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INCLUDING DECLARATION
OF INDEPENDENCE & UNITED
STATES CONSTITUTION

THE FEDERALIST PAPERS

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay

The Federalist Papers

**Including Declaration of Independence &
United States Constitution**

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Table of Contents

[The Federalist Papers](#)

[Declaration of Independence](#)

[United States Constitution](#)

The Federalist Papers

(1787-1788)

Table of Contents

FEDERALIST I – General Introduction

FEDERALIST II – Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence

FEDERALIST III – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence

FEDERALIST IV – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence

FEDERALIST V – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning Dangers From Foreign Force and Influence

FEDERALIST VI – Concerning Dangers From Dissensions Between the States

FEDERALIST VII – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning Dangers From Dissensions Between the States

FEDERALIST VII – The Consequences of Hostilities Between the States

FEDERALIST IX – The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection

FEDERALIST X – The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection

FEDERALIST XI – The Utility of the Union in Respect to Commercial Relations and a Navy

FEDERALIST XII – The Utility of the Union in Respect to Revenue

FEDERALIST XIII – Advantage of the Union in Respect to Economy in Government

FEDERALIST XIV - Objections to the Proposed Constitution
From Extent of Territory Answered

FEDERALIST XV - The Insufficiency of the Present
Confederation to Preserve the Union

FEDERALIST XVI - The Same Subject Continued: The
Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the
Union

FEDERALIST XVII - The Same Subject Continued: The
Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the
Union

FEDERALIST XVIII - The Same Subject Continued: The
Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the
Union

FEDERALIST XIX - The Same Subject Continued: The
Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the
Union

FEDERALIST XX - The Same Subject Continued: The
Insufficiency of the Present Confederation to Preserve the
Union

FEDERALIST XXI - Other Defects of the Present
Confederation

FEDERALIST XXII - The Same Subject Continued: Other
Defects of the Present Confederation

FEDERALIST XXIII - The Necessity of a Government as
Energetic as the One Proposed to the Preservation of the
Union

FEDERALIST XXIV - The Powers Necessary to the Common
Defense Further Considered

FEDERALIST XXV - The Same Subject Continued: The Powers
Necessary to the Common Defense Further Considered

FEDERALIST XXVI – The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered

FEDERALIST XXVII – The Same Subject Continued: The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered

FEDERALIST XXVIII – The Same Subject Continued: The Idea of Restraining the Legislative Authority in Regard to the Common Defense Considered

FEDERALIST XXIX – Concerning the Militia

FEDERALIST XXX – Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXI – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXII – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXIII – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXIV – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXV – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXVI – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the General Power of Taxation

FEDERALIST XXXVII – Concerning the Difficulties of the Convention in Devising a Proper Form of Government

FEDERALIST XXXVIII – The Same Subject Continued, and the Incoherence of the Objections to the New Plan Exposed

FEDERALIST XXXIX – The Conformity of the Plan to Republican Principles

FEDERALIST XL – The Powers of the Convention to Form a Mixed Government Examined and Sustained

FEDERALIST XLI – General View of the Powers Conferred by the Constitution

FEDERALIST XLII – The Powers Conferred by the Constitution Further Considered

FEDERALIST XLIII – The Same Subject Continued: The Powers Conferred by the Constitution Further Considered

FEDERALIST XLIV – Restrictions on the Authority of the Several States

FEDERALIST XLV – The Alleged Danger From the Powers of the Union to the State Governments Considered

FEDERALIST XLVI – The Influence of the State and Federal Governments Compared

FEDERALIST XLVII – The Particular Structure of the New Government and the Distribution of Power Among Its Different Parts

FEDERALIST XLVIII – These Departments Should Be So Far Separated as to Have No Constitutional Control Over Each Other

FEDERALIST XLIX – Method of Guarding Against the Encroachments of Any One Department of Government

FEDERALIST L – Periodic Appeals to the People Considered

FEDERALIST LI – The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments

FEDERALIST LII – The House of Representatives

FEDERALIST LIII – The Same Subject Continued: The House of Representatives

FEDERALIST LIV – The Apportionment of Members Among the States

FEDERALIST LV – The Total Number of the House of Representatives

FEDERALIST LVI – The Same Subject Continued: The Total Number of the House of Representatives

