ADAMS AND JEFFERSON:
Personal Politics in the Early Republic

Robert Conner[1]

The deterioration of the friendship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson remains a controversial subject among historians. The two men were once the best of friends, spending personal time with each other's family, and enjoying a professional collaboration that would become famous—drafting the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, they freely acknowledged their mutual fondness. In 1784, Adams wrote that his colleague Thomas Jefferson was "an old friend with whom I have often had occasion to labor at many a knotty problem and in whose ability and steadiness I always found great cause to confide."[2] Jefferson wrote similar words of praise to his friend James Madison: "[Adams] is profound in his views, and accurate in his judgments. He is so amiable, that I pronounce you will love him if ever you become acquainted with him."[3] But despite this initial close friendship, by the 1790s Adams called Jefferson "weak, confused, uninformed, and ignorant."[4] At the same time, Jefferson called

[1] Editor's Note: This essay originally appeared under the name "John Connor" in The Oakland Journal 21 (Fall 2011). It is reprinted in full here with correct attribution to Robert Conner.

[2] Merrill D. Peterson, *Adams and Jefferson: A Revolutionary Dialogue (*Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 32.

[3] Ibid, 32.

[4] John Adams, *The John Adams Paper. S*elected, ed., and interpreted by Frank Donovan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 258.

Adams actions as President "the most grotesque scene in the tragic-comedy of government."[5] What led these two men who once worked so closely together to turn from close friends to bitter enemies in only ten years?

How their friendship dissolved has been discussed by Stephen Kurtz, Stanley Elkins, and Eric McKitrick, who emphasize certain events in the Adams Presidency as precise moments in which the two men parted ways.[6] Noble Cunningham Jr., points to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Act and the creation of a Standing Army as the point in which the two men's differences became irreconcilable.[7] Mrecent scholarship by James Sharp argues that a dinner conversation held before Adams was even elected led to their disbanding.[8]

A second school of thought, led by Merrill Peterson, Dumas Malone, and John Ferling, links the divide not so much to a particular event but to the actions of a third party, often Alexander Hamilton. These scholars have argued that Hamilton's position of power within Adams's cabinet subverted Adams's authority over his administration and pushed the cabinet towards a more "Arch-Federalist" policy regarding France and the pursuit of peace, which in turn upset Jefferson.[9]

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[5] Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The collapse of Federalism 1796–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 300.

[6] For more on event centric Adams-Jefferson Material, see Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1993), Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism 1796–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), and John Ferling, John *Adams: A Life* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).

[7] For Cunningham's opinion on the Alien and Sedition acts and their role in the Adams-Jefferson Friendship, see Noble E. Cunningham, Jr. *The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789–1801* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957).

[8] For Sharp's opinion on the significance of this conversation, please see; James Sharp. *American Politics in the Early American Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 165–6.

[9] For more on Hamilton's role in the Adams administration, see Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson & the New Nation: To the Vice Presidency (* Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1970) 558–622; John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson:*

This essay argues that there is no "single moment" that marks the ending of their friendship and that neither of the statesmen, Adams or Jefferson, is solely responsible. Throughout the Adams administration, overtures to the Republican camp were made as late as February of 1799 when William Vans Murray was selected to spearhead peace negotiations with France. Conversely, the writings of Jefferson do not turn from warm support to harsh criticism overnight.[10] An attempt to place blame solely on Adams, Jefferson, or a third party like Hamilton or Madison, over-simplifies the circumstances that led to the disbanding of the partnership. Adams and Jefferson's friendship was first weakened by the dual publishing of the *Discourses on Davila* and Foreword to *The Rights of Man* which created suspicion in the friendship. Further weakened by an already developing political atmosphere, Adams's May 15th Address to Congress in conjunction with his awareness of both the Mazzei letter and the Forrest Letter pushed the two men away from each other significantly enough that following the XYZ affair in 1798 and the public maelstrom of Anti-French and Pro-Adams sentiment, whatever friendship that existed between the two men evaporated. These events turned the political debates surrounding Adams and Jefferson into a personal struggle that ultimately ended their friendship for nearly 20 years.

