This article analyses the ideas of James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, the authors of the famous *The Federalist*. They belonged to a wider environment of the so-called federalists – supporters of the constitution adopted in September 1787. The analysis is conducted from the perspective of questions about the relationship between sovereignty and federalism, which were provoked by the new provisions of the constitution. By introducing the strong central (federal) government, which had hitherto taken no part in the tradition of confederation, it was exposed to the strong accusations of their opponents, called anti-federalists, who would often associate it with the “national” government in its almost pure form. The main dilemmas of sovereignty were theoretically solved by Madison, who attributed two independent and parallel areas of power to the union and the states, which were justified by the supreme authority of the nation that legitimized them. A closer analysis reveals, however, some inconsistencies in the arguments presented in *The Federalist*, which are evidence of theoretical difficulties of this highly innovative project and are owed to a more “national” outlook, which characterized the earlier intentions of federalists.

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