FEDERALIST LVII – The Alleged Tendency of the New Plan to Elevate the Few at the Expense of the Many

FEDERALIST LVIII – Objection That the Number of Members Will Be Augmented as the Progress of Population Demands Considered

FEDERALIST LIX – Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members

FEDERALIST LX – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members

FEDERALIST LXI – The Same Subject Continued: Concerning the Power of Congress to Regulate the Election of Members

FEDERALIST LXII – The Senate

FEDERALIST LXIII – The Senate Continued

FEDERALIST LXIV – The Powers of the Senate

FEDERALIST LXV – The Powers of the Senate Continued

FEDERALIST LXVI – Objections to the Power of the Senate to Set as a Court for Impeachments Further Considered

FEDERALIST LXVII – The Executive Department

FEDERALIST LXVIII – The Mode of Electing the President

FEDERALIST LXIX – The Real Character of the Executive

FEDERALIST LXX – The Executive Department Further Considered

FEDERALIST LXXI – The Duration in Office of the Executive

FEDERALIST LXXII – The Same Subject Continued, and Re-Eligibility of the Executive Considered

FEDERALIST LXXIII – The Provision for the Support of the Executive, and the Veto Power

FEDERALIST LXXIV – The Command of the Military and Naval Forces, and the Pardoning Power of the Executive

FEDERALIST LXXV – The Treaty Making Power of the Executive

FEDERALIST LXXVI – The Appointing Power of the Executive

FEDERALIST LXXVII – The Appointing Power Continued and Other Powers of the Executive Considered

FEDERALIST LXXVIII – The Judiciary Department

FEDERALIST LXXIX – The Judiciary Continued

FEDERALIST LXXX – The Powers of the Judiciary

FEDERALIST LXXXI – The Judiciary Continued, and the Distribution of the Judicial Authority

FEDERALIST LXXXII – The Judiciary Continued

FEDERALIST LXXXIII – The Judiciary Continued in Relation to Trial by Jury

FEDERALIST LXXXIV – Certain General and Miscellaneous Objections to the Constitution Considered and Answered

FEDERALIST LXXXV – Concluding Remarks

FEDERALIST I:
General Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

To the People of the State of New York:

After an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting Fœderal Government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences, nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire, in many respects, the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, 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. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis, at which we are arrived, may with propriety be regarded as the æra in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act, may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

This idea will add the inducements of philanthropy to those of patriotism to heighten the solicitude, which all considerate and good men must feel for the event. Happy will it be if our choice should be directed by a judicious estimate of our true interests, unperplexed and unbiased by considerations not connected with the public good. But this is a thing more ardently to be wished, than seriously to be

expected. The plan offered to our deliberations, affects too many particular interests, innovates upon too many local institutions, not to involve in its discussion a variety of objects foreign to its merits, and of views, passions and prejudices little favorable to the discovery of truth.

Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter, may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument and consequence of the offices they hold under the State-establishments-and the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandize themselves by the confusions of their country, or will flatter themselves with fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies, than from its union under one Government.

It is not, however, my design to dwell upon observations of this nature. I am well aware that it would be disingenuous to resolve indiscriminately the opposition of any set of men (merely because their situations might subject them to suspicion) into interested or ambitious views: Candor will oblige us to admit, that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and it cannot be doubted, that much of the opposition which has made its appearance, or may hereafter make its appearance, will spring from sources, blameless at least, if not respectable; the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. So numerous indeed and so powerful are the causes, which serve to give a false bias to the judgment, that we, upon many occasions, see wise and good men on the wrong as well as on the right side of questions, of the first magnitude to society. This circumstance, if duly attended to, would

furnish a lesson of moderation to those, who are ever so much persuaded of their being in the right, in any controversy. And a further reason for caution, in this respect, might be drawn from the reflection, that we are not always sure, that those who advocate the truth are influenced by purer principles than their antagonists. Ambition, avarice, personal animosity, party opposition, and many other motives, not more laudable than these, are apt to operate as well upon those who support, as upon those who oppose, the right side of a question. Were there not even these inducements to moderation, nothing could be more ill-judged than that intolerant spirit, which has, at all times, characterized political parties. For, in politics as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution.

