

THE STORY OF CONSTITUTIONS

Today, 189 out of 193 officially recognised nation-states have a written constitution, and 75% of these have been ratified since 1975. How did this worldwide diffusion of constitutions come about? In this book, Wim Voermans traces the varied and surprising story of constitutions since the agricultural revolution of c.10,000 BCE. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, Voermans shows how human evolution, human nature and the history of thought have all played their part in shaping modern constitutions. Constitutions, in turn, have shaped our societies, creating imagined communities of trust and recognition that allow us to successfully co-operate with one another. Engagingly and wittily told, the story of constitutions is vital to understanding our world, our civilisations and, most significantly, ourselves.

WIM VOERMANS is Professor of Constitutional Law at Leiden University. His research focuses on comparative constitutional law, the evolution of human groups into political societies and the genesis of constitutions, legitimacy and storytelling. Voermans has written widely on subjects related to constitutional law, including European Law, Administrative Law (and the dynamics of the Administrative State) and legislative issues. His last four books have become bestsellers in the Netherlands, selling thousands of copies over the last three years.

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The Story of Constitutions

DISCOVERING THE WE IN US

WIM VOERMANS

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Wim Voermans

Frontmatter

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To Angèle

Every self-respecting nation on the face of the earth wants to have a constitution if it does not already have one. And, with the notable exception of Great Britain, most states that have constitutions would not mind improving their existing ones. Constitutionalism in this sense is one of the dominant values of our time, all over the world. And no matter how often it seems to have been disproved by history, the belief persists that a deliberately constructed constitution is the best means available for assuring achievement of the common goals of a community.

Herbert Spiro, *Government by Constitution; The Political System of Democracy* 1959, p. 11–12

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