Adams and Jefferson met for the first time in the Second Continental Congress in 1775 where they worked together in drafting the Declaration of Independence and in 1784, securing loans from various European states to help the fledgling American economy. It was during these later years in Europe

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The Tumultuous Election of 1800 (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2004) 85–134; Manning J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1953); Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time Vol. 3: Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty (*Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1962),326–339; and Richard K. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the creation of Military Establishment in America, 1783–1802. (*New York: The Free Press, 1975).

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that the Adams and Jefferson friendship became closer than at any time in its nearly 40 year duration.

While in Europe, Jefferson and Adams brought their families along with them and eventually introduced them to one another. The Jeffersons and Adamses spent much of their time in Paris together, forming what was a sort of extended family. John's wife Abigail held Jefferson in great regard while Adams's daughter, Abigail "Abby", and his son John Quincy came to view Jefferson almost as a second father, referring to him as someone "whom I love to be with".[11] When Adams left for his new post as first ambassador to London in 1785, Jefferson wrote, "the departure of your family has left me in the dumps."[12] Adams too admitted, "I shall part with M. Jefferson with great Regret."[13] Their separation from each other did not dampen their correspondence, however, as they wrote more frequently than ever before.

In 1788, both Adams and Jefferson were recalled from their posts as a new government was being elected under the recently ratified Constitution. Soon, they found themselves swept up in the pamphleteering wars of the rapidly emerging political conflict. In 1791 Adams published a series of essays entitled "Discourses on Davila," in which he largely sided with those who favored a national Bank, stronger ties with the British, and a stronger central government. In his "Discourses" he stated that no purely democratic government could exist without nobility consisting of politically astute individuals to check it.[14] Along with his essays, he suggested that the president ought to receive the official title of "His Highness the President of the United States."[15] These actions, when put to-

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[11] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2004), 27, John Murray Allison, *Adams and Jefferson: The Story of a Friendship* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 66.

[12] John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters,* 23.

[13] Allison, 68.

[14] Peterson, *Adams and Jefferson*, 56.

[15] Allison, 115.

gether, led many to call Adams a "Monarchist," a title he never escaped for the remainder of his political career. Jefferson, meanwhile, was taken aback by these unexpected words of his friend. He wrote to James Madison that suggesting this title was "The most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of. It is proof [that Adams is] an honest man, often a great one, but sometimes absolutely mad."[16]

Jefferson was not free from controversy either. Jefferson wrote to a friend that he thought author Thomas Paine's most recent Pro-French work, *The Rights of Man,* was an excellent book and that it was good that "something at length be publically said against the political heresies which had of late sprung among us."[17] Jefferson meant this to be a private letter; however, his colleague forwarded the letter to a Philadelphian printer who published Jefferson's note along with Paine's work. Jefferson's statement on "political heresies" was now the foreword of one of the most widely circulated documents of the decade.

Anyone with political sense at the time knew that "political heresies" referred to the Federalist writers, especially Adams and his recent work. The *Foreword* by Jefferson made public their private debate over the recent Revolution in France and put the two men on a public stage as combatants against one another. Jefferson explained to Adams that it was never his intention to have the comment published. However, Adams did not warm to the apology. He had enjoyed arguing with Jefferson in private, but by having their argument made public Adams felt Jefferson had breached their trust.

While Jefferson and Adams continued to correspond, their friendship only continued to deteriorate after this point, each man showed apprehension about his association with the other. Much of the same party violence that plagued Washington's Presidency soon surrounded the Adams Presidency before it even had a chance to begin. The Election of 1796 only strengthened the ideological divide between the two men as

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[16] Ibid, 116.