And yet however just these sentiments will be allowed to be, we have already sufficient indications, that it will happen in this as in all former cases of great national discussion. A torrent of angry and malignant passions will be let loose. To judge from the conduct of the opposite parties, we shall be led to conclude, that they will mutually hope to evince the justness of their opinions, and to increase the number of their converts by the loudness of their declamations, and the bitterness of their invectives. An enlightened zeal for the energy and efficiency of government will be stigmatized, as the offspring of a temper fond of despotic power, and hostile to the principles of liberty. An over scrupulous jealousy of danger to the rights of the people, which is more commonly the fault of the head than of the heart, will be represented as mere pretence and artifice; the stale bait for popularity at the expense of public good. It will be forgotten, on the one hand, that jealousy is the usual concomitant of violent love, and that the noble enthusiasm of liberty is too apt to be

infected with a spirit of narrow and illiberal distrust. On the other hand, it will be equally forgotten, that the vigor of Government is essential to the security of liberty; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well-informed judgment, their interest can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people, than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of Government. History will teach us, that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism, than the latter; and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics the greatest number have begun their career, by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing Demagogues, and ending Tyrants.

In the course of the preceding observations I have had an eye, my Fellow-Citizens, to putting you upon your guard against all attempts, from whatever quarter, to influence your decision in a matter of the utmost moment to your welfare by any impressions other than those which may result from the evidence of truth. You will, no doubt, at the same time, have collected from the general scope of them that they proceed from a source not unfriendly to the new Constitution. Yes, my Countrymen, I own to you, that, after having given it an attentive consideration, I am clearly of opinion, it is your interest to adopt it. I am convinced, that this is the safest course for your liberty, your dignity, and your happiness. I affect not reserves, which I do not feel. I will not amuse you with an appearance of deliberation, when I have decided. I frankly acknowledge to you my convictions, and I will freely lay before you the reasons on which they are founded. The consciousness of good intentions disdains ambiguity. I shall not however multiply professions on this head. My motives must remain in the

depository of my own breast: My arguments will be open to all, and may be judged of by all. They shall at least be offered in a spirit which will not disgrace the cause of truth.

I propose, in a series of papers, to discuss the following interesting particulars.-*The utility of the UNION to your political prosperity-The insufficiency of the present Confederation to preserve that Union-The necessity of a Government at least equally energetic with the one proposed, to the attainment of this object-The conformity of the proposed Constitution to the true principles of republican Government-Its analogy to your own state constitution-and lastly, The additional security, which its adoption will afford to the preservation of that species of Government, to liberty, and to property.*

In the progress of this discussion I shall endeavor to give a satisfactory answer to all the objections which shall have made their appearance, that may seem to have any claim to your attention.

It may perhaps be thought superfluous to offer arguments to prove the utility of the UNION, a point, no doubt, deeply engraved on the hearts of the great body of the people in every State, and one, which it may be imagined, has no adversaries. But the fact is, that we already hear it whispered in the private circles of those who oppose the new Constitution, that the Thirteen States are of too great extent for any general system, and that we must of necessity, resort to separate confederacies of distinct portions of the whole.¹ This doctrine will, in all probability, be gradually propagated, till it has votaries enough to countenance an open avowal of it. For nothing can be more evident, to those who are able to take an enlarged view of the subject, than the alternative of an adoption of the new Constitution or a dismemberment of the Union. It will,

therefore, be of use to begin by examining the advantages of that Union, the certain evils, and the probable dangers, to which every State will be exposed from its dissolution. This shall accordingly constitute the subject of my next address.

PUBLIUS.

FEDERALIST II:
**Concerning Dangers From
Foreign Force and Influence**
[Table of Contents](#)

To the People of the State of New York:

When the people of America reflect that they are now called upon to decide a question, which, in its consequences, must prove one of the most important, that ever engaged their attention, the propriety of their taking a very comprehensive, as well as a very serious, view of it, will be evident.

