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Contrast the political views of Jefferson and Hamilton

In mid-nineteenth century American, the view that the Yeoman farmer is supposed to be the heart and foundation of America's economy and its democracy started to disappear. With that shift, the economy began to rely more on modern economic activities such as commerce, manufacturing, large-scale agriculture engagements, and industrialization. The former view, and its associated values were hugely significant for Thomas Jefferson, while Alexander Hamilton, from the Federalist Party, advocated for a more centralized and industrialized economy, sharply contrasting Jefferson’s views. The paper will further explore important political differences between these two prominent American leaders, to explain this transition in the American worldview.

Jefferson who had seen through the stages that led to Independence did not want a state modeled on British aristocracy. Displays of formality, pomposity or aristocratic tensions did not appeal to Jefferson who passionately supported the Yeoman farmer. The farmer was the salt of the earth, unlike mechanics, bankers or merchants, for Jefferson who disliked urban life. Politically, Alexander Hamilton was his greatest rival. Hamilton envisioned a centralized Industrial economy and made efforts to create the first US national bank, a move Jefferson, with his deep mistrust of urban institutions and banks, vehemently opposed (HistoryCentral). In the Jefferson era, the moral judgment of the common man, or the farmer, was relied upon with confidence. The ideal American could be trusted to make fundamental political decisions just as they could resolve basic moral questions on their own. Therefore, the common people would rely upon their moral and ethical wisdom to choose natural aristocrats (Griswold). The views of Jefferson and his companions formed from experience and the lessons of history. The government itself was seen as a necessary evil and inherently dangerous. A minimal government with reduced powers that left people to manage their own affairs that places greater confidence in human virtue, ethics and reason would preserve liberty and prevent Tyranny. However, this idealistic view changed with Jefferson's immediate successor, James Madison, who had worked closely with Alexander Hamilton, someone who even before Jefferson’s Presidency, had been a staunch supporter of a mechanized Industrial based economy.

Politically speaking, Jeffersonian democracy offered the most prosperous and freest America, where there were no regulations, federal taxes, a standing army or federal police force. The election of Jefferson proved that the political ideas of the Federalists and Alexander Hamilton was too much to handle for traditional American society, who saw Jefferson as the candidate that held up to the ideals of the American Revolution (Griswold). However, with Jefferson's rule, the War of 1812, and the Embargo Act of 1807 led many to question them and join Hamilton’s camp. The trade Embargo of 1807 was placed by Jefferson on American exports to Britain and France, however, it resulted in hurting the US economy, and consequently led to bankruptcy, and loss of profits. Yet, a positive side to it was the realization that self-production of goods was crucial instead of relying on foreign products, to be able to support itself and avoid the economic crisis as a result of the Embargo. Similarly, the necessity for a better transportation system and infrastructure, as well as an independent economy was increasingly felt, something Hamilton strongly advocated. The War of 1812 and the Embargo Act served as the springboard for the coming Industrial Revolution. Coupled with other factors, this naturally pushed the drive towards greater industrialization, large-scale production, and mechanization, in order to protect America's political and geopolitical interests, essentially the Hamiltonian view.

In conclusion, it is evident that a number of social, political and economic factors drove the US towards an Industrial leader from an agrarian state. It leads to a shift in Individual and social values, and competition between the classes, as well as what it meant to be an American. The changing political shift transitioned America from the Jefferson’s political thought to that of Hamilton.

# Works Cited

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