

Madison's Third Way

"The Madisonian Madison and the Question of Consistency: The Significance and Challenge of Recent Research" by Alan Gibson, in *The Review of Politics* (Spring 2002), Univ. of Notre Dame, P.O. Box B, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

James Madison (1751–1836), the cerebral father of the Constitution and coauthor of *The Federalist*, emerges from many scholarly accounts as a disappointing political chameleon: a Hamiltonian nationalist in one decade (the 1780s), a Jeffersonian defender of states' rights in the next. But recent studies show that he was not so inconsistent, according to Gibson, a political scientist at California State University, Chico. Neither Hamiltonian nor Jeffersonian, Madison forged or represented "a third way."

Historian Lance Banning argued in *The Sacred Fire of Liberty* (1995) that Madison shared his fellow *Federalist* author Alexander Hamilton's "contempt for the weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation and his fear of majority tyranny," Gibson writes. But he was "no less repelled than Patrick Henry and other Anti-Federalists by Hamilton's vision of national splendor and consolidated government."

Instead of Hamilton's vision of a manufacturing America, historian Drew McCoy showed in *The Elusive Republic* (1980), Madison clung through the 1780s and 1790s to the ideal of an agrarian republic, albeit one that required land and commercial expansion.

Yet, says Gibson, political theorist Gary Rosen made the case in *American Compact*

(1999) that Madison was "a better defender of the fragile achievement of the American Founding" than his lifelong friend and political ally Thomas Jefferson. "In particular, Rosen observes that Madison opposed Jefferson's proposition that 'the earth belongs to the living' and the specific proposal that constitutions be rewritten every 19 years to reflect the aspirations of the living generation." Such practices would "rob the government of the veneration" it needed, Madison believed, and possibly prevent the present generation from assuming obligations to future ones.

McCoy argued that similar concerns animated Madison's approach to constitutional interpretation. His doctrine of "originalism" led him to oppose creation of a national bank in the 1790s, but his belief that precedent and practice could confer constitutional legitimacy led him as president in 1816 to sign into law a bill rechartering the Bank of the United States.

Taken together, Gibson concludes, the recent studies show that in his political thinking, Madison was relatively consistent, coherent—and independent. He carved out "a third way, between Federalists and Anti-Federalists, strict and broad constructionists, Hamilton and Jefferson, and ultimately nationalists and nullifiers."

No Politics, Please

"How to Make Congress Popular" by John R. Hibbing, in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (May 2002), Comparative Legislative Research Center, Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242.

Why is Congress so unpopular with the American public? Because legislators don't carry out the wishes of their constituents, is the usual response. If ordinary people had more access to the democratic process, they would clasp the institution to their bosom. Poppycock, says Hibbing, a political scientist at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Basing his analysis on data from surveys and focus groups, Hibbing contends that Americans don't feel "shut out" of the legislative process but have happily opted out. The "American populist spirit" is a myth; few people are involved even in local politics. Almost nobody in America trusts the public at large to conduct national