Nothing is more certain than the indispensable necessity of Government, and it is equally undeniable, that whenever and however it is instituted, the people must cede to it some of their natural rights, in order to vest it with requisite powers. It is well worthy of consideration, therefore, whether it would conduce more to the interest of the people of America, that they should, to all general purposes, be one nation, under one Fœderal Government, or that they should divide themselves into separate confederacies, and give to the head of each, the same kind of powers which they are advised to place in one national Government.

It has until lately been a received and uncontradicted opinion, that the prosperity of the people of America depended on their continuing firmly united, and the wishes, prayers, and efforts of our best and wisest Citizens have been constantly directed to that object. But Politicians now appear, who insist that this opinion is erroneous, and that instead of looking for safety and happiness in union, we ought to seek it in a division of the States into distinct

confederacies or sovereignties. However extraordinary this new doctrine may appear, it nevertheless has its advocates; and certain characters who were much opposed to it formerly, are at present of the number. Whatever may be the arguments or inducements which have wrought this change in the sentiments and declarations of these Gentlemen, it certainly would not be wise in the people at large to adopt these new political tenets without being fully convinced that they are founded in truth and sound Policy.

It has often given me pleasure to observe, that Independent America was not composed of detached and distant territories, but that one connected, fertile, wide-spreading country was the portion of our western sons of liberty. Providence has in a particular manner blessed it with a variety of soils and productions, and watered it with innumerable streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants. A succession of navigable waters forms a kind of chain round its borders, as if to bind it together; while the most noble rivers in the world, running at convenient distances, present them with highways for the easy communication of friendly aids, and the mutual transportation and exchange of their various commodities.

With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice, that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country, to one united people; a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established their general Liberty and Independence.

This country and this people seem to have been made for each other, and it appears as if it was the design of

Providence, that an inheritance so proper and convenient for a band of brethren, united to each other by the strongest ties, should never be split into a number of unsocial, jealous, and alien sovereignties.

Similar sentiments have hitherto prevailed among all orders and denominations of men among us. To all general purposes we have uniformly been one people; each individual citizen everywhere enjoying the same national rights, privileges, and protection. As a nation we have made peace and war: as a nation we have vanquished our common enemies: as a nation we have formed alliances, and made treaties, and entered into various compacts and conventions with foreign States.

A strong sense of the value and blessings of Union induced the people, at a very early period, to institute a Fœderal Government to preserve and perpetuate it. They formed it almost as soon as they had a political existence; nay, at a time when their habitations were in flames, when many of their Citizens were bleeding, and when the progress of hostility and desolation left little room for those calm and mature inquiries and reflections, which must ever precede the formation of a wise and well-balanced government for a free people. It is not to be wondered at, that a Government instituted in times so inauspicious, should on experiment be found greatly deficient and inadequate to the purpose it was intended to answer.

This intelligent people perceived and regretted these defects. Still continuing no less attached to Union, than enamored of Liberty, they observed the danger, which immediately threatened the former and more remotely the latter; and being persuaded that ample security for both, could only be found in a national Government more wisely framed, they, as with one voice, convened the late

Convention at Philadelphia, to take that important subject under consideration.

This Convention, composed of men who possessed the confidence of the people, and many of whom had become highly distinguished by their patriotism, virtue, and wisdom, in times which tried the minds and hearts of men, undertook the arduous task. In the mild season of peace, with minds unoccupied by other subjects, they passed many months in cool, uninterrupted, and daily consultations; and finally, without having been awed by power, or influenced by any passions except love for their Country, they presented and recommended to the people the plan produced by their joint and very unanimous councils.

Admit, for so is the fact, that this plan is only *recommended*, not imposed, yet let it be remembered, that it is neither recommended to *blind* approbation, nor to *blind* reprobation; but to that sedate and candid consideration, which the magnitude and importance of the subject demand, and which it certainly ought to receive. But this, (as was remarked in the foregoing number of this Paper,) is more to be wished than expected, that it may be so considered and examined. Experience on a former occasion teaches us not to be too sanguine in such hopes. It is not yet forgotten, that well grounded apprehensions of imminent danger induced the people of America to form the Memorable Congress of 1774. That Body recommended certain measures to their Constituents, and the event proved their wisdom; yet it is fresh in our memories how soon the Press began to teem with Pamphlets and weekly Papers against those very measures. Not only many of the Officers of Government, who obeyed the dictates of personal interest, but others, from a mistaken estimate of consequences, or the undue influence of former

attachments, or whose ambition aimed at objects which did not correspond with the public good, were indefatigable in their endeavors to persuade the people to reject the advice of that Patriotic Congress. Many indeed were deceived and deluded, but the great majority of the people reasoned and decided judiciously; and happy they are in reflecting that they did so.

