## Prompt

Analyze how competing conceptions of national identity were expressed in the development of political in institutions and cultural values from late colonial through antebellum periods.

## Context

From the late colonial through antebellum periods, the sense of national identity in the United States was interpreted in different and competing ways, politically and culturally.

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<th>National Identity: A sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, represented by traditions and cultures</th>
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<td>Original a colony of Britain, however over time, the colonies formed their separate identity</td>
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| Political: government and political parties with differing views |

| Cultural: Spiritual, religious, and reform movements which united the people |

## Thesis Statement

From the late Colonial era through the Antebellum period, political and cultural differences became more evident, resulting in the competing conceptions of national identity. Politically, parties formed with competing views on the United States as a cohesive whole; for instance, the different economic visions of Hamilton and Jefferson, and the emergence and opposition to the Era of the Common Man, and culturally, religious and spiritual movements that united the masses, such as the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening.

## Evidence

### Political

**Salutary Neglect:** This refers to a time period during the late colonial era when England practiced loose political control over the colonies, thus allowing the colonies to begin to self-govern and slowly break away from England.

**Stamp Act Congress:** Consisted of 9 delegates from different colonies, in opposition to the Sugar and Stamp Acts passed by George Grenville, where they discussed and moderately protested the lack and loss of rights of the colonists, in hopes of compromise.

**Federalists vs. Antifederalists:** After the war of Independence, the Articles of Confederations loosely held the states together. During the Philadelphia Convention the “framers” established the Constitution. The Federalists supported the constitutions and the idea of a centralized national government. The anti-federalists were skeptical of the constitution and feared that the growth of a centralized government would become tyrannical and corrupt.

**Jefferson’s vision of Society:** Jefferson envisioned a society with a weak central government giving more power to state legislatures while creating an agrarian republic. He opposed taxes on agrarian farmers, and contested the industrializing plans of Alexander Hamilton such as the first bank of the United States.

## Analysis

The **Salutary Neglect** toward the American colonies by the British allowed the colonists to develop their own form government, which contributed to the separation of views between England and the colonies. Forms of government and its institutions established in the colonies and by the colonists (House of Burgesses in Virginia, Town meetings) provided a sense of national identity among the colonists, despite the fact that they were still ruled by England and not yet a nation.

The **Stamp Act Congress** united many of the colonies to protest against their lack of natural rights given by England. This set a precedent for the identities of the nation to stand up for their rights and not always follow British orders. This gave the colonies an identity that they are united, and in the future could be independent from England.

The views of the **federalists** and the **antifederalists** showed the emergence of the competing views on the identity of the nation’s politics post War of Independence. The antifederalists believed that the national and political identity should have more emphasis on states-rights, whereas the federalist vision of the nation’s politics emphasized more federal power and the supreme law. These differing conceptions of the political identity of the United States led to certain compromises such as the bill of rights and checks and balances.

**Thomas Jefferson’s** vision of the economic identity of the United States shows one of the different views among the people during the time period. His vision of national identity consisted of a small, agriculturally based economy with local officials and independent yeomen farmers who sustained themselves through their own farms, which in turn would benefit the economy, however, others had much different visions of the national and economic identity of the United States.

**Hamilton’s** vision for America was one based on a stronger federal government. Hamilton believed that the country’s individuals should be governed through elected officials. Furthermore, Hamilton was in favor of federal over states’ rights. This vision is far different from Jefferson’s vision, exemplifying the competing conceptions of national identity and what it means to be a part of the United States.

The **Interpretation of the Constitution** is important because it is an example of competing conceptions of national and political identity. Much of a country’s national identity is determined by how they are governed, therefore the interpretation of the constitution significantly contributes to national identity. When **Alexander Hamilton** wanted to create the first **Bank of the United States,** there was a dispute over the interpretation of the **Necessary and Proper Clause** (elastic clause).
Hamilton’s vision of society: Hamilton's vision for America was one of modern economic vision based on investment and industry. Hamilton created a successful debt system thus attracting foreign investors. He also created the first national bank of the U.S. that would collect taxes, hold funds and make loans.

Constitutional Interpretations: After the Constitution was ratified, there were still arguments on how the Constitution was interpreted. Some believed in a “strict interpretation” and some believed in a “loose interpretation”

Era of Good Feeling: After the Federalist Party dissolved, only the Republican Party remained. During this era, economic, cultural, legal and diplomatic nationalism emerged along with sectionalism of the north, south and west.

Era of the Common Man: In the early 1800s, the states started to expand franchise to all white men, despite class and land ownership, which changed the tone of politics resulting in the election of more “common” men into office and presidency such as Andrew Jackson. Soon the campaigning of political parties formed to cater to the common man through slogans, parties, and parades.