[17] Peterson, *Adams and Jefferson*, 57.

both Jefferson and Adams found themselves on opposite sides of the widening political divide. During the election Jefferson began to assume the role as the head of the opposition.[18] Adams, on the other side, was Vice President and a key figure in the Federalist Administration. Over the course of the election of 1796, Republicans and Federalists alike started a campaign to smear the other candidate. Republicans used familiar terms for Adams such as "Monarchist," "The Duke of Braintree" and "His Rotundancy." Meanwhile, Federalists characterized Jefferson as a coward, "a weak, wavering, indecisive character . . . a philosopher, not a statesman."[19]

Despite this, it should be noted that Adams and Jefferson were still friends and had mutual respect for one another, though neither harbored the warm, familial feelings they had enjoyed during their residence abroad. While their friendship cooled over the course of the Washington Presidency, the two men still occasionally confided their opinions on government to one another and shared books to read.[20] Once Adams was elected President, the two men were optimistic on what the new administration had in store for them. Adams wrote to a friend, stating "[I] have ever believed in [Jefferson's] Honor, integrity and the love of his country and friends."[21] Adams ad-

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[18] Joseph Ellis, Alexander DeConde and Dumas Malone argue that during Jefferson's retirement leading up to the 1796 election, Madison became the figure head for the Republican party. For more on this theory, see Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson (*New York: Random House Inc., 1997),160–162; Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War (*New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1966),13, and Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time Vol. 3: Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty (*Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1962), 312–325.

[19] Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 89–90. It is important to note that Adams and Jefferson communicated little with one another during the election, and did not participate in any of the muck-raking and name calling of the election itself.

[20] John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams, Volume 1: 1777–1804*, ed. by Lester J. Cappon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 252.

[21] Allison, 165.

mitted that he hoped and expected Jefferson's "cordial and uniform support."[22] Jefferson was equally flattering to Adams; even before the results from the election were in, he wrote to his confidant, James Madison, instructing him that if the election should be too close to call that "[I] authorize you to fully sollicit on my behalf that Mr. Adams may be preferred."[23] In one of Adams first tasks following his election, he extended the olive branch to Jefferson and his party.

Adams began his efforts at bi-partisanship by confiding to Jefferson in early 1797 a plan he wanted to implement that included sending a Republican to join the Federalist Ambassador C.C. Pinckney in a new peace mission to France. He initially hoped Jefferson himself would go to France but understood the impracticality of such an endeavor. Adams then asked Jefferson to confide in his friend and fellow Republican, James Madison, to see if he would be willing to go. However, that night, Jefferson informed him that Madison's response was also negative. Adams' determination for bi-partisanship was undeterred; he eventually settled on Republican Elbridge Gerry to join Federalist Ambassadors C.C. Pinckney and John Marshall in France.[24]

The months between his inaugural address in 1797 and before the publication of the infamous XYZ affair, marked the peak of cooperation and potential in the re-kindling of the Adams-Jefferson friendship, and the one window of opportu-

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[22] Sharp, 160.

[23] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1993), 540.

[24] Malone, 296; Peterson, *Adams and Jefferson*, 69. Public Sentiment towards the peace mission tended to be split along party lines. Many Republican writers and politicians, including the heated partisan Republican journalist Benjamin Franklin Bache, rejoiced at his outreach of friendship and delighted in thinking of the possibilities that awaited the new administration. Federalists on the other hand had much more to fear from the possible friendship and coalition that may have resulted from Adams' outreach to Jefferson. Federalist papers in general tended to dislike Adams' conciliatory stance and continued to inhibit any peace missions that Adams might send to France throughout his tenure.

nity in which it could have been successfully orchestrated. Jefferson seemed to be willing to give his friend the benefit of the doubt when it came to his actions.[25] One of Jefferson's principle overtures to Adams came in a letter he intended to send to him in the weeks following his victory in the election. In the letter, Jefferson congratulated Adams by saying "[I still retain] for you a solid esteem of the moments when we were working for our independence, and sentiments of respect & affectionate attachment."[26] Jefferson forwarded the letter to Madison, asking him to read it and assess whether or not it would be in Jefferson's best interest to send it to Adams. Madison determined it would not be a sound idea to send the letter. If Jefferson sent the letter, Madison reasoned, it would be just another document for which his opponents could attack him, should Adams fall from favor with his party.[27] It would be far more beneficial to Jefferson to wait out the first few months of Adams' tenure to test the political waters before coming out in support of the president.