They considered that the Congress was composed of many wise and experienced men. That being convened from different parts of the country, they brought with them and communicated to each other a variety of useful information. That in the course of the time they passed together in inquiring into and discussing the true interests of their country, they must have acquired very accurate knowledge on that head. That they were individually interested in the public liberty and prosperity, and therefore that it was not less their inclination than their duty, to recommend only such measures as after the most mature deliberation they really thought prudent and advisable.

These and similar considerations then induced the people to rely greatly on the judgment and integrity of the Congress; and they took their advice, notwithstanding the various arts and endeavors used to deter and dissuade them from it. But if the people at large had reason to confide in the men of that Congress, few of whom had been fully tried or generally known, still greater reason have they now to respect the judgment and advice of the Convention, for it is well known that some of the most distinguished members of that Congress, who have been since tried and justly approved for patriotism and abilities, and who have grown old in acquiring political information, were also members of this Convention, and carried into it their accumulated knowledge and experience.

It is worthy of remark, that not only the first, but every succeeding Congress, as well as the late Convention, have invariably joined with the people in thinking that the prosperity of America depended on its Union. To preserve and perpetuate it, was the great object of the people in forming that Convention, and it is also the great object of the plan which the Convention has advised them to adopt. With what propriety, therefore, or for what good purposes, are attempts at this particular period, made by some men, to depreciate the importance of the Union? Or why is it suggested that three or four confederacies would be better than one? I am persuaded in my own mind, that the people have always thought right on this subject, and that their universal and uniform attachment to the cause of the Union rests on great and weighty reasons, which I shall endeavor to develop and explain in some ensuing papers. They who promote the idea of substituting a number of distinct confederacies in the room of the plan of the Convention, seem clearly to foresee that the rejection of it would put the continuance of the Union in the utmost jeopardy: that certainly would be the case, and I sincerely wish that it may be as clearly foreseen by every good Citizen, that whenever the dissolution of the Union arrives, America will have reason to exclaim in the words of the Poet, "Farewell! a long Farewell, to all my Greatness."

PUBLIUS.

FEDERALIST III:
**The Same Subject
Continued: Concerning
Dangers From Foreign Force
and Influence**

[Table of Contents](#)

To the People of the State of New York:

It is not a new observation that the people of any country (if, like the Americans, intelligent and well-informed,) seldom adopt, and steadily persevere for many years in, an erroneous opinion respecting their interests. That consideration naturally tends to create great respect for the high opinion which the people of America have so long and uniformly entertained of the importance of their continuing firmly united under one Fœderal Government, vested with sufficient powers for all general and national purposes.

The more attentively I consider and investigate the reasons which appear to have given birth to this opinion, the more I become convinced that they are cogent and conclusive.

Among the many objects to which a wise and free people find it necessary to direct their attention, that of providing for their *safety* seems to be the first. The *safety* of the people doubtless has relation to a great variety of circumstances and considerations, and consequently affords great latitude to those who wish to define it precisely and comprehensively.

At present I mean only to consider it as it respects security for the preservation of peace and tranquillity, as

well against dangers from *foreign arms and influence*, as from dangers of the *like kind* arising from domestic causes. As the former of these comes first in order, it is proper it should be the first discussed. Let us therefore proceed to examine whether the people are not right in their opinion, that a cordial Union under an efficient national Government, affords them the best security that can be devised against *hostilities* from abroad.

The number of wars which have happened or will happen in the world, will always be found to be in proportion to the number and weight of the causes, whether *real* or *pretended*, which *provoke* or *invite* them. If this remark be just, it becomes useful to inquire, whether so many *just* causes of war are likely to be given by *United America* as by *disunited* America; for if it should turn out that United America will probably give the fewest, then it will follow, that in this respect the Union tends most to preserve the people in a state of peace with other nations.

