

# PRESIDENTIAL COURAGE<sup>1</sup> Brave Leaders and How They Changed America 1789-1989 by Michael Beschloss [textbooksfree.org](http://textbooksfree.org)

**Editor's notes:** 1) The author summarized events in only the first of four chapters  
2) Presidents elected on even decades like 1990, 2000, off year elections of 1992, 2014...

3) Pictures are from Wikipedia and the Internet can often be enlarged with a click.  
4) **Editorial comments are in red font.** 5) [Part 2](#) for TR, FDR, HST, JFK, and RR

## Events Summary

## The Politics

### GEORGE WASHINGTON 1) A SPEEDY DEATH TO GENERAL WASHINGTON

Washington had been unanimously elected by the Electoral College in 1788 and 1792. Britain, at war with France, was seizing U.S. ships trading with France. In addition, London was reneging on its pledge made as part of the treaty ending the Revolutionary War to vacate forts in Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, and Michilmackinac. She was also arming Indians and spurring them to attack American settlers. These attacks were killing helpless women and children. Trying to avoid a war with Great Britain that might "strangle the infant nation in its cradle," Washington secretly sent aristocratic Chief Justice John Jay to England to negotiate a peace treaty. Eventually word got out and many found some treaty demands humiliating. Article 12 of the treaty stated America could trade with the West Indies with only small ships really aggrieved Southerners as it severely hurt their exports. Another article stated the U.S. could not export products native to the islands. To make matters worse, a Provision Order issued later by Britain required U.S. ships carrying grain to France be stopped and the cargo confiscated. See [Jay Treaty](#).

Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson hated the English, adored France, and demanded retaliation. Alexander Hamilton always argued with him over foreign policy and economics. He also felt America could not win a war with Britain. In 1793, not happy as Secretary of State Federalists and missing Virginia; he resigned and began to organize the Republicans who would opposed Federalist leaders, Washington, Adams, and Hamilton.

**2) Kick This Treaty to Hell** A Virginia Republican ignored Washington's order to keep treaty content secret and passed a copy to the French who helped make it public. When Hamilton defended the treaty in front of the New York City Hall he was stoned and left with a bloody face. In Boston, a British ship was set aflame. The net result was our [First Party System](#). Washington's attempt to use [Executive Privilege](#) to keep Jay Treaty information from Congress was the first of many such Presidential attempts. Richard Nixon attempted used is perhaps the most notorious.

The Politics "A speedy Death to General Washington!" was title of another cartoon. Some wanted Washington impeached as cartoons depicted the President being chased out of town feeling the treaty's enactment was unconstitutional. **One reason for unhappiness was that the south was not compensated for slaves that fought for England to obtain freedom.**

**Editor's Note:** Secretary of State Hamilton wanted to negotiate but his friendship with England ruled him out. Supreme Court Chief Justice Jay was sent. Soon to be a Republican, he was far from being a loyal cabinet member. See **Leader of the Opposition: In Wait at Monticello** from [Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power, 2012 by J. Meacham and U.S. History Hamilton vs. Jefferson](#)



### 3) THE DAMNEDEST LIAR



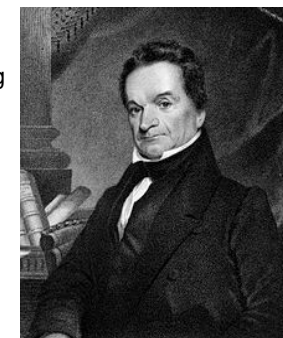
To support the treaty powerful Federalist rolled into gear and stopped issuing ship insurance until the treaty was enacted. In Philadelphia, debtors were pressured by banks to support the treaty. By 1796, Britain had scrapped the Provision Order accepting Washington's version of the treaty excluding Article 12 so large ships could trade in West Indies. The tide had turned in favor of the treaty.

### 4) HE MAY RETIRE WITH UNDIMINISHED GLORY

The Republican controlled house tried to withhold ninety thousand dollars needed to enact the Jay Treaty. John Adams feared a war with Britain might result in a "civil war" between the Anglophile Northeast who wanted to protect their manufacturing and the Southern Francophiles more interested in exporting cotton. The funding vote tie of 49 to 49 was surprisingly broken by Republican [Frederick Muhlenberg](#) of Pennsylvania who was chairing a Committee of the Whole. He **committed political suicide** by voting for the funding and against the wishes of his German American constituents who hated England. After the vote, Frederick was stabbed by his German-American brother-in-law.

[Edward Livingston](#) [pictured] of New York demanded Washington hand over all documents related to treaty bargaining. Limited access was granted and Washington said the only way to get unlimited access was to impeach him. **Think Executive privilege.**

In a letter to John Jay Washington stated he had survived "the Storm" and would never forget the "pernicious" people "disseminating the poison" against him. As Washington predicted, America was powerful enough to get their way in a war with England. Click to enlarge both pictures. **As was common for Southerners of his day Washington was plagued by seven deadly diseases during his life. Upon leaving office he suffered from a bad back, painful false teeth and rheumatism. Washington was very unhappy with the verbal political war between people with presidential aspirations, especially Hamilton and Jefferson whose dislike for each other approached paranoia. Hamilton's was over a weak central government unable to fulfill his dreams of Manifest Destiny. He feared French invasion after their revolution because it would have southern support. Jefferson's was that a central government that would end his Southern based rural world best described by "Gone with the Wind."** Of the nine presidents who owned slaves only Washington freed them upon the death of Martha. [George Washington's Farewell Address](#) is very prophetic.



1 From the 2007 first edition 2. Table, column and row titles, and name abbreviations are by Walter Antoniotti  
3. Editor's addition 4. Editor's Note: Washington's fears of political though logical were avoided as [US Undergoes the First Peaceful 1800 Transfer of a Democratic System](#) from [Turning Points in American History](#) Notes from A Great Course audio by E. O'Donnell

4. Help in keeping track of presidential elections, they happen on even numbered decades as Lincoln was elected in 1860, Kennedy, 1960. For more on Washington see [Don't Know Much About History Chapter 3](#) on Growth of a Nation from the Creation of the Constitution to Manifest Destiny and [Meacham's Thomas Jefferson, PART VII](#) reviewing Jefferson as opposition to the Federalists of Hamilton and Adams.