CHAPTER 6

Jeffersonian Democracy

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ 1.</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson believed that humans were selfish by nature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 2.</td>
<td>Thomas Jefferson was a superb political theorist, but he was an unskillful politician and ineffective president.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 3.</td>
<td>Although appreciated by later generations, the Louisiana Purchase was unpopular when it was made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 4.</td>
<td>As president, Thomas Jefferson rejected the entirety of Federalist policies and programs, and he replaced them with his own as quickly as possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 5.</td>
<td>While he was Jefferson’s vice president, Aaron Burr was impeached, convicted of treason, and removed from office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 6.</td>
<td>During Jefferson’s presidency, the war between Britain and France was enormously profitable for American commerce.</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ 7.</td>
<td>Military preparedness was of key importance to President Jefferson’s foreign policy.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 6 you should be able to:

1. State Thomas Jefferson’s key political principles.
3. Describe how the United States came to purchase the Louisiana territory from France, and explain why the purchase was significant in both the short run and the long run.

4. Evaluate Jefferson as president by highlighting his major successes and most disappointing failures.

5. Explain why Jefferson’s second administration was consumed with foreign policy concerns, and evaluate Jefferson’s attempts to deal with these matters.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The Federalist Contribution

Thomas Jefferson won the election of 1800 by defeating his running mate, Aaron Burr, in the House of Representatives (a curious development that was prevented from occurring again by the Twelfth Amendment). Federalists worried that the Republican victory would bring radical social reforms, a weakened national government, and financial chaos.

Federalists had strengthened the national government, established a sound financial system, tried to diversify the economy, and sought an accommodation with Britain. Before 1798 they had acted with moderation, posing no serious threat to states’ rights, democracy, or individual freedom. But their fear of the growing strength of the Republican opposition pushed them into antilibertarian excesses in 1798. The Republicans routed them in the election of 1800 as voters delivered a mandate for individual freedom and limited national power. The Republicans took power peacefully, demonstrating the usefulness of the two-party system. They then proceeded to confirm the great achievements of the Federalist era.

Thomas Jefferson: Political Theorist

Jefferson had wide-ranging interests. He shied away from controversy, but he could be stubborn and devious in the pursuit of power. Jefferson believed people were basically selfish, but improvable if left free to follow the dictates of reason. He suspected blacks were inferior to whites, yet he was a champion of democracy, limited government, and individual freedom. He did not think the rich and the well-born had any special virtues.

Jefferson objected to Hamilton’s effort to commercialize and centralize the country. He thought commerce would bring the growth of cities, complicate society, and require government regulation. He wanted the United States to remain a society of independent small farmers because he believed that city workers were easy prey for demagogues. Jefferson objected to Hamilton’s pro-British orientation because he thought of England as immoral, decadent, and corrupt. He was delighted to see the French Revolution strike a blow against monarchy and tyranny, and persisted in excusing the excesses of that revolution.
Jefferson As President

Jefferson’s presidency brought a change in style, but it was moderate and he was sensitive to minority rights. He opposed foreign alliances, but was in favor of limited government, paying off the national debt, and cooling partisan passions. His administration repealed the Federalists’ excise taxes, including the infamous Whiskey Tax, and cut military spending in order to reduce the national debt and balance the budget. The Alien and Sedition acts were allowed to expire. Jefferson made no effort to tear down Hamilton’s fiscal structure or alter the balance of federal-state power.

Jefferson played down the ceremonial aspects of the presidency. His egalitarianism was reflected in his pell-mell policy at White House functions. He was a superb politician and a skillful communicator, but he was also a partisan Republican who demanded party discipline in Congress and used his patronage power to reward his friends.

Jefferson’s Attack on the Judiciary

Jefferson held a stubborn prejudice against entrenched judicial power and, in part owing to their aggressive enforcement of the Alien and Sedition acts, he held a strong distrust of Federalist judges. Lame-duck Federalists compounded this sentiment when they shamelessly passed the Judiciary Act of 1801, expanding the number of federal judges. Adams appointed Federalist “midnight justices” to these new positions in the waning hours of his presidency. The new Republican Congress repealed the act and Jefferson refused to allow several commissions of appointment to be delivered. As a result, one appointee, William Marbury, sued in the Supreme Court. In *Marbury v. Madison*, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that Marbury should receive his appointment. But he also ruled that the court could not issue a writ of mandamus to require Secretary of State Madison to deliver it because the Judiciary Act of 1789 in which Congress had empowered the Supreme Court to issue such writs was unconstitutional. The significance of the case lies in Marshall’s establishing the power of the Supreme Court to determine the constitutionality of federal laws.