Cultural

The Enlightenment: A movement that began in Europe and traveled to the Americas that emphasized the power of human reason, the progressive improvement of society, and the natural rights of the people.

The 1st Great Awakening: An evangelical religious movement to make religion better understood by the people. Personal and individual sides of salvation were emphasized.

The 2nd Great Awakening: The Second Great Awakening was a Christian revival movement during the early 19th century. The movement expressed a theology that people can be saved through religious revivals.

Alternate movements/societies (transcendentalism, Shakers, Oneida, Mormons): This United different groups of people who opposed the changes in society due to the industrial revolution. To many of these groups, these societies formed the identity of the nation.

Jefferson and his supporters believed that Hamilton did not have the right to create the first national bank because the Constitution did not strictly say so. On the other hand, Hamilton loosely interpreted the Constitution, arguing that creating a bank was necessary and proper for the nation, therefore constitutional under the Necessary and Proper clause.

The time period after the Federalist Party disappeared was called the “Era of Good Feeling” because only one political party remained, which caused less political conflict. During this period of time Nationalism began to emerge, which united Americans in certain ways. Economically, the American System emphasized a strong federal economy with a national bank and federally funded works. Culturally, national anthems, national heroes, and American literature united the people.

However, as nationalism emerged, sectionalism also emerged, which resulted in differing views and needs among the north, south and west. For example, the north relied on industry, the south on slaves and cotton, and the west on farming. Many disagreed on the federally funded works because many didn’t want to pay taxes for works that wouldn’t benefit their section.

The Era of the Common Man broadened the franchise to all white men, therefore giving the common man a political identity. The common man united together in politics to elect people such as Andrew Jackson into presidency. For Jackson’s democratic campaign, Martin Van Buren developed a political campaign system for his political party. For Jackson’s campaign, Van Buren incorporated slogans, parties, and parades, which catered to and unified the common man. On the other hand, the Whig political party formed which was against Jackson’s Era of the Common Man. This competing view on national identity opposed Jackson’s policies and the formation of “king mob”. The Whigs also believed that the world should be dominated by elite men with ability, no the common man.

The Enlightenment was brought to the United States from Europe during the Colonial Era. It gave the colonists a sense of unity because it brought the ideas of human reason, which was not a well received idea throughout the colonies at this time; progressive improvements to society, which had not happened since the arrival of the colonists; and the natural rights of the people, which, at that time, the colonists were not receiving from England due to their rule over the colonies.

The Great Awakening may also be considered the last major expression of the religious ideals on which the New England colonies were formed. Religion had been on the decline for decades, partly due to the Enlightenment and negative publicity from the Salem witch trials. After the Great Awakening, popularity in religion again subsided and over the next eighty years, religion in the US was fairly secular. The first Great Awakening is important to the national identity of the United States because it was unique to the American colonies, and was completely separate from England. The Great Awakening was one of the first things that set the colonies apart from England, contributing to a separate identity and the eventual independence from England.

The Second Great Awakening united groups of people during the antebellum era, and led to acts of benevolence and the Benevolent Empire. People were incredibly devoted to religious revivals, which gave many people their identity. The mass of people that were drawn to religious revival was vast, which became a part of the national identity

During the antebellum era, the economy of the United States became more industrialized, which resulted in poor working conditions in factories and separation between the rich and poor in society. As a reaction to the industrial revolution, utopian societies and different movements formed, such as the transcendalist movement, which emphasized reflection of the individual, and trust in one’s passion and emotion. Utopian societies such as the Shakers and Oneidas formed as well. These societies and movements were the identities of many people for example, Henry David Thoreau, a transcendentalist who believed in Civil Disobedience.

There were three types of Abolitionists during the Antebellum period. Those who believed in radical change, gradual change, and American Colonization. Radical abolitionists believed in full freedom and liberty of slaves. Gradual abolitionists believed in slow change in the amount of slaves in America
Abolition Movement: Abolitionist ideals became increasingly popular in northern churches and politics in the 1830s. The overall goal of the abolition movement was to terminate the use of slaves in the United States. Abolitionism was partly fueled by the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, advocating that slavery was immoral and unjust.

over time. Lastly the American Colonization Movement was a movement proposed that would free all slaves in America and send them Africa. These movements united many people together, including women, who began to participate in movements outside the home. Doing good works like supporting the cause for the abolition of slavery, or womens rights created an identity for people especially women who had previously been limited to doing work within the home. Examples of women who participated in such movements are Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.