

I

Politics and the Constitution

[T]here can be no doubt but that the result [of the Constitutional Convention] will in some way or other have a powerful effect on our destiny.

– James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1787

What problems were the U.S. Constitution's authors trying to solve? How did they imagine their Constitution would answer these problems? We know the framers intended to change America's destiny, and we know they succeeded. But how did they intend to transform the way American government uses its power and the way Americans use their government? What kinds of politics were the delegates to the Constitutional Convention trying to make – and what kinds of politics *did* their design make? For all that has been written about the Constitution, we do not have satisfactory answers to these questions.

Practicing politicians wrote the Constitution, and they expected politicians to use it. To understand the enduring effects of the Constitution on America's destiny, we need to know what its designers thought they were doing. We need to understand the circumstances that convinced these politicians that they could and should reconstitute the nation's government. We need to understand precisely how these circumstances shaped their strategies for building a new government. We need to reconstruct how these politicians used such strategies to design their Constitution, provision by provision. Better answers to these questions can help us better understand how Americans have used the government they have inherited.

HOW HISTORIANS AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HAVE APPROACHED THE CONSTITUTION

I could not find satisfactory answers to these questions in the many published studies of the Constitution. The most prominent historians of the founding era, such as Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, and Douglass Adair, chronicle the sweeping intellectual currents of American culture in the eighteenth century. By eloquently describing evolving ideas about republicanism and liberty, these beautifully narrated and inspiring intellectual histories underscore the breadth and flow of political thought in the founding period.¹ But these narratives do not aim to show how the delegates to the Constitutional Convention used these indefinite principles when they designed specific constitutional provisions, nor do they aim to explain systematically the political process of the Constitutional Convention.

Several historians give politics a much more prominent role in their narratives of the convention. Charles A. Beard memorably wrote that the Constitution was “an economic document drawn with superb skill by men whose property interests were immediately at stake; as such it appealed directly and unerringly to identical interests in the country at large.”² Beard’s bold explanation of the Constitution as the product of the delegates’ material interests became a lightning rod for critics. Forrest McDonald, Robert E. Brown, and James Ferguson each discredited Beard’s claim as simplistic.³ McDonald’s work provides a more

¹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Trevor Colbourn, ed., *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair* (New York: W. W. Norton for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, 1974).

² Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 188. As Forrest McDonald pointed out, Beard (p. 73) was not accusing the delegates of writing a Constitution primarily to benefit themselves personally. See Forrest McDonald, *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 6.

³ McDonald, *We the People*; Robert E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution: A Critical Analysis of “An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution”* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965); E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of Public Finance, 1776–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), pp. 251–86. According to a survey of 178 randomly selected members of the Economic History Association conducted by Robert Whaples, only a quarter of the economists and historians responding generally agreed with the statement that “The personal economic interests of delegates to the Constitutional Convention generally had a significant effect on their voting behavior.” Forty-three percent of economists answering the survey agreed with the statement provisionally; 53 percent of the historians generally disagreed. Robert Whaples, “Where Is There Consensus among Economic Historians? The Results of a Survey on Forty Propositions,” *Journal of Economic History* 55:1 (March 1995): 139–54.

politically nuanced account that emphasizes the way the delegates worked out arrangements that accommodated diverse interests, ideas, and personalities.⁴ Jack Rakove provides exceptional insight into the politicians of the founding era and presents the best historian's account of the convention's politics.⁵ Rakove views the convention as both an intellectual and a political process in which the delegates, representing diverse constituencies, balanced differences of ideas and interests as they hammered out constitutional compromises on specific provisions. McDonald, Rakove, Clinton Rossiter, and Lance Banning provide superb, indispensable historical narratives that weave the influence of politics into the story of constitutional design.⁶ These historians provide a necessary starting point for the systematic political analysis of the Constitutional Convention.

