

# The Codification of American Federalism: An Analysis of Events Preceding the Ratification of the United States Constitution



By: Timothy S. Spangler III

# Research Question

- American Federalism is a political system where power is divided between federated states and a central government, and the federated states retain a large portion of their original independence and police powers.
  - The exact balance of powers has been heavily debated.
- **Research Question:** *How and why did the idea of a federated system, where the states retain their own sphere of sovereignty, become codified in American political thought?*
- Once one understands why a belief is embedded in thought, the belief can be better understood in the modern era in order to ask if the belief still deserves to fit into contemporary American political thought due to changes, or lack thereof, in the fundamental political culture that led to the codification of the belief.
- **Thesis:** Federalism became codified in American political thought due to a changing definition of republicanism with heavy influences from a changing definition of a constitution and a desire to change from the established British system.

# Analytical Framework and Method

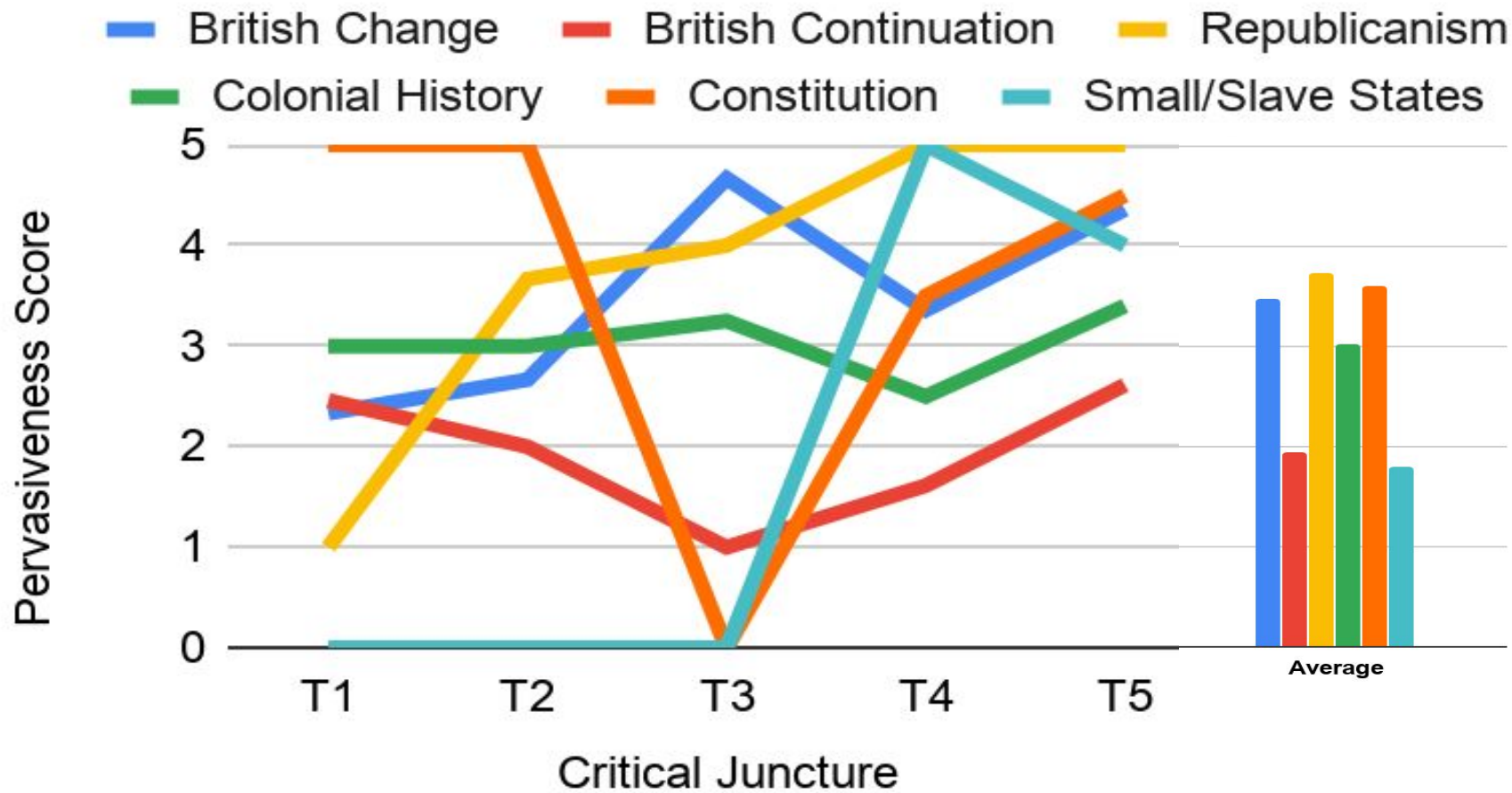
- 1) British Change
  - a) A country distrustful of their current government to the extent where it is willing to form a new political system.
- 2) British Continuation
  - a) A country satisfied with the state/federal relationship that existed pre-revolution.
- 3) Republicanism
  - a) A country rejecting the British definition of republicanism which allowed Parliament to have complete control over the state.
- 4) Colonial Historical Factors
  - a) A country only being influenced by internal factors to develop a new concept of federalism.
- 5) Constitution
  - a) A county adopting a system of law that can be tested like a science with a rigid constitution.
- 6) Small/Slave States
  - a) Small states and Slave states influencing the conventions to create the federalist system which disproportionately empowered these states.

