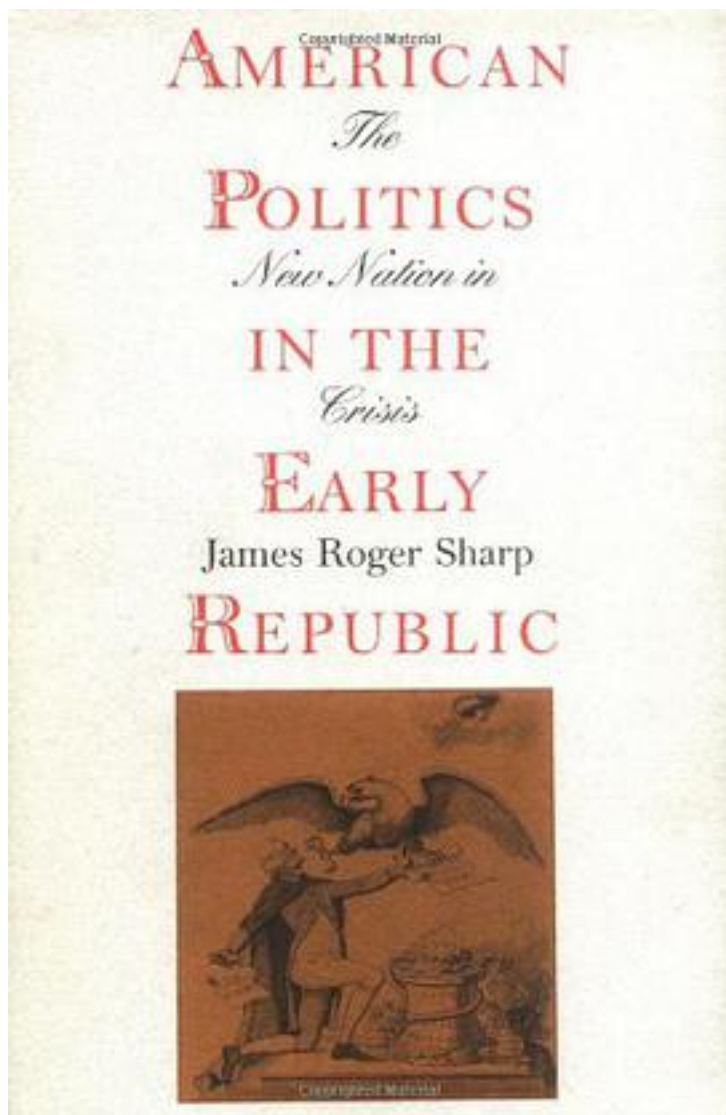


American Politics in the Early Republic



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During the years from 1789 to 1801, the republican political institutions forged by the American Constitution were put to the test. A new nation - born in revolution, divided over the nature of republicanism, undermined by deep-seated sectional allegiances, and mired in foreign policy entanglements - faced the challenge of creating a stable, enduring national authority and union. In this engagingly written book, James Roger Sharp offers a penetrating new assessment disputing the conventional wisdom that the birth of the country was a relatively painless and unexceptional one. Instead, he tells the dramatic story of how the euphoria surrounding the inauguration of George Washington as the country's first president quickly soured. Soon, the Federalist defenders of the administration and their Republican critics regarded each other as bitter political enemies. The intense partisanship prevented the acceptance of the idea that an opposition could both oppose and be loyal to the government. As a result, the nation teetered on the brink of disintegration as fear, insurrection, and threats of secession abounded. Many even envisioned armed civil conflict as a possible outcome. Despite the polarization the nation did manage to survive its first trial. The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1801 and the nonviolent transfer of power from one political group to another ended the immediate crisis. But sectionally based politics continued to plague the nation and eventually led to the Civil War.

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