These vivid histories could not decisively answer my questions about the Constitution, however. By privileging ideas, historians undervalue the role of politics.⁷ Historians have produced no careful and systematic analysis of delegates' political interests to match the rich literature on republican ideas, even though historians such as Allan Nevins, Jackson Turner Main, and Peter Onuf provide excellent analyses of the political landscape of the states that the delegates represented.⁸ Principle usually

⁴ Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776–1790*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1979); *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985); and *States' Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio, 1789–1876* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

⁵ Jack N. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979); "The Great Compromise: Ideas, Interests, and the Politics of the Constitution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 44:3 (July 1987): 424–57; *James Madison and the Creation of the American Republic* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, 1990); and *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

⁶ Clinton Rossiter, *1787: The Grand Convention* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁷ Historical studies' emphasis on intellectual history probably is compounded by a bias in Madison's convention notes. Madison's records may characterize the principles and logic of positions he supported more carefully than positions he opposed. Not surprisingly, ideas, which are so fully elaborated in the intellectual histories of this era, and which are so central to the theoretically minded Madison, seem to trump interests in explaining the most important convention dispute, on representation. This point also is suggested by Thornton Anderson in *Creating the Constitution: The Convention of 1787 and the First Congress* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 8n13.

⁸ Allan Nevins, *The American States during and after the Revolution, 1775–1789* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); Jackson Turner Main, *Political Parties before the Constitution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973) and *The Sovereign States, 1775–1783* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1973); Peter S. Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal*

speaks for itself in a way political interest seldom does – that is, politicians are more likely to frame issues in terms of principle than in terms of interest because principles legitimate and broaden support for their interests. Even Jack Rakove, who is unusually sensitive to the play of politics, considers the convention's conflict over representation chiefly as a philosophical conflict, distinct and separate from the interest-driven bargaining over the authority of the reconstituted government.⁹ Historians occasionally cite specific social-science studies of the convention, but their narratives do not employ insights about political processes such as state building, policy making, political realignment, or legislative behavior.¹⁰ A more systematic exploration of political interests, alignments, and processes reveals that political maneuvering permeated all of the convention's decisions.

Political scientists have not augmented historians' work with a thorough political analysis of the Constitution's design. Although many political scientists have claimed that the Constitution contributed to enduring political features of American government, they usually choose – more or less arbitrarily – certain “important” features of the Constitution to support a more general point about American politics.¹¹ Not surprisingly, political scientists have widely different views about the design of the Constitution. For William Riker, the Constitution represented a strategic victory for nationalists; for John P. Roche, the success of pragmatic political reformers; for Vincent Ostrom, a shrewdly crafted “compound republic” that promotes public control and economic efficiency; for Barry Weingast, “market-preserving federalism.” Others characterize the founding in different but no less general terms – for

Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775–1787 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

⁹ Rakove, *Original Meanings*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Rakove notes that historians generally interpret the convention in a familiar narrative that adds “little of interpretive value to our understanding of the framing of the Constitution. Certain stock themes are so essential to all accounts of the Convention as to defy authors to show a spark of originality” (*Original Meanings*, p. 13). On the other hand, Rakove characterizes the analysis of behavioral political science as “fine-milling techniques of roll-call analysis that are commonly used to explain decision-making in Congress, state legislatures, or, for that matter, any city council outside Cook County, Illinois” (p. 15).

¹¹ William H. Riker, for example, trying to illustrate the art of political manipulation (and perhaps captivated by Gouverneur Morris's capacity for sound bites), oversimplifies the position of Madison's allies and opponents and misrepresents the underlying political logic of policy agency at the convention. Compare *The Art of Political Manipulation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 34–51, with Chapters 5, 6, and 7 in this volume.

Cambridge University Press

0521607787 - The Constitution and America's Destiny

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Excerpt

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5

example, as a triumph for protocorporate elites or policy conservatism.¹² Political scientists most frequently have characterized the Constitution as a triumph for interest-group pluralism, using quotations from *Federalist* 10 and 51 to prove the point.¹³

A few social scientists have attempted to study voting behavior at the Constitutional Convention systematically.¹⁴ Calvin Jillson's work, based

¹² William H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); John P. Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," *American Political Science Review* 55:4 (December 1961): 799–816; Vincent Ostrom, *The Political Theory of a Compound Republic: A Reconstruction of the Logical Foundations of American Democracy as Presented in the Federalist* (Blacksburg: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1971); Barry R. Weingast, "The Economic Role of Political Institutions: Market-Preserving Federalism and Economic Development," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 7:1 (1995): 1–31; Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Linda Medcalf, "The Dark Side of the Constitution," in *The Case against the Constitution from the Antifederalists to the Present*, ed. John F. Manley and Kenneth M. Dolbeare (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1987), pp. 120–42; David Brian Robertson and Dennis R. Judd, *The Development of American Public Policy: The Structure of Policy Restraint* (Glenview, IL, and Boston: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, 1989).

