



## Federalist No. 2

Attributed to John Jay (1787)

*This is the second of the Federalist Papers, a series of essays published in 1787-88 to encourage the thirteen states to ratify the Constitution, thereby implementing the federal system that continues to govern the United States today. The Federalist Papers were written by white politicians Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, all using the pseudonym Publius. Federalist No. 2 is believed to be Jay's work. As part of his argument for a federal union, Jay paints the United States as a nation that is—by providential design—racially, linguistically, and religiously homogenous.*

### Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence

[...] 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 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. [...]

It is worthy of remark that not only the first but every succeeding Congress, as well as the late convention,<sup>a</sup> 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. [...] 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 [...] I sincerely wish that it may be [...] 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.*”

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<sup>a</sup> “Congress” refers to the unicameral Continental Congress, which first convened in 1774, issued the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and continued as the United States’ national government until ratification of the Constitution (when it was replaced by today’s bicameral Congress). “The late convention” is the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

**Source:** *The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution* [...], 2 vols. (New York: J. and A. McLean, 1788), 1:6-11, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101007520263>. Public domain, Google-digitized.

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