

Jay's Treaty

More than a decade after the American Revolution, several disputes remained between Britain and the United States. For example, British soldiers were still stationed at forts in western U.S. territories, a violation of the Treaty of Paris of 1783. In addition, the British were supplying Indians with guns and ammunition in an effort to limit American settlement along the Ohio River. The British had also been impressing (seizing) American sailors who they claimed were deserters from the British Navy.



According to the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1783), the western border of the United States was set at the Mississippi River.

As waves of anti-British feeling swept the country, President George Washington believed that it was in the new nation's best interest to avoid another war with Britain. Furthermore, Alexander Hamilton, Washington's Secretary of the Treasury believed the United States needed to expand trade if it were to survive. Chief Justice John Jay was sent to Britain to negotiate a treaty. Later referred to as "Jay's Treaty," the agreement achieved both of its objectives.

Although Washington and Hamilton's goals were met, many Americans were outraged by the terms of the treaty. Western settlers, for example, resented the fact that there was no provision preventing British fur traders from conducting business south of the U.S. - Canadian border. Others thought the treaty undermined the very independence they had fought for and won because, although troops were withdrawn from U.S. territory, Britain was not obligated to end the practices of impressment or supplying Indian combatants with weapons. In addition, U.S. citizens would be taxed to pay off pre-Revolutionary debts owed to British merchants. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison argued that closer ties to Britain would increase Federal power.

Jay's Treaty also strained America's relationship with France. Relations with France had begun to deteriorate during the French Revolution. In the beginning, most Americans supported the revolutionaries, who were inspired by America's own fight for independence. Moreover, French involvement in the American Revolution helped turn the tide of the war. As the French Revolution grew increasingly violent, however, American opinion became divided. When the French government declared war on Great Britain in 1793, President Washington issued a declaration of neutrality. In France, Jay's Treaty was viewed as an insult and as a flagrant violation of the Treaty of 1778 which had created an official alliance between France and the United States. In retaliation, the French navy began seizing American merchant ships headed to Britain.

1. Define impressments.
2. **How** did Jay's Treaty achieve its objectives?
3. Was America supposed to be making treaties with France's enemies, such as Great Britain?
How did the treaty affect U.S. relations with France?
4. Look at your class notes and the reading. How did Jay's Treaty contribute to the emergence of two political parties in America?