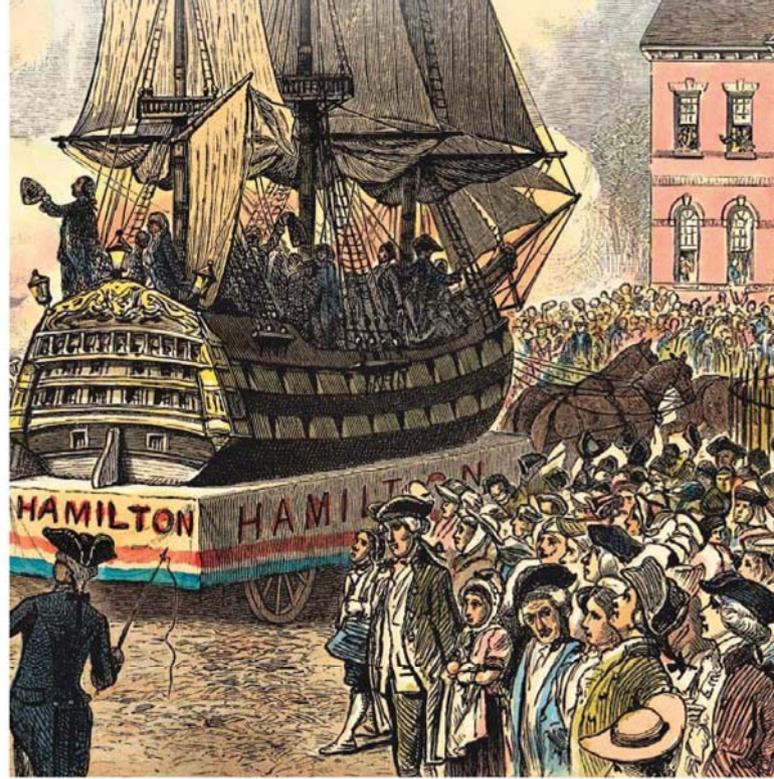


Concerns of the Antifederalists The Antifederalists thought the Constitution took too much power away from the states and did not guarantee rights for the people. Some feared that a strong president might be declared king. Others feared the Senate might become a powerful ruling class. In either case, they thought, the liberties fiercely won during the Revolution might be lost.

Antifederalists received support from rural areas, where people feared a strong government that might add to their tax burden. Large states and those with strong economies, such as New York, which had greater freedom under the Articles of Confederation, also were unsupportive of the Constitution at first.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST Describe the disagreements between Federalists and Antifederalists.



New Yorkers cheer a “Ship of State” float in honor of the new Constitution of 1798. Why did Alexander Hamilton deserve a float in his honor?

The Battle for Ratification

KEY QUESTION How did the lack of a bill of rights endanger the Constitution?

The proposed U.S. Constitution contained no guarantee that the government would protect the rights of the people, or of the states. Some supporters of the Constitution, including Thomas Jefferson, wanted to add a bill of rights—a formal summary of citizens’ rights and freedoms, as a set of amendments to the Constitution.

The Call for a Bill of Rights Virginia’s convention opened in June of 1788. Antifederalist Patrick Henry fought against ratification, or approval, of the Constitution. George Mason, who had been a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, also was opposed to it.

Antifederalists wanted written guarantees that the people would have freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion. They demanded assurance of the right to trial by jury and the right to bear arms.

Federalists insisted that the Constitution granted only limited powers to the national government so that it could not violate the rights of the states or of the people. They also pointed out that the Constitution gave the people the power to protect their rights through the election of trustworthy leaders. In the end, Federalists yielded to the people’s demands and promised to add a bill of rights if the states ratified the Constitution.

Final Ratification In December 1787, Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania voted for ratification. In January 1788, Georgia and Connecticut ratified the Constitution, followed by Massachusetts in early February. By