Jefferson then pursued the removal of Federalist judges through impeachment. One, John Pickering, was impeached and removed, but an effort to remove justice Samuel Chase from the Supreme Court failed. Chase’s actions had been outrageous in enforcing the Sedition Act, but they were not “high crimes and misdemeanors,” the constitutional standard for removal by impeachment.

The Barbary Pirates

Presidents Washington and Adams had followed international convention by paying tribute (annual protection money) to Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean in order to protect American
commerce there. Jefferson dispatched a naval squadron to the Mediterranean, but little was accomplished and the United States continued to pay tribute until 1815.

The Louisiana Purchase

The major achievement of Jefferson’s first term was the purchase of Louisiana territory from France—a quite unexpected opportunity. Because access to the Mississippi River and New Orleans was vital to America’s economic growth, Jefferson was alarmed when Spain transferred its Louisiana territory to Napoleonic France in the Treaty of San Ildefonso in 1800. Napoleon saw Louisiana as a breadbasket for valuable French West Indian sugar plantations.

Jefferson sent James Monroe to Paris with an offer to buy New Orleans and Florida. Meanwhile, French efforts to capture Saint Dominique in the West Indies failed, thereby reducing Napoleon’s interest in Louisiana. Napoleon also needed money for a new campaign against the British in Europe. Thus, Napoleon offered to sell Louisiana to the United States. The deal was struck for $15 million, but there was a catch: The Constitution made no specific allowance for the purchase of foreign territory or the extending of citizenship to its inhabitants by executive act. Jefferson reluctantly abandoned his strict constructionist view of the Constitution, embraced Hamilton’s “implied powers” view, and urged Congress to ratify the Louisiana Purchase Treaty. The popular Louisiana Purchase nearly doubled the size of United States, assured Jefferson’s reelection, and dealt a heavy blow to the fortunes of the Federalist party.

The Federalists Discredited

The addition of new western states from the Louisiana Territory would eventually reduce New England’s influence in national affairs. This realization pushed New England’s Essex Junto of die-hard Federalists to consider secession. They looked to Aaron Burr for help, but Burr lost the race for governor of New York—partly due to Hamilton’s opposition. The secession movement failed, and Burr killed Hamilton in a duel.

Lewis and Clark

Jefferson commissioned Lewis and Clark to lead an expedition to explore the Louisiana Territory. He was interested in the flora and fauna of the region and the possibility of developing the fur trade. He also had an imperialistic vision of an expanding America. The expedition began in 1804, moved up the Missouri River Valley, crossed the Continental Divide, and traveled on to the Pacific. By the time they returned in 1806, Lewis and Clark had located several passes through the Rockies, established friendly relations with many Indian tribes, and obtained a wealth of information about the country. Later expeditions by Thomas Freeman and Zebulon Pike were less productive.
Jeffersonian Democracy

Jefferson stood midway between the skeptical democracy of the colonial period and the rampant democracy of the Jacksonians. He was deeply committed to majority rule, but he hoped the majority would continue to be independent property-owning farmers. Jefferson’s presidency demonstrated that a democratic egalitarian could establish and maintain a stable government, thus he calmed the fears of conservatives who had thought him a radical. He accepted Federalist ideas on public finance, admitted that manufacturing and commerce were vital to national prosperity, and adopted the view that the federal government should protect and promote economic development. He even learned to live with Hamilton’s bank. Thus, he achieved orderly government, security, and prosperity without resorting to heavy taxation or placing limits on individual liberty.

