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## The Revolution of 1800

John Adams policy toward France remained relatively moderate, though an undeclared naval quasi-war against France raged during his presidency.

Others, including Alexander Hamilton, wanted more aggressive activity. Thus, the Federalists split. Hamilton refused to support Adams and Thomas Jefferson appeared likely to win in 1800.

However, when the final vote was counted Jefferson and his potential Vice President, Aaron Burr ended up tied with 73 votes each. One of Burr's electors failed to discard a vote on someone else as planned.

The election went to the House of Representatives for a decision. Burr, rather than backing down, seemed to now want to be president. The newly elected Congress was not scheduled to replace the sitting Congress for some months, so a Federalist controlled Congress would decide the new Democratic-Republican president.

Though Hamilton and Jefferson disliked each other, Hamilton truly loathed Burr (each had been involved in New York politics for years). Burr also seemed eager for power and was a "rogue" according to Hamilton. Hamilton felt that Jefferson had "some pretension to character." Hamilton directed that Federalists support Jefferson and he became the third president.

His inauguration witnessed the first peaceful transfer of power in US history. Jefferson immediately made noteworthy changes in the style of government. He wanted the type of simplicity that he thought was representative of "republican" government.

Simpler clothing for diplomats, no more bowing, a hand shake would suffice, no more powdered wigs or knee britches. Jefferson refused to have formal balls or state dinners. Jefferson, when hosting informal dinners often wore slippers and served the guests himself.

He refused to go to Congress, and sent a clerk to read his messages. He dismissed Federalist customs collectors and had Congress repeal internal taxes.

Cut the Army and Navy budgets to make government more frugal.  
Repealed the Alien and Sedition Acts and released those convicted.  
Downsized the Federal court system and impeached Federalist Judges. One of the judges, John Pickering, obviously deserved that, as he was increasingly insane and alcoholic. The other Samuel Chase was a respected Supreme Court Justice. Chase was not removed.

The main theme of Jefferson's first term was frugality and strict construction of the Constitution. However, events would arise that forced Jefferson to betray

his own policies.

### **Louisiana Purchase**

Louisiana was a French possession until the 1760s, when the French defeat in the French and Indian War led to the transfer of the area to Spain.

After the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power in the late 1790s, the French dictator seriously considered re-establishing French colonial power in the new world. The French still possessed islands, including Haiti, in the Caribbean.

Further, Spain came under Napoleon control as a client state during the Napoleonic Wars. France, secretly, regained control over Louisiana, New Orleans, and the Mississippi River.

Americans were rightly concerned about the French control of the area and Jefferson said, "There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans."

Though not favoring a war with France, Jefferson prepared for the possibility and sent Robert Livingston to France to try and Buy New Orleans.

In the meantime, a major, successful slave revolt in Haiti occurred and a French Army sent to quash the rebellion was destroyed. Napoleon's dreams of a new empire collapsed and, needing money for renewed war with Great Britain, decided to sell the whole Louisiana Territory, not just New Orleans to the US for \$15 Million, nearly 1 million square miles at \$.03 per acre.

How could Jefferson reject this? But, the Constitution did not seem to specifically authorize him to complete the transaction. He definitely wanted the land to provide generations of republican farmers the ability to maintain their independence. In the end, he decided to buy the land and worry about the apparent hypocrisy later. He made his second election a referendum on the purchase and was overwhelmingly re-elected.

Ironically, a slave revolt provided the opportunity for America to expand the "empire of liberty." Eventually, though, issues would arise as to whether the land purchased would be free or slave.

### **Embargo**

France did go back to war with England after completing the Louisiana Purchase. Initially, America's merchant marine made significant profits carrying goods for both sides. The re-export trade was especially lucrative. Re-export allowed goods to be loaded on US ships for the trip to America, and then

reloaded to a different ship for transport elsewhere. Both sides in the war agreed to this as a means of protecting their own ships from attack. Better to let neutral Americans transport goods.

Profits increased from \$13 million to \$102 million in a few years! But, things turned quickly after the British fleet destroyed the French navy and The French Army destroyed several European armies. The stalemate resulted in a British blockade of Europe and the British re-established older rules about the re-export trade (Rule of 1756) that subjected American neutral ships to seizure.

Napoleon responded to the Blockade with his Berlin Decree outlawing all trade with England (of course, he couldn't enforce it).

Britain responded with Orders in Council that required all ship to stop in England for inspection and Napoleon responded with the Milan Decree that subject any ship obeying the Orders with seizure.

The result was that all American shipping became illegal. Only the British could enforce their various rules and they did, not just seizing many ships but also impressing Americans into the British navy against their will. Perhaps 10,000 were impressed between 1803 and 1812.

Jefferson feared the likelihood of war with Britain and the impact it would have on the new nation – high taxes, more spending, repression of dissent, and the possibility for territorial loss.

Instead, thinking the British needed our raw materials more than we needed their finished product, Jefferson passed an Embargo Act to halt all American trade. All imports and exports were prohibited. The impact on the economy was devastating. Ships rotted in harbors, people were unemployed and smuggling increased.

The Embargo lasted only about a year and was replaced by the Non-intercourse Act, opening trade with all nations but the English and French.

Still, in 1808 the Democratic-Republicans won again. Jefferson's protégé, James Madison became President and inherited the international problems that Jefferson failed to resolve.



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