The Republicans had much more to lose if the two parties were to be merged.[28] It was widely believed that the President would have to spend a great deal of his time trying to avoid war with France. Benjamin Rush, a mutual friend of the two men who facilitated their eventual reconciliation years later, shared this view when he congratulated Jefferson on his "escape of the office of the President" and went on to say, "In the present situation of our country it would have been impossible for you to preserve the credit of our republican principles."[29] Jefferson himself admitted that "[Washington] is fortunate to get off just

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[25] Cunningham Jr., 117.

[26] Kurtz, 541.

[27] Ibid, 213

[28] Merrill Peterson delves deeper into the political situation the Democratic-Republican's faced during Adams' administration, see; Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson & the New Nation: To the Vice Presidency (Oxford*: University of Oxford Press, 1970), 557–651.

[29] Cunningham Jr., 108.

as the bubble is bursting."[30] The negative effects of the friendship between the two men must also be considered in order to understand why events progressed the way they did. If Adams faltered in his task of keeping America afloat or if he lost public support, Jefferson's correspondence and his close proximity to Adams would bring the "Sage of Monticello" down with him.[31]

Meanwhile, Adams faced opposition from his own cabinet concerning co-operation with the Republicans. His initial gestures toward Jefferson during the months of the election were met with mortification by his staunchly Federalist cabinet. When Adams consulted with his Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott Jr. on the bi-partisan mission to France and his wishes to send Madison, Wolcott was so horrified that he and the other Arch-Federalists in Adams's cabinet threatened to resign if he went through with it.[32] Not wanting the trouble, or perhaps viewing these men as too valuable to his own agenda, Adams informed Jefferson that it was acceptable that Madison refused the offer, since he had decided against sending him anyway. Jefferson recalled this event in March of 1796 later, admitting that "[Adams] never after that . . . consulted me as to any measure of government."[33]

From what survives of the Adams-Jefferson letters, it is impossible to determine whether Jefferson was telling the truth in this statement, that he and Adams never subsequently consulted each other on political matters. Their once flowing written correspondence of the two men slowed to a trickle during the Adams Presidency. Adams and Jefferson wrote each other

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[30] David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2001), 476.

[31] Ellis, 167; Dauer, 112.

[32] Brown, 29; Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 339.

[33] Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson & the New Nation: to the Vice Presidency*, 562.

only three times during the Adams presidency.[34] However, it is possible that their written correspondence decreased because it was simply more convenient for them to talk to one another face-to-face then to write at length.

Regardless of how often Adams consulted Jefferson during the presidency, their difficulties in reconciling were increased tenfold by outside elements, especially those from Adams's own cabinet. The Madison Affair was not the only time the Arch-Federalists in Adams's cabinet undermined a chance for the two men to reconcile their differences in hopes of pushing forward a more Federalist agenda. When Adams asked members of his cabinet for advice, their responses often reflected their Arch-Federalist beliefs. Adams, much more of a moderate Federalist, took them to heart in many cases and implemented versions of their advice. Despite Adams's moderation, his cabinet often made his administration seem more Arch-Federalist than Adams was himself. In his unsent congratulatory letter to Adams, Jefferson had written on the dangers that the cabinet posed to the American republic. "Your Arch-friend of New York . . . has been able to make of your real friends tools to defeat . . . your wishes."[35] The men in the Cabinet owed their positions to Hamilton. Therefore, Jefferson and many other Republicans concluded that the cabinet under Adams was more loyal to Hamilton than they would be to the President.

On May 15th 1797, Adams prepared to go to a special session of Congress to address the situation with France and announce his plans on a peace mission. He denounced the actions of the French government. He attributed a rebuff of the

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[34] The first two letters were a short conversation on a book forwarded by Adams to Jefferson in 1796 on the French Revolution. A third letter sent in 1801 by Adams informing Jefferson that horses would be provided for his imminent inauguration. For more on their correspondence during this time please see; John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 261–264.

