**The Rise of Political Parties in America**

The result of the Constitutional Convention was the United States Constitution. The Constitution created a federal government consisting of three separate branches in order to impose checks and balances on the powers of each branch.

* The executive branch would be headed by a president, who would be elected.
* The legislative branch would be composed of an upper house, the Senate, and a lower house—the House of Representatives. Representation in the House would be based on population—including counting enslaved men and women at the proportion of three to five for the purposes of representation and taxation. Each state would elect two representatives to the Senate.
* The judicial branch would consist of a Supreme Court and lower courts to interpret and apply the law.

The finished Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787 by 39 of the 42 delegates present. The Convention had decided that the Constitution would take effect upon ratification by conventions in nine of the 13 states.

By June 1788 the required nine states ratified the Constitution, but the large states of Virginia and New York had not. Most people felt that without the support of these two states, the Constitution would never be honored. To many, the document seemed full of dangers: would not the strong central government that it established tyrannize them, oppress them with heavy taxes and drag them into wars?

Differing views on these questions brought into existence two parties, the Federalists, who favored a strong central government, and the Antifederalists, who preferred a loose association of separate states. Impassioned arguments on both sides were voiced by the press, the legislatures and the state conventions.

Virginia Antifederalists were led by Patrick Henry, who became the chief spokesman for back-country farmers who feared the powers of the new central government. Wavering delegates were persuaded by a proposal that the Virginia convention recommend a bill of rights, and Antifederalists joined with the Federalists to ratify the Constitution on June 25.

In New York, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison pushed for the ratification of the Constitution in a series of essays known as *The Federalist Papers*.

**The Federalist Papers**

The Federalist was originally planned to be a series of essays for publication in New York City newspapers, but ultimately expanded into a collection of 85 essays, which were published as two volumes in March and May 1788. They did not become known as "The Federalist Papers" until the 20th century. The essays were aimed at convincing opponents of the US Constitution to ratify it so that it would take effect as the nation’s fundamental governing document. (Opponents of the Constitution drafted their own series of essays, which became known collectively as the Anti-Federalist Papers.)

The essays comprising the Federalist Papers were authored by John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, three of the most influential nationalist thinkers. The nationalists urged the creation of a stronger central government that would be sufficiently empowered to confront the many challenges facing the young nation. Though the authors primarily sought to influence the vote in favor of ratifying the Constitution, Federalist No. 1 framed the debate in much broader terms, by questioning “whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”

Many of the most influential essays in The Federalist were penned by either Hamilton or Madison:

* In Federalist No. 10, Madison reflects on how to prevent rule by majority faction and advocates the expansion of the United States into a large, commercial republic.
* In Federalist No. 39 and Federalist 51, Madison seeks to “lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty,” emphasizing the need for checks and balances through the separation of powers into three branches of the federal government and the division of powers between the federal government and the states.
* In Federalist No. 84, Hamilton advances the case against the Bill of Rights, expressing the fear that explicitly enumerated rights could too easily be construed as comprising the only rights to which American citizens were entitled.

Although the primary purpose of The Federalist was to convince New Yorkers to send to the Constitutional Convention delegates who would vote to ratify the Constitution, fully two-thirds of New York’s delegates initially opposed ratification. These delegates refused to ratify the document unless it was amended by a [Bill of Rights](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/road-to-revolution/creating-a-nation/a/the-bill-of-rights). Thus, the authors of The Federalist failed in their original objective.

Nevertheless, The Federalist Papers is widely considered to be the most significant American contribution to the field of political philosophy and theory and is held up by scholars, lawyers, and judges to be the most authoritative source for determining the original intent of the framers of the US Constitution.

Antipathy toward a strong central government was only one concern among those opposed to the Constitution; of equal concern to many was the fear that the Constitution did not protect individual rights and freedoms sufficiently. Virginian George Mason, author of Virginia's 1776 Declaration of Rights, was one of three delegates to the Constitutional Convention who refused to sign the final document because it did not enumerate individual rights. Together with Patrick Henry, he campaigned vigorously against ratification of the Constitution by Virginia. Indeed, five states, including Massachusetts, ratified the Constitution on the condition that such amendments be added immediately.

When the first Congress convened in New York City in September 1789, the calls for amendments protecting individual rights were virtually unanimous. Congress quickly adopted 12 such amendments; by December 1791, enough states had ratified 10 amendments to make them part of the Constitution. Collectively, they are known as the Bill of Rights.

**The Bill of Rights**

The Bill of Rights consists of 10 amendments that explicitly guarantee certain rights and protections to US citizens by limiting the power of the federal government.