¹³ David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), pp. 4–5; Paul F. Bourke, "The Pluralist Reading of James Madison's Tenth Federalist," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 271–98; John F. Manley, "Class and Pluralism in America: The Constitution Reconsidered," in Manley and Dolbeare, *The Case against the Constitution from the Antifederalists to the Present*, pp. 101–19. See also Emery G. Lee III, "Representation, Virtue, and Political Jealousy in the Brutus-Publius Dialogue," *Journal of Politics* 59:4 (November 1997): 1073–95.

¹⁴ On the Confederation Congress, see Calvin C. Jillson and Rick K. Wilson, *Congressional Dynamics: Structure, Coordination, and Choice in the First American Congress, 1774–1789* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); Keith L. Dougherty, *Collective Action under the Articles of Confederation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On the Constitutional Convention, see S. Sidney Ulmer, "Sub-group Formation in the Constitutional Convention," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 10:3 (August 1966): 288–303; Gerald M. Pomper, "Conflict and Coalitions at the Constitutional Convention," in *The Study of Coalition Behavior: Theoretical Perspectives and Cases from Four Continents*, ed. Sven Groennings, E. W. Kelley, and Michael Lieserson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 209–25; Calvin C. Jillson and Cecil L. Eubanks, "The Political Structure of Constitution Making: The Federal Convention of 1787," *American Journal of Political Science* 28:3 (August 1984): 435–58; Robert A. McGuire and Robert L. Ohsfeldt, "An Economic Model of Voting Behavior over Specific Issues at the Constitutional Convention of 1787," *Journal of Economic History* 46:1 (March 1986): 79–111; Calvin C. Jillson, *Constitution Making: Conflict and Consensus in the Federal Convention of 1787* (New York: Agathon Press, 1988); Anderson, *Creating the Constitution*; Robert A. McGuire, *To Form a More Perfect Union: A New Economic Interpretation of the United States Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

When employed without a careful interpretation of the political goals of the delegates, quantitative analysis can produce misleading findings. In his effort to quantify

on an especially perceptive and systematic analysis of each vote at the convention, dovetails with Rakove's conclusions. Jillson showed that coalitions of states shifted as the convention dealt with different issues and argues that philosophical issues divided the delegates in debating "the general institutional structure for the new national government," whereas differences in narrow material interests divided them "when they voted on specific mechanisms for implementing various aspects of the constitutional design."¹⁵

Surprisingly, Jillson is the only political scientist identified with the field of American political development who has tried to analyze the politics of the Constitutional Convention so thoroughly. This is surprising because, according to two of the field's leaders, Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, "political development" refers to "a durable shift in governing authority." The Constitution was the most significant and durable shift in governing authority in American history.¹⁶ But until recently, American political development scholars have rarely addressed the early American republic at all.¹⁷ Rather, they draw on perfunctory descriptions

the impact of economic interests at the convention, for example, McGuire's *To Form a More Perfect Union* makes a heroic effort to determine individual delegates' votes and their meaning. Many of his interpretations are uncontroversial, but some are flawed. For example, McGuire incorrectly assumes that the proposal to join judges and the president in the exercise of the veto is an example of support for moderate amendments to the Confederation government, rather than support for a completely new and stronger national government (p. 56). As argued in Chapter 6, James Madison and James Wilson, two of the most determined supporters of a stronger, thoroughly reconstituted national government, introduced this proposal in the belief that the joint veto would strengthen resistance to legislative parochialism in favor of national interests. McGuire generally has great difficulty making sense of the positions of Madison and others in the Virginia delegation in terms of economic interest (pp. 90–1). McGuire concedes that he has stretched quantitative analysis when he admits that "It is plausible . . . that the lack of significant findings for a large number of the economic and other interests results from the relatively weak data set for the Philadelphia convention. . . . It may be that considerable error is introduced into the estimating procedure because the dependent variables (the votes) are themselves based on an inference of a delegate's actual vote on each issue" (pp. 92–3). Because Madison and his fellow Virginians set the initial agenda for the meetings, this interpretive limitation severely restricts the conclusions that can be drawn from his approach.