[35] Elkins and McKitrick, 540–541.

new French Minister and the subsequent tribute held to recalled foreign minister, Republican James Monroe, as an attempt by the French to "separate the people of the United States from the Government . . . and thus produce divisions fatal to our peace . . . such attempts ought to be repelled with a decision which shall convince France and the world that we are not a degraded people . . . fitted to be the instruments of foreign influence."[36] He publicly announced his intentions to send Gerry and John Marshall to join Pinckney in a three-man peace mission. However, as a hedge he also requested that Congress provide the funds to build up a navy and improve coastal defenses to protect American interests on the high seas.[37]

Whatever admiration the traditionally Pro-French Republicans held for Adams previously evaporated after his speech. Bache, who had praised Adams' character earlier, called his speech a "war whoop" and referred to Adams himself as "his Rotundancy" and "the President by three votes."[38] To them, as to Jefferson, the request for Congress to create a navy and supply an army made Adams's speech nothing short of an un-proclaimed war against France.

At this point, Jefferson began to sever his emotional and political ties to Adams. Shortly after the President's speech to Congress, Jefferson met with the French consul general Philippe Letombe and assured the French Minister that Adams was "vain, suspicious, obstinate, excessively egotistic, [and] not taking advice from any one."[39] Jefferson's opinion on the President's intentions turned very critical after Adams's address. Jefferson let his opinions be known when he wrote a friend, "I do not think [of] the speech and address of Congress as conciliatory."[40] He was certain that the lack of further information

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[36] Brown, 42.
[37] Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 344.
[38] McCullough, 485., Brown, 42.
[39] Allison,174.
[40] Kurtz, 234.

from the envoys in France was due to Adams's own desire to hide favorable information from the American people in hopes of boosting his party.[41] From Adams's point of view, building up defense was not a declaration of war but rather a method of insuring peace.[42] In building a naval force and protecting American interests abroad, Adams was sending a clear message to France not to challenge the United States.

Adams's own opinions of Jefferson were becoming strained as well. In May of 1797, during the same week as Adams's address to Congress, the controversial "Mazzei letter" was published.[43] Written by Thomas Jefferson to a confidant, Phillip Mazzei, it noted how Washington had surrounded himself with an "Anglican and monarchial party" who were "Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council . . . [with] their heads shorn by the harlot of England."[44] The Mazzei letter alone would have been enough to shake Adams of his faith in Jefferson, but shortly after this publication, another letter became known to Adams, one more personal and more deeply disheartening. In June of 1797, Federalist Uriah Forrest forwarded to Adams a letter that had come into his possession. The letter voiced Jefferson's disapproval of Adams's methods, stating, "It is possible from the . . . President's speech that he was disposed . . . to proceed on a line which would endanger the peace of our country."[45] Jefferson's letter marked a similar shift in Adams's perspective of the Vice President. While Jefferson did not know his letter had been leaked, Adams began to regard him in a far different light than he had before. Adams told Forrest the letter served as "evidence of a mind, soured, yet seeking popularity, and eaten to a honeycomb of ambition . . . I have been long convinced that this ambition is so inconsiderate as to be capable of going great lengths."[46]

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[41] Brown, 47.

[42] Ibid, 31.

[43] Kurtz, 232.

[44] Allison, 175.

[45] Malone, 321, Peterson, Adams and Jefferson, 73.

[46] John Adams, *The John Adams Papers s*elected, ed., and interpreted by Frank Donovan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 258.