The *just* causes of war for the most part arise either from violation of treaties, or from direct violence. America has already formed treaties with no less than six foreign nations, and all of them, except Prussia, are maritime, and therefore able to annoy and injure us: She has also extensive commerce with Portugal, Spain, and Britain, and, with respect to the two latter, has, in addition, the circumstance of neighborhood to attend to.

It is of high importance to the peace of America, that she observe the laws of nations towards all these Powers, and to me it appears evident that this will be more perfectly and punctually done by one national Government than it could be either by thirteen separate States, or by three or four distinct confederacies.

Because when once an efficient national Government is established, the best men in the country will not only consent to serve, but also will generally be appointed to manage it; for although town or country, or other contracted influence, may place men in State assemblies, or senates, or courts of justice, or executive departments, yet more general and extensive reputation for talents and other qualifications will be necessary to recommend men to offices under the national Government,-especially, as it will have the widest field for choice, and never experience that want of proper persons which is not uncommon in some of the States. Hence, it will result, that the administration, the political counsels, and the judicial decisions of the national Government, will be more wise, systematical, and judicious, than those of individual States, and consequently more satisfactory with respect to other nations, as well as more *safe* with respect to us.

Because, under the national Government, treaties and articles of treaties, as well as the laws of nations, will always be expounded in one sense, and executed in the same manner,-whereas, adjudications on the same points and questions, in thirteen States, or in three or four confederacies, will not always accord or be consistent; and that, as well from the variety of independent courts and judges appointed by different and independent Governments, as from the different local laws and interests which may affect and influence them. The wisdom of the Convention, in committing such questions to the jurisdiction and judgment of courts appointed by, and responsible only to, one national Government, cannot be too much commended.

Because the prospect of present loss or advantage may often tempt the governing party in one or two States to

swerve from good faith and justice; but those temptations, not reaching the other States, and consequently having little or no influence on the national Government, the temptation will be fruitless, and good faith and justice be preserved. The case of the treaty of peace with Britain adds great weight to this reasoning.

Because, even if the governing party in a State should be disposed to resist such temptations, yet as such temptations may, and commonly do, result from circumstances peculiar to the State, and may affect a great number of the inhabitants, the governing party may not always be able, if willing, to prevent the injustice meditated, or to punish the aggressors. But the national Government, not being affected by those local circumstances, will neither be induced to commit the wrong themselves, nor want power or inclination to prevent, or punish its commission by others.

So far therefore as either designed or accidental violations of treaties and the laws of nations afford *just* causes of war, they are less to be apprehended under one general Government than under several lesser ones, and in that respect, the former most favors the *safety* of the people.

As to those just causes of war which proceed from direct and unlawful violence, it appears equally clear to me, that one good national Government affords vastly more security against dangers of that sort than can be derived from any other quarter.

Because such violences are more frequently caused by the passions and interests of a part than of the whole; of one or two States than of the Union. Not a single Indian war has yet been occasioned by aggressions of the present Fœderal Government, feeble as it is; but there are several

instances of Indian hostilities having been provoked by the improper conduct of individual States, who, either unable or unwilling to restrain or punish offences, have given occasion to the slaughter of many innocent inhabitants.

The neighborhood of Spanish and British territories, bordering on some States, and not on others, naturally confines the causes of quarrel more immediately to the borderers. The bordering States, if any, will be those who, under the impulse of sudden irritation, and a quick sense of apparent interest or injury, will be most likely, by direct violence, to excite war with these nations; and nothing can so effectually obviate that danger as a national Government, whose wisdom and prudence will not be diminished by the passions which actuate the parties immediately interested.

But not only fewer just causes of war will be given by the national Government, but it will also be more in their power to accommodate and settle them amicably. They will be more temperate and cool, and in that respect, as well as in others, will be more in capacity to act advisedly than the offending State. The pride of States, as well as of men, naturally disposes them to justify all their actions, and opposes their acknowledging, correcting, or repairing their errors and offenses. The national Government, in such cases, will not be affected by this pride, but will proceed with moderation and candor to consider and decide on the means most proper to extricate them from the difficulties which threaten them.

