

## FEDERALIST NO. 10

James Madison



In one of the most famous *Federalist Papers*, *Federalist No. 10*, Madison makes a strong case for the new national government. With its built-in system of checks and balances, he argues that the new government can control what he terms “factions”—citizens united and activated by common impulses or passions. Madison sees the proposed new national government as able to control these factions. Yet it is clear that although he foresaw factions as inevitable, he never envisioned how quickly political parties and interest groups would come to play a major role in the functioning and even organization of the new government.

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Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction....

... The instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils, have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished....

... These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administration.

By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects.

There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it is worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an ailment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive energy.

The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed....

The inference to which we are brought is, that the *causes* of faction cannot be removed, and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*.

If a faction consists of less than a majority, relief is supplied by the republican principle, which enables the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote. It may clog the administration, it may convulse the society; but it will be unable to execute and mask its violence under the forms of the Constitution. When a majority is included in a faction, the form of popular government, on the other hand, enables it to sacrifice to its ruling passion or interest both the public good and the rights of other citizens.

**Toward Critical Thinking**

1. What methods did Madison see as ways to end the causes of faction? Is it feasible or even desirable to end factions in a democratic society?
2. Given that strong Anti-Federalist sentiment had already emerged to challenge ratification of the Constitution, why doesn't Madison appear to address this type of “faction”?