* The First Amendment prevents the government from interfering with the freedoms of speech, peaceable assembly, and exercise of religion.
* The Second Amendment declares that properly constituted militias are a safeguard of liberty and that the right to bear arms will be protected.
* The Third Amendment restricts the quartering of soldiers in private homes—an extremely contentious issue that had led the colonists to war with Great Britain.
* The Fourth Amendment protects citizens against unreasonable searches and seizures of private property.
* The Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Amendments establish a variety of guarantees relating to legal proceedings and criminal justice, including the right to a trial by jury; protection against self-incrimination and double jeopardy, being tried twice for the same offense; the right to due process; prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment; and the right to face one’s accuser, obtain legal counsel, and be informed of all criminal charges.
* The Ninth Amendment acknowledges that the other eight amendments are not an exhaustive list of all of the rights and protections to which citizens are guaranteed, and the Tenth Amendment declares that any powers not explicitly delegated to the federal government in the Constitution are to be left to the states. This reinforced the principle of federalism, or separation of powers, by ensuring that the federal government could not usurp rights and powers that were not explicitly authorized in the Constitution.

**Washington's presidency**

The states ratified the new Constitution of the United States in 1787, which created three branches of the federal government: Congress, the courts, and the presidency. In 1789, George Washington became the first person to hold the office of President of the United States. When Washington took office, the new Constitution enjoyed neither tradition nor the full backing of organized public opinion. Moreover, the new government had to create its own machinery. No taxes were forthcoming. Until a judiciary could be established, laws could not be enforced. The Army was small. The Navy had ceased to exist.

Congress quickly created the departments of State and Treasury, with Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as their respective secretaries. Simultaneously, the Congress established the federal judiciary, establishing not only a Supreme Court, with one chief justice and five associate justices, but also three circuit courts and 13 district courts. Both a secretary of war and an attorney general were also appointed. And since Washington generally preferred to make decisions only after consulting those men whose judgment he valued, the American presidential Cabinet came into existence, consisting of the heads of all the departments that Congress might create.

**HAMILTON VS. JEFFERSON**

Coming out of the [American Revolution](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/road-to-revolution), the United States was faced with the issue of a large national debt. After taking out loans from France to cover the expenses of fighting the war, the state debt totaled about 25 million dollar. The new nation had to find ways to bring in money and pay what it owed. The new Constitution said the national government was responsible for re-paying the states' wartime loans.

One way to get money was to borrow it. But no one wanted to lend money to the United States unless they were sure they would get it back. So, the Congress asked Treasury Secretary Hamilton to write a report about how to build up the government's credit.

Hamilton's report said the government must pay back the full amount of all its debts. This caused a dispute. Many of the debts were in the form of government notes. The notes promised to pay someone for supplying food, clothing, and weapons to the rebel army. Some promised to pay soldiers for joining the army. The notes really were worth nothing, however. The wartime Congress had no money. People who got them lost hope of ever getting re-paid. So they sold them to anyone willing to pay even part of the value.

Hamilton's plan would repay the full value of the notes to those who owned them last. This meant the people who first got the notes from the government would receive nothing. And the people who bought them at low cost would receive much more than they paid. Congressman James Madison of Virginia protested. He said the people who bought the notes at low cost should be paid, but not in full. Some of the money, he said, should go to those who got the notes in exchange for supplies or services.

Hamilton said the purpose of his plan was greater than simply paying debts. He said it was a way to build up the nation's credit so it could borrow money more easily in the future. Hamilton believed that those who bought the notes had a right to earn money from them. These men took a chance that the worthless notes would be worth something, someday. The government could not deny them their profits. Many members of Congress felt sorry for the poor soldiers and their families. Yet they voted against Madison's proposal and supported Hamilton's plan.

Alexander Hamilton's plan to re-pay the nation's debts caused much protest. However, another one of his financial plans caused even more. It was his plan to create a national bank. Hamilton argued that there were central banks in Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. He said the banks greatly helped those countries' commerce, industry and agriculture. Hamilton said a central bank in the United States would increase the flow of money throughout the country. It would help the national government negotiate loans and collect taxes.

There was just one problem: the Constitution said nothing about creating a national bank. However, Hamilton and his followers believed that under the “necessary and proper” clause of Article I, the Constitution gave Congress the right to create the bank to fix the debt problem. Thomas Jefferson and his followers disagreed with Hamilton’s argument, stating that it was a misinterpretation of the necessary and proper clause. He believed that creating a national bank would be an abuse of power by the federal government.

After much debate between these two emerging factions—the Federalists, represented by Hamilton, and the Democratic-Republicans, represented by Jefferson—the bill establishing the first Bank of the United States passed the House and Senate, President Washington signed the bill into law in early 1791.

**The French Revolution and the Proclamation of Neutrality**

The American Revolution sparked several other revolutions across the world, including the Haitian Revolution and the French Revolution.

At the start of the French Revolution in 1789, the United States had just ratified its new Constitution and Bill of Rights. When French revolutionaries came to the United States asking for assistance, Washington decided to issue a Proclamation of Neutrality, guaranteeing that the United States would stay out of the war and not take anyone’s side. This was a risky decision, since France had been the United States's major ally during the Revolutionary War.

Washington's decision to issue a Proclamation of Neutrality was rooted in the fact that the United States was still dealing with a sizable debt after the American Revolution. With this act, along with the recommendations he made in his Farewell Address upon leaving office, Washington set a precedent for isolationism, or refraining from involvement in international affairs, that set the tone for US foreign policy over the next century.