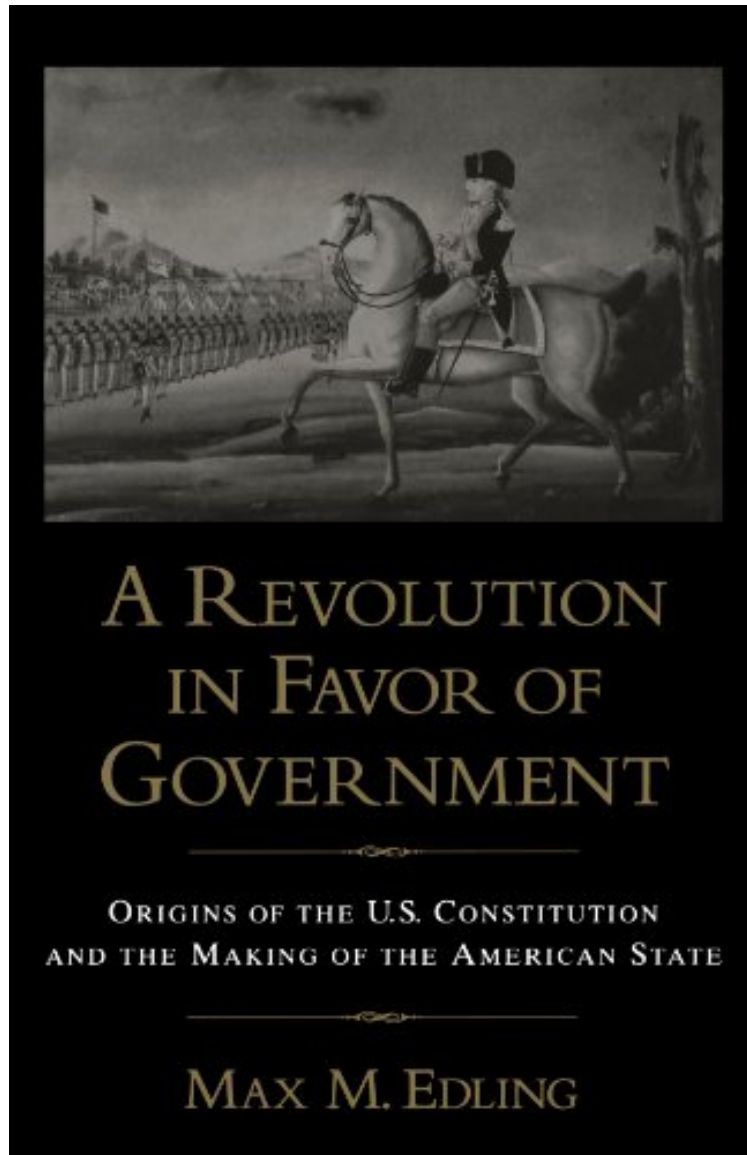


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A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State

Max M. Edling

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Max M. Edling : A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Corrects misinterpretations of the developmental trajectory of the Founding Era by using comparative historical analysis. By Keith Fitzgerald This book is tightly argued and well structured. It counters the inward looking view of the Federalists which sees them as setting of a limited and weak state. Their project was subtle and it was only fully realized with the adoption of the 14th Amendment, they successfully created a stealthy, strong state at least with respect to foreign relations and fiscal policy. Edling's discussions of the Federalists' fiscal policies especially illuminate their success. Contrary to the fantasies of latter day budget hawks, the ability of the federal government to assume state debts, manage currency and the effectiveness at repayment, allowed the US to run large but well financed deficits from the beginning much to the benefit of future generations.