While turmoil engulfed the U.S. government domestically, events in France took a turn for the worse for the peace commission. The ministers from America were told that a $250,000 payment as a *douceur* [sweetener], a public apology by President Adams for his May 15th address, and a loan of 10 million dollars for the French Republic, were all necessary in order for negotiations to take place, conditions amounting to extortion.[47]

On March 19th, 1798, Adams addressed Congress on the XYZ affair. He did not officially disclose the dispatches that Minister Pinckney had sent him, or ask for a Declaration of War against the French as his Cabinet would have liked. He did, however, call the peace mission to France hopeless and its mission impossible.[48] He again stressed the need for naval defenses but with an added caution that America must not get caught up in the European affair.[49]

Republicans accused Adams and the delegation to France of falsifying evidence to further their own ends, with what Jefferson called an "insane message."[50] They demanded to see the correspondence between Pinckney and the French diplomats to prove that there had been no Federalist foul play. A few days later, Adams capitulated to the Republican demands and released the documents, editing them to address the French Diplomats as agents W, X, Y, and Z, hence the name of the scandal. The Republican Party had over-played its hand. Jefferson lamented with "gloomy apprehensions" that war seemed all but inevitable.[51]

The XYZ affair is crucial in understanding why the Adams and Jefferson friendship did not repair itself despite the warm feelings of both men. The war-fever that emerged made Adams

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[47] McCullough, 495; Brown, 48.

[48] Brown, 49.

[49] Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 107.

[50] Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 354 and Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* , 108.

[51] Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 108.

seem like the hero of the common man. Jefferson subsequently was vilified by the press. During a Fourth of July rally, a toast made to Adams summed up the war hysteria, and the tension between the two men, quite nicely saying, "may he [Adams] like *Samson*, slay thousands of Frenchmen with the *jawbone* of Jefferson."[52]

Public opinion made it impossible for the two old friends to reconcile as Federalists accused Jefferson and his party of favoring France more than they did America and accused the Republicans, as John Ferling says, of "wish[ing] to threaten the very fabric of American society."[53] To Republicans and Jefferson in particular, the thought of a standing army proposed by Federalists was perhaps the most egregious offense that any government could enact. There had been much doubt in Jefferson's mind about whether or not Adams would become a puppet to Hamilton's intentions. With the passage of war measures by the Federalist congress, Jefferson was convinced that this fear was now a reality.

Furthermore, in 1798 Congress drafted the Alien and Sedition Acts. The Sedition Act in particular, sought to eliminate Republican dissension domestically. The Sedition Act in particular permitted the federal government to jail or issue fines to any persons who sought to make "false, scandalous and malicious" comments about the Federal government or its officers.[54]

These actions only strengthened Jefferson's resolve. By this

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[52] Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson & the New Nation: To the Vice Presidency,* 606. The atmosphere following the publication of the XYZ Affair deepened party lines even further. Republican house member Matthew Lyon spat at Federalist Roger Griswold of Connecticut during a heated debate on the House floor, giving him the nickname "the spitting Lyon." Calvary patrolled the streets of Philadelphia for three days to deter would be rioters, while guards were placed outside of Adams' s residence. In an act of mob violence, Benjamin Franklin Bache was assaulted and badly beaten for publishing his Pro-French newspaper. For more on this please see; Brown, 116; DeConde, 83; and Kohn, 213

[53] Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 357.

[54] Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 365.

point, he was convinced that he was battling to preserve liberty and freedom against the overtly militaristic Federalist government. He theorized that the "sedition bill . . . will subject America to executive despotism."[55] Because of his omission from the protected offices in the Sedition Act, Jefferson was cautious not to criticize them publicly. Jefferson attributed his tenure in the Fifth or "XYZ" Congress among his most important services to his country as he sought to defend his country against what he considered to be "a reign of witches."[56] Adams no doubt was one of these men. Instead of publicly denouncing the Alien and Sedition acts, Jefferson anonymously drafted the Kentucky Resolutions which denounced them as "unconstitutional and obnoxious" and addressed the rights of the individual states to nullify any such act which it deemed not expressly given to the National Government in the Constitution.[57] Kentucky proved an excellent stage for Jefferson to publish his objections. It was home to many Republicans who would protect Jefferson's anonymity. As a territory preparing itself for statehood, Kentucky also had the eyes of the entire United States on its state convention, where the document was presented.