The Burr Conspiracy

Jefferson’s second term was less successful than the first. On the one hand, the lack of Federalist opposition weakened party discipline and encouraged fragmentation of the Republicans. In addition, Jefferson found trouble from fellow Republican Aaron Burr. The president was vindictive toward Burr following the election fiasco in 1800, and dumped him as his running mate in 1804. For his part, Burr flirted with treason in an empire-building scheme in the West. He was arrested and tried for treason, but despite Jefferson’s efforts on behalf of the prosecution, Burr was acquitted. The incident was a blow to Jefferson’s prestige and left him even more embittered toward the federal judiciary.

Napoleon and the British

Renewal of the war between Britain and France in 1803 stimulated the American economy. The two belligerents needed American goods and American shipping. However, by 1807 the two sides were stalemated, Napoleon ruled Europe, and the British navy controlled the seas. Because neither nation could strike directly at the other, they resorted to commercial warfare with the intention of disrupting each other’s economy. Napoleon’s Berlin and Milan decrees and his Continental System made all ships doing business with Britain subject to seizure, and was designed to make Europe self-sufficient and deny Britain access to the Continent’s markets. British Orders in Council blockaded continental ports and charged customs duties on all goods going to the Continent.

Clever American merchants found loopholes in the restrictive Rule of 1756 and greatly expanded their West Indies trade. In the Essex case (1806), however, the British outlawed this devious re-export trade. Without the re-export trade, and with Britain and France cracking down on direct trade by neutrals, American commerce and the nation’s prosperity were gravely threatened.
The Impressment Controversy

American pride was dealt a blow by the cruel indignities of the British practice of impressment. This age-old policy empowered British naval commanders to forcibly “draft” British subjects into service in an emergency. The problem was that British subjects often worked on neutral vessels like those of the United States, and the British also refused to recognize the naturalization laws of the United States. Jefferson conceded the right of the British to impress legitimate British subjects from American merchant vessels, but he was irritated when naturalized Americans were seized, and he was outraged when even native-born Americans were taken by impressment. Frustrated as he was by impressment, the Essex decision, and harassment of neutral shipping, Jefferson nevertheless hated the thought of war. So, he refused to build a navy powerful enough to protect American commerce.

The Embargo Act

The nation’s frustration was compounded in 1807 when a British naval commander impressed three American sailors from the U. S. naval frigate Chesapeake. This was a clear violation of international law. When the American captain protested, his vessel was fired upon, and the incident stirred war sentiment in the United States.

Jefferson’s response was the Embargo Act. It prohibited all exports from the United States. Jefferson hoped to keep U. S. merchant ships off the seas, safe from seizure or impressment. He also hoped the embargo would increase pressure on the British and French by denying them access to American goods and the American market—a tactic (boycotts) that had worked during the crises that preceded the Revolution. Instead, the Embargo Act sharply reduced New England’s commerce, the nation’s prosperity, and Jefferson’s popularity.

Americans scrambled to avoid enforcement of the embargo. Merchant ships quickly left port before they could be compelled to stay; goods were smuggled in and out of Canada. At first Jefferson tried to vigorously enforce the hated law, then finally gave up. In 1809, Congress repealed the Embargo Act and replaced it with the Nonintercourse Act that forbade trade only with Britain and France. Thus, Jefferson’s political career ended on a sour note.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

writ of mandamus

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
impressment

Describe the following:

Election of 1800

Twelfth Amendment

Judiciary Act of 1801

Marbury v. Madison

Judiciary Act of 1789

Louisiana Purchase

Continental System

Chesapeake incident

Embargo Act
Nonintercourse Act

Identify the following:

Aaron Burr

Thomas Jefferson

John Marshall

Barbary pirates

Napoleon Bonaparte

Essex Junto

Lewis and Clark

Sacajawea

Zebulon Pike
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. After the election of 1800, the Constitution was amended to change
   A. the suffrage requirements for voting in national elections.
   B. the date of the presidential inauguration.
   C. voting procedures in the Electoral College.
   D. the laws regarding political parties.

2. A major contribution of the Federalists was their
   A. leadership skill in organizing the national government.
   B. toleration of their political opponents.
   C. strict neutrality toward the European war.
   D. equal concern for the interests of northern merchants and southern planters and farmers.

3. Thomas Jefferson did NOT believe that
   A. humans were selfish by nature.
   B. blacks were an inferior race.
   C. manufacturing was the key to national prosperity.
   D. the majority should rule.