# Analytical Framework and Method Cont.

- American Political Development (APD) is an interdisciplinary study where theories surrounding a question of development in American politics are viewed over time. APD serves as both a method and a framework. (Orren and Skowronek)
- Theories are tested by laying out a timeline and asking what the theory predicts will happen during that portion of the timeline. Then, the theories are assigned score based on how accurate the prediction is to reality.
  - This score is called a **pervasiveness score**.
- Here, there are six theories being tested across five portions of the timeline.
  - $T_1 = 1600 - 1750$
  - $T_2 = 1750 - 1774$
  - $T_3 = 1774 - 1781$
  - $T_4 = 1781 - 1787$
  - $T_5 = 1787 - 1791$

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
<b>British Change</b>	Frustration with British Authority	Political systems changing to work against the established British system	A Revolution Against the Crown	<i>Imperium in Imperio</i>	<i>Imperium in Imperio</i>
	Ideas Reflecting Colonial Unity from an Oppressive Government	Ideas Reflecting Colonial Unity from an Oppressive Government	Ideas Reflecting Colonial Unity from an Oppressive Government	Ideas Reflecting Colonial Unity from an Oppressive Government	Ideas Reflecting Colonial Unity from an Oppressive Government
	Small Protests Against the Crown	Large Protests Against the Crown	Political systems changing to work against the established British system	Refusing British Social Structures	Refusing British Social Structures
<b>British Continuation</b>	Satisfaction with British Authority	Consistencies in political systems to reflect the established British system	Consistencies in political systems to reflect the established British system	Adopting British social structures	Adopting British social structures
	Ideas Reflecting Satisfaction with the status quo	Ideas Reflecting Satisfaction with the status quo	Ideas Reflecting Satisfaction with the status quo	Refusing a powerful federal government	Refusing a powerful federal government
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Ideas Reflecting Satisfaction with the status quo	Ideas Reflecting Satisfaction with the status quo
<b>Republicanism</b>	Definition of Republicanism Favors a Limited Legislature	Definition of Republicanism Favors a Limited Legislature	A Limited Federal Legislature	A Limited Federal Legislature	A Limited Federal Legislature
	Institutions Supporting a Weaker Legislature with No Power over the Colonies	Institutions Supporting a Weaker Legislature with No Power over the Colonies	Non-Violent Requests, At First, for Parliament to Stop Infringing on the Colonies	Political and Social Institutions Limiting Federal Power	Political and Social Institutions Limiting Federal Power
	Political Thought Supporting a Weaker Legislature with No Power over the Colonies	Prevalent Rhetoric Pushing Against Parliament's New Taxes	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>Colonial History</b>	Cultural, Social, or Political consistencies	Cultural, Social, or Political consistencies	Colonies Banded Together for Military Safety	Federal Economic Protections	Cultural, Social, or Political consistencies
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Cultural, Social, or Political consistencies	Cultural, Social, or Political consistencies	Economic Necessity of a Federal System
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Colonies Working Together to Achieve a Common Goal	Colonies Working Together to Achieve a Common Goal	Negative Rhetoric on the Failures of the Articles of Confederation
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Rhetoric Promoting Colonial Military Success
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Colonies Working Together to Achieve a Common Goal
<b>Constitution</b>	A General Distrust for Law Easily Changed	A General Distrust for Law Easily Changed	Not Applicable	A General Distrust for Law Easily Changed	Constitution Studied as a Field of Law/ Law as a Science
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Well-Defined Structures in Government	Well-Defined Structures in Government
<b>Small/Slave States</b>	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Dedication to the State Over the Federal Government	Rhetoric Promoting State Power and States Deserving Power
	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Dedication to the State Over the Federal Government

# Findings



Questions?