Even though Jefferson believed that the government was openly heading toward despotism, Adams began to suddenly change course by early 1799. For months, he had been receiving information from independent sources, including George Logan, Elbridge Gerry, and his own son John Quincy, in Europe. All this evidence convinced Adams that the French were willing to accept another peace mission. Federalist opinions, however, were staunchly against this idea. Gerry, for his part in continuing negotiations, was ostracized by the Federalist Party

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[55] Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology. (*Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1978), 263.

[56] Malone, 359. 382.

[57] Harry Ammon, and Adrienne Koch, "The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions: An Episode in Jefferson's and Madison's Defense of Civil Liberties" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 5, No. 2. (Williamsburg: Omohundro Institute of Early American History, 1948), 149.

who openly referred to him as a fool and a traitor. Gerry would continue the rest of his political career as a Republican.[58]

Adams decided to use this information and, without consulting his Federalist Cabinet, he sent a letter to Congress on February 18th, 1799. He decided that the time was right to send Federalist William Vans Murray to France to seek peace with their government. By doing this, Adams alienated himself from Alexander Hamilton and many of the other Arch-Federalists; his cabinet was "thunderstruck" by the decision.[59] Adams's break with the Arch-Federalists continued with his removal of McHenry and Pickering from office in June of 1800, effectively cutting the ties he had left with the Arch-Federalist wing of his party.[60] It was a superb effort of statesmanship that ultimately resulted in political suicide.

While Jefferson surely supported the new peace mission, no letters of reconciliation resulted from Adams's clear break with the Federalists. Jefferson and Madison, by this point, were much too skeptical to believe that anything Adams did was in the spirit of genuine bi-partisanship. Ironically, Jefferson believed the decision to send a second peace mission was a shrewd attempt by Hamilton to rally support for the Federalists and not the original work of his long time friend.[61] Jefferson believed the "mortification" that Adams's fellow Federalists showed towards his decision, which he used as further proof that war for political gain was the true aim of the Federalists' policies.[62]

By this point, there was no way of saving their partnership, nor did either man have much desire to do so. Jefferson came out on top in the election of 1800, which saw unprecedented mudslinging by both Parties. Adams's efforts to pursue peace with France had successfully alienated him from Hamilton and

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[58] Brown, 81.
[59] Ferling, John *Adams: A Life*, 380. Charles, 420.
[60] Charles, 420.
[61] Brown, 91.
[62] McCullough, 524.

many conservative Federalists in his party and cost him the election.[63]

In the end, a poisonous political atmosphere ruined the personal friendship, ending what had been a dynamic partnership. The Adams-Jefferson Friendship was not a trivial union for political gain and should not be viewed as such. Both men genuinely desired friendship and respected each another. But their friendship ultimately was not strong enough to endure the heated politics of the time. Nevertheless, once the political atmosphere that consumed them had subsided with the end of the War of 1812, the two men began to mend their relationship through a long series of conciliatory measures, with no single event being the sole reason for rebuilding the relationship. Ultimately, the story of Adams and Jefferson is one of the Political overtaking the Personal. Not until the partisanship of the late 1790s subsided could the two old friends work on reconciliation.[64]

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[63] While the Election of 1800 certainly did not help repair Adams' and Jefferson's friendship, it is clear that by this point their relationship had reached the point of no return. Therefore, any additional discussion on the relation of the Election of 1800 to the friendship would be superfluous. As the name suggests, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* by John Ferling, is an excellent case study on the Election of 1800 and the resulting animosity that arose from it, for those who wish to read further into this area of Scholarship. Ralph Brown, Noble Cunningham Jr., Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick also spend a good deal of time mentioning the results the 1800 election had on the Adams-Jefferson duo and their respective parties. Please see; Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: the Tumultuous Election of 1800*, 126–215, Brown, 175–209, Cunningham Jr., 144–248, and Elkins and McKitrick, 691–754. It was not until well after Jefferson's presidency in 1812 did the two began to repair what had been so damaged by the twelve years of Federalist control of government. Spurred along by mutual friends like Elbridge Gerry and Benjamin Rush, the two men began corresponding once more. What resulted was a lengthy correspondence of fourteen years that lasted until both men died on the same day, July 4th, 1826.

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