



# America's Counter-Revolution: The Constitution Revisited

*Sheldon Richman*

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This book challenges the assumption that the Constitution was a landmark in the struggle for liberty. Instead, Sheldon Richman argues, it was the product of a counter-revolution, a setback for the radicalism represented by America's break with the British empire. Drawing on careful, credible historical scholarship and contemporary political analysis, Richman suggests that this counter-revolution was the work of conservatives who sought a nation of "power, consequence, and grandeur." *America's Counter-Revolution* makes a persuasive case that the Constitution was a victory not for liberty but for the agendas and interests of a militaristic, aristocratic, privilege-seeking ruling class. "No state or government can limit itself through a written constitution, no matter how fine the words or how noble the sentiments they expressed. It is one of the many virtues of Sheldon Richman's book that it shows how this is true even of the American Constitution, which despite the promises of its designers and the insistence of its defenders down the years, made limited government less and not more likely." --Chandran Kukathas, London School of Economics

"This book is a milestone in real liberal history. Never to my knowledge has the liberal critique of constitutionalism been so acutely and concisely put. All those defending the heavy hand of statism will henceforth have to answer Richman's assessment point by point. He sums up the issues deftly. This book is the best extant overview of the matter." —Walter E. Grinder, Institute for Civil Society

"Richman delivers an accessible, incisive, and well-grounded argument that the Constitution centralized power and undid some of the Revolution's liberating gains. He rebuts patriotic platitudes but avoids the crude contrarianism so common in libertarian revisionism written for popular consumption. He does not romanticize America's past or overstate his case. Radical and nuanced, deferential to freedom and historical truth, Richman rises above hagiography or demonization of either the Federalists or anti-Federalists to produce an unsurpassed libertarian exploration of the subject." — Anthony Gregory, Independent Institute

"[A]fter reading this book, you will never think about the U.S. Constitution and America's founding the same way again. Sheldon Richman's revealing and remarkably well-argued narrative will permanently change your outlook. . . . Richman . . . [is] one of this country's most treasured thinkers and writers . . . . [H]e draws on the most contemporary and important scholarly research, while putting the evidence in prose that is accessible and compelling." — Jeffrey A. Tucker, Liberty.me and Foundation for Economic Education

"Several years ago, in just a few short blog posts and exchanges, Sheldon Richman changed my mind—he challenged my naïve view of the Constitution as an imperfect but basically libertarian blueprint for a minimalist state. No, the Interstate Commerce clause was not really just about free trade. No, the taxing authority is not as limited as we would like to argue. In *America's Counter-Revolution: The Constitution Revisited*, Richman demonstrates that the purpose of the Constitutional project was to expand and centralize the new federal government's powers. This is a much-needed antidote to US-centric Constitution worship common among libertarians and conservatives. — N. Stephan Kinsella, Center for the Study of Innovative Freedom

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