this law over 20 Republican newspaper editors were arrested and some were imprisoned. The most dramatic victim of the law was REPRESENTATIVE MATTHEW LYON of Vermont. His letter that criticized President Adams' "unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation, and self avarice" caused him to be imprisoned. While Federalists sent Lyon to prison for his opinions, his constituents reelected him to Congress even from his jail cell.

Lyon vs. Griswold  
A fight in Congress! This image appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine nearly a century after the incident between Lyon and Griswold with the poetic caption: "He in a trice struck Griswold thrice / Upon his head enraged, Sir; / Who seized the tongs to ease his wrongs, / And Griswold thus engaged, Sir." The Sedition Act clearly violated individual protections under the first amendment of the Constitution; however, the practice of "JUDICIAL REVIEW," whereby the Supreme Court considers the constitutionality of laws was not yet well developed. Furthermore, the justices were all strong Federalists. As a result, Madison and Jefferson directed their opposition to the new laws to state legislatures. The Virginia and Kentucky legislatures passed resolutions declaring the federal laws invalid within their states. The bold challenge to the federal government offered by this strong states' rights position seemed to point toward imminent armed conflict within the United States.

Enormous changes had occurred in the explosive decade of the 1790s. Federalists in government now viewed the persistence of their party as the equivalent of the survival of the republic. This led them to enact and enforce harsh laws. Madison, who had been the chief architect of a strong central government in the Constitution, now was wary of national authority. He actually helped the KENTUCKY LEGISLATURE to reject federal law. By placing states rights above those of the federal government, Kentucky and Virginia had established a precedent that would be used to justify the secession of southern states in the Civil War.

Whiskey Rebellion  
In January 1791, President George Washington's Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton proposed a seemingly innocuous excise tax "upon spirits distilled within the United States, and for appropriating the same."<sup>1</sup> What Congress failed to predict was the vehement rejection of this tax by Americans living on the frontier of Western Pennsylvania. By 1794, the Whiskey Rebellion threatened the stability of the nascent United States and forced President Washington to personally lead the United States militia westward to stop the rebels. By 1791 the United States suffered from significant debt incurred during the Revolutionary War. Secretary Hamilton, a Federalist supporting increased federal authority, intended to use the excise tax to lessen this financial burden. Despite resistance from Anti-Federalists like Thomas Jefferson, Congress passed the legislation. When news of the tax spread to Western Pennsylvania, individuals immediately voiced their displeasure by refusing to pay the tax. Residents viewed this tax as yet another instance of unfair policies dictated by the eastern elite that negatively affected American citizens on the frontier.

Western farmers felt the tax was an abuse of federal authority wrongly targeting a demographic that relied on crops such as corn, rye, and grain to earn a profit. However, shipping this harvest east was dangerous because of poor storage and dangerous roads. As a result, farmers frequently distilled their grain into liquor which was easier to ship and preserve. While large-scale farmers easily incurred the financial strain of an additional tax, indigent farmers were less able to do so without falling into dire financial straits.

President Washington sought to resolve this dispute peacefully. In 1792, he issued a national proclamation admonishing westerners for their resistance to the "operation of the laws of the United States for raising revenue upon spirits distilled within the same."<sup>2</sup> However, by 1794 the protests became violent. In July, nearly 400 whiskey rebels near Pittsburgh set fire to the home of John Neville, the regional tax collection supervisor. Left with little recourse and at the urgings of Secretary Hamilton, Washington organized a militia force of 12,950 men and led them towards Western Pennsylvania, warning locals "not to abet, aid, or comfort the Insurgents aforesaid, as they will answer the contrary at their peril."<sup>3</sup>

The calling of the militia had the desired effect of essentially ending the Whiskey Rebellion. By the time the militia reached Pittsburgh, the rebels had dispersed and could not be found. The militia apprehended approximately 150 men and tried them for treason. A paucity of evidence and the inability to obtain witnesses hampered the trials. Two men, John Mitchell and Philip Weigel, were found guilty of treason, though both were pardoned by President Washington. By 1802, then President Thomas Jefferson repealed the excise tax on whiskey. Under the eye of President Washington, the nascent United States survived the first true challenge to federal authority.

Formally titled the "Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America," but more popularly known as the Jay Treaty, the document was officially ratified by President George Washington in August 1795. Debates about the treaty caused Washington to establish a firm protocol concerning the constitutional treaty-making process. His response to the public uproar over the treaty also helped define the executive's role in shaping public sentiment.

By spring of 1794, America appeared to be on the brink of war with England. Citizens claimed that the British government resisted opening its ports to American ships, interfered with neutral shipping rights to fight its war with France, and violated sections of the 1783 Treaty of Peace that ended the American Revolution. Amid clamors from Federalists and Republicans that ranged from negotiations, defense measures, and commercial non-intercourse, President Washington chose to nominate Supreme Court Chief Justice John Jay as a special envoy to negotiate disputes between the two nations. Jay's "mission," announced Washington, demonstrated to the world America's "reluctance to hostility."<sup>1</sup> The treaty Jay negotiated with British Foreign Secretary William Wyndham Grenville, favored England's economic and military power. Jay realized that America had few bargaining options and signed an agreement on November 19, 1794. A delay of nearly four months occurred before Washington received a copy. When the treaty arrived on March 7, 1795, Congress had adjourned, and speculative newspapers' essays began to agitate the public. However, terms of the treaty remained secret while the Senate convened in a special session on June 8, 1795. Few members liked the contents of the treaty, but most objected particularly to Article XII, which limited commercial access to the British West Indies solely to ships of seventy tons or less. The Senate narrowly approved the treaty, subject to a suspension of Article XII and a renegotiation of that section. According to Edmund Randolph, Washington's Secretary of State, a "qualified ratification" was a new development in diplomatic history.<sup>2</sup> However, Washington concluded that partial approval implied final consent.