Besides, it is well known that acknowledgments, explanations, and compensations are often accepted as satisfactory from a strong united nation, which would be rejected as unsatisfactory if offered by a State or Confederacy of little consideration or power.

In the year 1685, the State of Genoa having offended Louis XIV., endeavored to appease him. He demanded that they should send their *Doge*, or chief magistrate, accompanied by four of their Senators, to *France*, to ask his pardon and receive his terms. They were obliged to submit to it for the sake of peace. Would he on any occasion either have demanded, or have received, the like humiliation from Spain, or Britain, or any other *powerful* nation?

PUBLIUS.

FEDERALIST IV:
**The Same Subject
Continued: Concerning
Dangers From Foreign Force
and Influence**

[Table of Contents](#)

To the People of the State of New York:

My last paper assigned several reasons why the safety of the people would be best secured by Union, against the danger it may be exposed to by *just* causes of war given to other nations; and those reasons show that such causes would not only be more rarely given, but would also be more easily accommodated, by a national Government than either by the State Governments, or the proposed little Confederacies.

But the safety of the People of America against dangers from *foreign* force, depends not only on their forbearing to give *just* causes of war to other nations, but also on their placing and continuing themselves in such a situation as not to *invite* hostility or insult; for it need not be observed that there are *pretended* as well as just causes of war.

It is too true, however disgraceful it may be to human nature, that nations in general will make war whenever they have a prospect of getting anything by it; nay, absolute monarchs will often make war when their nations are to get nothing by it, but for the purposes and objects merely personal, such as thirst for military glory, revenge for personal affronts, ambition, or private compacts to aggrandize or support their particular families, or partisans.

These, and a variety of other motives, which affect only the mind of the Sovereign, often lead him to engage in wars not sanctified by justice, or the voice and interests of his people. But, independent of these inducements to war, which are more prevalent in absolute monarchies, but which well deserve our attention, there are others which affect nations as often as Kings; and some of them will on examination be found to grow out of our relative situation and circumstances.

With France and with Britain, we are rivals in the fisheries, and can supply their markets cheaper than they can themselves, notwithstanding any efforts to prevent it by bounties on their own, or duties on foreign fish.

With them and with most other European nations we are rivals in navigation and the carrying trade; and we shall deceive ourselves, if we suppose that any of them will rejoice to see it flourish; for as our carrying trade cannot increase without in some degree diminishing theirs, it is more their interest, and will be more their policy, to restrain, than to promote it.

In the trade to China and India, we interfere with more than one nation, inasmuch as it enables us to partake in advantages which they had in a manner monopolized, and as we thereby supply ourselves with commodities which we used to purchase from them.

The extension of our own commerce in our own vessels, cannot give pleasure to any nations who possess territories on or near this Continent, because the cheapness and excellence of our productions, added to the circumstance of vicinity, and the enterprise and address of our merchants and navigators, will give us a greater share in the advantages which those territories afford, than consists with the wishes or policy of their respective Sovereigns.

Spain thinks it convenient to shut the Mississippi against us on the one side, and Britain excludes us from the Saint Lawrence on the other; nor will either of them permit the other waters, which are between them and us, to become the means of mutual intercourse and traffic.

From these and such like considerations, which might, if consistent with prudence, be more amplified and detailed, it is easy to see that jealousies and uneasinesses may gradually slide into the minds and cabinets of other nations; and that we are not to expect they should regard our advancement in union, in power and consequence by land and by sea, with an eye of indifference and composure.

The People of America are aware that inducements to war may arise out of these circumstances, as well as from others not so obvious at present; and that whenever such inducements may find fit time and opportunity for operation, pretences to color and justify them will not be wanting. Wisely therefore do they consider Union and a good national Government as necessary to put and keep them in *such a situation*, as, instead of *inviting* war, will tend to repress and discourage it. That situation consists in the best possible state of defence, and necessarily depends on the Government, the arms and the resources of the country.

As the safety of the whole is the interest of the whole, and cannot be provided for without Government, either one or more or many, let us inquire whether one good Government is not, relative to the object in question, more competent than any other given number whatever.

One Government can collect and avail itself of the talents and experience of the ablest men, in whatever part of the Union they may be found. It can move on uniform principles of policy. It can harmonize, assimilate, and protect the