



When it seemed as though the American States would not ratify a new Constitution, three of the country's Founding Fathers—James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay—mounted a defense for ratification. Their 85 essays were collectively published in a two-volume work called “The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution,” published in 1788. The pen name, under which they wrote, was “Publius.”

This image depicts James Madison's copy of what is now known as “The Federalist Papers.” Not only was Madison strongly supportive of the proposed Constitution, he had worked on its creation.

One of the most-famous of the 85 essays is number 10, written by “Publius” who, in this instance, was James Madison.

What are the key points of Federalist 10?

Humans are prone to factions. Factions—for example, special-interest groups—have a tendency to be domineering in their efforts to pass laws, control things (including government) and generally run the affairs of a group (to the exclusion of differing points of view).

One of the greatest potential vices, of a popular government (democracy), is the possibility that special-interest groups will act as steamrollers (to the detriment of minority points of view).

To control this tendency—and to minimize the power of factions—the proposed Constitution, which Madison favored, organizes the American States into a united republic.

Republics modify pure democracy (where special-interest groups could undermine minority viewpoints) by having the people elect representatives to run the government (instead of the people, themselves, running everything).

Representatives are more likely to vote in the best interests of *all* the people, not just their own selfish interests or passions.

Madison argues that representatives of the people, instead of the people themselves, will have more of a tendency to protect the interests of the minority because they will try to do what is just (compared to the people themselves who will usually vote for their own best interests).

Even in a representative government, however, special-interest groups could still gain the upper hand. But this could be tempered in a national government—compared to individual state governments—because there are more voters across the country. More voters, electing more representatives, would have a tendency to cancel-out, or at least ameliorate, extreme positions.

The theory of representative government, as set forth in the U.S. Constitution, would therefore protect the minority from the potential tyranny of the majority.

However ... things did not always work-out the way Madison envisioned in Federalist 10.

Throughout America's history, there have been times when national representatives passed laws—sometimes egregious laws—when the rights of minorities were not protected. A single example is America's “Jim Crow” era during which laws consistently interfered with the rights of minority citizens.

It is fair to say, however, that the U.S. Constitution has created a form of federal (national) government in which the people (personally and in their individual states) give-up something (doing everything “their way”) to

gain a greater sense of security nation-wide.

We could also say that representative government, as set forth in America's Constitution, provides the country flexibility in the face of human fallibility. And *that*, in the *real* - not the *theoretical* - world may be as reasonable an approach to government as Madison and his two colleagues could envision.

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