An unauthorized copy of the treaty appeared in the Aurora General Advertiser, a Republican newspaper, on June 29. A swirl of largely negative public reaction to the treaty followed. Riots and public bonfires of the British flag, the treaty, and effigies of Jay took place. Essayists fired their opinions in the public newspapers. City and county residents sent their opinions to Washington. The President described reactions to the treaty as being similar to "that against a mad-dog; . . . every one. . . seems engaged in running it down." Washington urged Alexander Hamilton and Federalist supporters of the treaty to spread their views nationwide and counteract the "poison" of its opponents.<sup>3</sup> Washington preferred solicited advice from knowledgeable men, rather than dictates from groups with no constitutional authority. His response to the petition of the Boston Selectmen and similar letters repeatedly stressed the executive's constitutional prerogative in the treaty-making process. Another complication arose in July 1795, when reports surfaced that the British government approved a new Order in Council concerning neutral vessels that carried provisions bound for French-controlled ports. In mid-August, Washington ratified the Jay Treaty unconditionally amid concern about the impact of protest efforts, how the French might take advantage of such negative reaction, and news of Randolph's possible intrigue with the French government. Washington did not consider the treaty "favorable," but believed ratification far better than "unsettled" conditions.<sup>4</sup> Anti-treaty protests continued into 1796, including an effort by the House of Representatives to force Washington to submit documents that related to the treaty. Washington refused and insisted that the House possessed no constitutional authority to determine treaties. Public sentiment gradually began to praise Washington for his leadership during the crisis. In May 1796, Washington expressed the hope that his ratification of the Jay Treaty would provide America with peace and the time to become a prosperous and powerful nation.<sup>5</sup>

Between the onset of the French Revolution in 1789 and the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo in 1815, the foreign policy of the United States confronted the dilemma of possible or actual global warfare between the two most powerful European states. In addition, the conflict between the Federalists and their opponents in domestic politics often revolved around whether the new republic should side with the English, the French, or remain as neutral as possible. The XYZ Affair was a moment within this larger span of events tying the domestic and international arenas together as the Federalists benefited politically from a French attempt to bribe American diplomats. Yet the Federalist reaction to the XYZ affair would eventually cause a backlash against them and contribute substantially to the election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800.

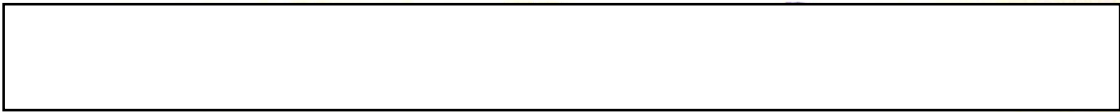
The adoption of the Jay Treaty by the Washington administration in 1795 angered the French, who viewed the new United States as siding with the English. While President, George Washington attempted to replace James Monroe (who was sympathetic to the French Revolution) as minister to France with Charles Pinckney, whom the French refused to accept. In the fall of 1796, the French government began to allow French ships to seize and search neutral American ships for supposed contraband that would benefit England. As relations between the two countries worsened in the late spring of 1797, President John Adams sent a special delegation to Paris consisting of Elbridge Gerry and John Marshall to join with the American ambassador to France, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to negotiate a new treaty that would replace the 1778 American-French Treaty of Amity and Commerce that the two nations signed in the midst of the American Revolution.

When the diplomats arrived in Paris in October 1797, the French foreign minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord granted the group only a short fifteen minute meeting and then left them with three French officials named Jean Hottenguer, Pierre Bellamy, and Lucien Hauteval. The three officials became popularly known as X, Y, and Z, respectively according to how the American negotiators labeled their French counterparts when sending messages back to Washington, D.C. The French asked that a large bribe, over a quarter of a million dollars, be given before negotiations even began. The American officials refused and when further talks failed the Americans returned home in the spring of 1798.

Around the same time, Adams was asked by some of his opponents to release the messages from the American negotiators because they believed Adams was too anti-French and was hiding positive news. On the contrary, the messages stirred up American public opinion against the French, and Adams seized the opportunity to push for an enlarged navy consisting of six new naval frigates and an enlarged ten thousand man Provisional Army.

Adams overreached, however, when he and his Federalist allies passed the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798. The former act allowed the President to arbitrarily arrest and deport anyone who was not an American citizen and deemed dangerous, while the latter act allowed the government to jail and fine anyone, including citizens, who criticized Congress or the President. The Adams administration used the Sedition Act to shut down critical portions of the press and arrest the editors of a number of opposing newspapers. The public reacted vehemently against these intrusions against free speech and individual liberties.

Later in 1798 the legislatures of Kentucky and Virginia passed resolutions declaring the Alien and Sedition Acts to be unconstitutional and threatened to block the enforcement of those acts within those states, challenging federal authority. In the end, Adams did not force a showdown over states rights and virtually no foreigners were deported. However, the damage had been done as the Federalist clampdown swung large segments of public opinion behind the Democratic-Republicans and Thomas Jefferson, leading to his election in 1800.



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# BOTTLING UP THE WHISKEY REBELLION



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See Persepolis, in Colours just Portray'd, | Vex'd in darkness, acts the aspiring part,  
 Aloud he cries, 'Tis time to drive his dirty trade, | And triumphs much to stab you to the heart.