4. Thomas Jefferson did NOT favor
   A. states’ rights.
   B. individual freedom.
   C. military preparedness.
   D. limited government.

5. President Jefferson’s first administration was responsible for all of the following EXCEPT
   A. repealing the Whiskey Tax.
   B. reducing the national debt.
   C. revoking the National Bank’s charter.
   D. cutting appropriations for national defense.

6. Jefferson’s presidency was characterized by all of the following EXCEPT
   A. philosophical consistency.
   B. practical compromises.
   C. stability and prosperity.
   D. casual informality.
7. The legal precedent for the Supreme Court’s authority to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional was established when
   A. the House impeached federal judge John Pickering.
   B. the Marbury v. Madison ruling was handed down in 1803.
   C. Congress repealed the Judiciary Act of 1801.
   D. a federal court acquitted Aaron Burr of treason charges.

8. The case of Marbury v. Madison concerned
   A. foreign alliances.
   B. “high crimes and misdemeanors.”
   C. “midnight justices.”
   D. the National Bank.

9. President Jefferson’s first foreign policy decision was to
   A. purchase Louisiana from the French.
   B. send a naval squadron to the Mediterranean.
   C. remove the British from northwest forts.
   D. purchase Florida from Spain.

10. In a secret treaty with Spain in 1800,
    A. the United States purchased Louisiana.
    B. the Mississippi River was opened to American trade.
    C. the United States acquired Florida.
    D. France acquired Louisiana.

11. Which one of these Caribbean islands played a key role in the Louisiana Purchase?
    A. Barbados
    B. St. Croix
    C. St. Dominique
    D. Martinique

12. What is the correct time order of  A) Louisiana Purchase,  B) Election of 1800,  
    C) Marbury v. Madison,  D) Burr conspiracy?
    A. A, B, C, D
    B. B, C, A, D
    C. C, A, D, B
    D. A, D, C, B

13. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was commissioned to explore the
    A. Red River Valley.
    B. Spanish Southwest.
    C. Louisiana Territory.
    D. Trans-Appalachian West.
14. Jefferson’s presidency was characterized by all the following EXCEPT
   A. national prosperity.
   B. territorial growth.
   C. international peace.
   D. Republican popularity.

15. John Randolph of Roanoke was notable as
   A. the leader of the Essex Junto.
   B. a co-conspirator with Aaron Burr.
   C. a staunch defender of states’ rights.
   D. the man who negotiated the Louisiana Purchase Treaty.

16. After the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the war between Britain and France became a war of
   A. guerrilla tactics.
   B. prolonged siege.
   C. economic attrition.
   D. trench warfare.

17. In the Essex case in 1806, a British court found the United States in violation of the
   A. Embargo Act.
   B. Rule of 1756.
   C. Milan Decree.
   D. Naturalization Act.

18. The Chesapeake affair involved flagrant use of
   A. the Rule of 1756.
   B. judicial review.
   C. the Continental System.
   D. impressment.

19. Thomas Jefferson’s political career “ended on a sour note” because of the failure of the
   A. Lewis and Clark Expedition.
   B. Louisiana Purchase.
   C. Republican effort to purge the federal courts of Federalists.
   D. Embargo Act.

20. In the following pairs the two items are directly related to each other in each case EXCEPT
   A. Continental System—impressment
   B. Marbury v. Madison—Judiciary Act of 1789
   C. Chesapeake affair—Embargo Act
   D. Election of 1800—Twelfth Amendment
Essay Questions

1. List Thomas Jefferson’s political principles and show how they relate to his position on such public policy matters as national finance, economic development, territorial expansion, and foreign policy.

2. State the significance of the Marbury v. Madison decision and describe how it was made.

3. Explain why the United States purchased Louisiana from France. State what the terms of the purchase were, what it accomplished, and what problems it presented to Jefferson.

4. Evaluate Jefferson as president. What of real significance did he achieve, and what would you count among his failings? Why?

5. Explain how the European war affected the United States during Jefferson’s presidency, and assess Jefferson’s conduct of foreign policy in response to the war.

Critical Thinking Exercise

Compare and Contrast

Complete the compare-and-contrast matrix in Chapter 5.