¹⁵ Jillson, *Constitution Making*, pp. ix–xi.

¹⁶ Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 123.

¹⁷ Richard R. John argues that American political development scholars have invested too little time in the study of the early American history; see "Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787–1835," *Studies in American Political Development* 11:2 (1997): 347–80. American political development scholars who have studied the early republic include Rogers Smith,

of the Constitution to analyze later eras in American political history. Stephen Skowronek in *Building a New American State* and Theda Skocpol in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* both begin their landmark books with brief sketches of the Constitution's complexity.¹⁸ Skowronek's and Skocpol's sketches of the Constitution, in turn, depend almost exclusively on Samuel Huntington's argument that the Constitution implemented English political values of the seventeenth-century. Huntington held that Americans brought Tudor-era political principles to their colonies and, unlike the British, never transcended these ideas. Americans drew up their revolutionary state constitutions on these seventeenth-century precepts. The U.S. Constitution merely implemented the same constitutional notions on a national scale, creating a "Tudor polity." Huntington concluded that "American political institutions are unique, if only because they are so antique."¹⁹

But Huntington's glib portrayal of the Constitution is far too shallow to help us understand its design. From the very beginning, colonists had to adapt their mores and their governments to a situation profoundly different from that in Britain. American land was plentiful and labor was scarce, whereas in Britain land was scarce and labor plentiful. Acute labor

Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Charles A. Kromkowski, *Recreating the American Republic: Rules of Apportionment, Constitutional Change, and American Political Development, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David J. Siemers, *Ratifying the Republic: Antifederalists and Federalists in Constitutional Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002) and *The Antifederalists: Men of Great Faith and Forbearance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Samuel Kernell, ed., *James Madison: The Theory and Practice of Republican Government* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Keith E. Whittington, *Constitutional Interpretation: Textual Meaning, Original Intent, and Judicial Review* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999) and *Constitutional Construction: Divided Powers and Constitutional Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Rogan Kersh, *Dreams of a More Perfect Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 29–116; Bartholomew Sparrow, *Growing the Nation-State: U.S. Territorial Policy, 1783–1898* (unpublished manuscript, University of Texas at Austin, 2004) and "U.S. Government Lands and the Federal System," paper presented at the meeting of the Social Science History Association, St. Louis, October 2002.

¹⁸ Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 19–23; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992), pp. 67–72.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Modernization: America vs. Europe," *World Politics* 18:3 (April 1966): 378–414, and *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 93–133 (quotation from p. 98).

shortages undermined the feudal aspirations of early landholders in the Carolinas, the Hudson Valley, and elsewhere. For example, European status distinctions broke down under the pressure of American land and mobility. Americans gradually came to use prestigious titles such as “mister,” “honorable,” and “esquire” to express the status of those holding offices, instead of some natural status of the individuals themselves.²⁰ The presence of Native Americans forced settler communities to develop diplomatic skills and military capacity uncommon in England. The two most decisive factors in shaping American political development – extracting public revenues and mounting military operations – already distinguished the American colonies from Europe even before the American Revolution.²¹

Long before 1787, American politics was diverging steadily from British politics. Male freeholders were having an immediate, powerful impact on state policy that had no precedent in Tudor England; although there were severe restrictions on voting in the colonies, the lower houses of the colonial assemblies better represented public opinion than did the British Parliament. Blessed by abundant land and cursed by incessant conflict over its ownership, Americans constantly engaged in legal disputes. Courts strengthened; litigiousness blossomed in the American character. Judges turned away from British law when it did not suit the colonies’ needs. American lawyers became singularly important quasi-public officials who mediated between private parties and the state.²² As James Morone points out, religion uniquely framed Americans’ approach to all these problems and all their solutions.²³ Presbyterians contested Quakers for political control in Pennsylvania, for example. “New Lights” challenged “Old Lights” for political control in Connecticut, while “up country” Presbyterians contested coastal Anglicans in South Carolina. The defense of religious liberty became a defining issue for such young politicians as James Madison.

²⁰ Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 371.

²¹ See Roger H. Brown, *Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 233.

²² William E. Nelson, *Americanization of the Common Law: The Impact of Legal Change on Massachusetts Society, 1760–1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 10; Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

²³ Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, pp. 100–16.

