

federalism. **Federalism** is a system of government in which power is shared between the central (or federal) government and the states. Linking themselves to the idea of federalism, the people who supported the Constitution took the name **Federalists**.

The Federalists promoted their views and answered their critics in a series of essays, known as **The Federalist papers**. Three well-known politicians wrote *The Federalist* papers—James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. These essays first appeared as letters in New York newspapers. Calling for ratification of the Constitution, *The Federalist* papers appealed both to reason and emotion. In *The Federalist* papers, Hamilton described why people should support ratification.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“Yes, my countrymen, . . . I am clearly of opinion it is your interest to adopt it [the Constitution]. I am convinced that this is the safest course for your liberty, your dignity, and your happiness.”

—Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* “Number 1”

### ONLINE PRIMARY SOURCE

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## COMPARING Perspectives

Federalists and Antifederalists had very different ideas about how the United States should be governed. These were some of the arguments made as Americans passionately debated ratification of the Constitution.

### Antifederalists

“Your president may easily become king: Your Senate is so imperfectly constructed that your dearest rights may be sacrificed by what may be a small minority; and a very small minority may continue for ever unchangeably this government, although horridly defective. Where are your checks in this government?”

—Patrick Henry

The mode of levying taxes is of the utmost consequence; and yet here it is to be determined by those who have neither knowledge of our situation, nor a common interest with us.

—George Mason

### Federalists

“I am persuaded that a firm union is as necessary to perpetuate our liberties as it is to make us respectable; and experience will probably prove that the national government will be as natural a guardian of our freedom as the state legislature[s] themselves.

—Alexander Hamilton

As all the States are equally represented in the Senate, and by men the most able and the most willing to promote the interests of their constituents, they will all have an equal degree of influence in that body.

—John Jay

**CRITICAL THINKING Analyze** What was it about a strong federal government that frightened the Antifederalists?

John Jay



Patrick Henry