6 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Why we have a Constitution By Bernard R. Edling I just read this remarkable (and slim) book. Then I read it again. Most Oxford University Press books are slanted to the left of Lenin. I do not know how this one slipped through. Perhaps it was the deceptive title, which might lead one to mistake it for a statist tract. It is nothing of the sort. Edling is a young man from Sweden -- which is not the same as the proverbial "man from Mars," but is close enough when it comes to viewing the United States from an outsider's perspective. Edling looks at America of the 1780s without the distractions of America now (or in between). Edling's central thesis is that the essential debate between the Federalists and the anti-Federalists during the Ratification debate was on this question: Would the newly drafted Constitution succeed in keeping (small d) democrats out of the national government? The Convention had already abandoned the state governments to the (small d) democrats, which is why the definitions of citizenship and the franchise were left to each individual state, and are barely mentioned in the Constitution. Both sides in the Ratification debate, says Edling, agreed that this was the only area left unresolved, the only debate that really mattered. The Federalists said their Constitution would do the job. The anti-Federalists said it would fail. Both sides agreed that keeping (small d) democrats out of the national government was a worthy goal, indeed the ONLY reason for having a Constitution at all: to prevent the Republic from becoming a Democracy, and thence inevitably a Tyranny. Ultimately they reached a compromise, unsatisfactory to both. This compromise was the Bill of Rights, Amendments I-X. The Federalists said this Bill was unnecessary, and showed too little faith in the Constitution. The anti-Federalists said this Bill was not nearly enough, but better than nothing. They had no faith in the Legislative Branch, asserted that under the Constitution, the Legislature would still be as reckless, feckless, and corrupt as the Continental Congress, and as that Ancient Cesspit over in Westminster, the British Parliament. The anti-Federalists proved correct in their prognosis. Alas they had no satisfactory prescription. Thomas Jefferson, who did more than anyone to bring (small d) democrats into the national government, lived long enough to regret his folly -- and to regret that when he had the chance, he failed to hang his vice president, Aaron Burr, for insurrection and treason (Burr had been co-founder with George Clinton of the Democratic Party in New York). * * * * I had never understood the meaning of Alexander Hamilton's "funded debt," copied from the English "consols". Neither did Jefferson. Neither does anyone opining in the media today, from Left or Right or out in Space. Thanks to young Mr Edling, now I get it. The funded debt is not just about "deficit financing." That is a red herring. It is about private savers and investors funding national government operations (which in the 1780s meant defense and war, nothing else), while annual taxes paid only the annual interest on that obligation -- with FULL understanding on all sides that the PRINCIPAL would NEVER be repaid, but that the interest would always be paid, paid on time and in hard money. This guarantee would make government bonds the safest savings vehicle available, and make them totally liquid despite never being redeemed, because there was always a strong secondary market for interest bearing bonds underwritten by the full faith and credit of the government. This is how our funded debt continues to work, despite the irrelevant rhetoric and total misunderstandings on all sides, and even despite the abolition of hard currency. This is why foreigners remain happy to own American debt, a fact that puzzles even the sages at the Wall Street Journal. Anyone who uses the word "deficit" does not understand how funded debt works. There is no deficit. There is only the annual interest cost of the debt, versus annual federal revenue. As long as the revenue is sufficient to pay the interest, and as long as paying that interest remains the first financial obligation of the government, its bonds remain sound. Similarly, anyone who imagines there can be an imbalance of trade does not understand trade. Any seeming imbalance in trade flow is balanced by money flow, and that money can be used for anything, but particularly for purchasing government bonds, and collecting the interest on them. The only effect of an imbalance of trade is an increase in the proportion of government debt held by foreigners. Thank you Mr. Edling!

1 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Bought as a gift for son By Tim Harrison Bought as a gift for son, He said he liked it.

In this trenchant new interpretation of America's origins, Max Edling shows that the Federalists were primarily concerned with building a government that could act vigorously in defense of American interests. The Constitution transferred the powers of war-making and resource-extraction from the states to the national government, thereby creating a nation-state invested with all the important powers of Europe's eighteenth-century 'fiscal-military states.' A strong centralized government such as this, however, challenged the American people's deeply ingrained distrust of unduly concentrated authority. To secure the Constitution's adoption in the face of this inherent suspicion, the Federalists had to balance the formation of a powerful national government with the strong current of anti-statism in

the American political tradition. They did so, Edling argues, by designing a government that would be powerful in times of crisis, but which would make only limited demands on the citizenry and have a sharply restricted presence in society. Taking advantage of a newly published letterpress edition of the constitutional debates, *A Revolution in Favor of Government* recovers a neglected strand of the Federalist argument, making a persuasive case for rethinking the formation of the federal American state.

"A book of undoubted power and value"--*The Journal of American History*"At the very least, Max M. Edling has written the most important book on the adoption of the United States Constitution to appear since Forrest McDonald refuted Charles Beard in *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (1958)."--*Journal of the Early American Republic*"Edling's book is a powerfully argued revisionist interpretation of the origins of the Constitution. More than anything else, it helps us better understand the constitutional sources of the gigantic fiscal-military state that the United States has become."--Gordon S. Wood, Alva O. Way University Professor and Professor of History, Brown University"Not only a pleasure to read but extremely informative and persuasively argued. I will never think about the U.S. Constitution in the old way again."--Daniel Walker Howe, author of *What Hath God Wrought*About the AuthorMax M. Edling is Research Fellow and University Lecturer, Uppsala University, Sweden.