Many delegates brought the most modern ideas about economic policy and republicanism to Philadelphia.²⁴ James Wilson professed admiration for the theory of British government but reminded fellow delegates that “we can’t adopt it – we have no laws in favor of primogeniture – no distinction of families – the partition of Estates destroys the influence of the Few –.”²⁵ George Mason, perhaps the delegate more inclined to Tudor ideas than any other, was defeated frequently, refused to sign the final product, and opposed its ratification in Virginia.²⁶ Like modern politicians who evoke revered, time-tested principles to legitimize actions that shatter the existing political order, the framers used widely accepted political axioms (including century-old arguments used against the British court) to justify the fundamental changes they were proposing. Immediate political exigencies, calculations, and compromises explain the Constitution much more fully than these seventeenth-century ideas. The hard lessons of Confederation experience, not a sentimental attachment to a distant English tradition, caused the delegates to consider national reconstitution a necessity.

I failed to find a comprehensive political narrative of the Constitution’s design in any of these accounts. There exists no thorough political analysis of all the Constitution’s provisions, centered on the delegates as politicians at work, moving through a sequence of contingent decisions toward a final product no one imagined in advance. The best historical and political science studies of the convention, by Rakove and Jillson, conclude that the delegates simply veered from material interests to philosophical principles as they voted on individual provisions, and the interests that mattered were unique to each specific choice the delegates made. But anyone familiar with the politics of large, complicated policy decisions will recognize that politicians in these situations tether their individual

²⁴ Madison’s arguments in *The Federalist Papers* suggest that he thought the informed public in New York would not be attracted to a Constitution rooted in Tudor political ideas: “Is it not the glory of the people of America, that whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience?” Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), no. 15, p. 88.

²⁵ RFC June 7, 1: 159; see also Edmund Randolph, June 1, 1: 66; Charles Pinkney, June 25, 1: 398.

²⁶ On two occasions at the Constitutional Convention, Mason sought to authorize the national government to pass sumptuary laws, which aimed to restrict public affectations of wealth and privilege.

decisions to deeply held political objectives and strategies. These strategies are flexible and hard to uncover in isolation, but they become more evident in close scrutiny of the *pattern* of choices that make up a complex political product like a constitution.

Existing studies arbitrarily select some “important” convention choices to analyze and ignore others. They downplay issues that may have mattered intensely to the delegates and shaped the outcome but that seem unimportant now because they were left out of the final Constitution. James Madison sought a national government power to veto state laws when he arrived at the convention, fought for it repeatedly during the meeting, and expressed deep regret about its failure afterward. Why? What does this tell us about Madison’s political objectives and strategy, his intentions for national authority, national policy making, and the nation’s political future? What does it tell us about the delegates who opposed his agenda? It is not sufficient to lay this glaring fact aside, concluding that Madison somehow did not really mean it. In convention narratives, the debate over the presidency fits oddly into the story, as if the delegates discussed the office in isolation from the compromise on representation and the constraints on national power. The story of the Constitutional Convention needs to be retold from a political point of view.

A POLITICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTITUTION’S DESIGN

The delegates who made the Constitution were first and foremost politicians, not philosophers, political scientists, or plundering speculators.²⁷

²⁷ Many negative connotations burden the term “politician” in the early twenty-first century. I use the term “politician” neutrally and dispassionately to describe an individual who devotes a substantial amount of time and effort to an elective public office or other politically sensitive appointive position. All the delegates who substantially influenced the Constitution’s design had political experience, and nearly all soon occupied an elective or appointive office in the reconstituted national government. My experience with American politicians today convinces me that they seem to be motivated by a similar mix of aspirations as the general population. Like politicians today – and, for that matter, our co-workers in organizations of all kinds – the convention delegates generally behaved in a way that reconciled their interests with their principles. As Anderson notes, there is a tendency to think that politicians begin with general principles and reason down to policy specifics, when more often they begin with outcomes and reason back or reconcile them with principles (*Creating the Constitution*, p. 71). Political self-interest rarely can be reduced to simple goals of reelection or officeholding, and often it cannot even be specified fully. To achieve any goals, politicians must gain offices with public authority and must manipulate competing claims on public authority to maximize the achievement of their goals.