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A CONFLICT OF DISINTEREST:
THE PROBLEM OF PARTY IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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November 2021

A CONFLICT OF DISINTEREST:
THE PROBLEM OF PARTY IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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I still get excited, at times feel the adrenaline rush, and even experience goosebumps when I stumble on that primary source that speaks so perfectly to our current context. The continued relevance of words written many generations ago remind me of history's most attractive quality, namely its transformative power—the power to enlighten and alter future generations' behavior. That is what started me on this journey, and that is what sustains me still.

A CONFLICT OF DISINTEREST: THE PROBLEM OF PARTY IN THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Darren Morgan

This study examines the lost classical republican virtue of disinterestedness—its early role in the nation's founding, its eventual subordination to partisanship, and its enduring legacy in the realm of politics. Two seminal documents shaped Americans' early ideas regarding disinterestedness, namely James Madison's *Federalist*, No. 10 and George Washington's "Farewell Address;" however, these cornerstones of impartial politics built upon a long history of classical republican thought from both ancient Rome and mother England. The eventual impracticality of such a virtue quickly gave way to a more enticing and interested form of politics in the early republic—one where lines were rapidly drawn between those in favor of federal power and elite rule and those who preferred a trajectory toward state power and egalitarianism. In this transition from the theory of classical republican virtue to the practice of party politics, one can clearly see the continued influence of classical disinterestedness especially and rather ironically in the language of partisan politicians. The virtue evolved, but it did not die. Classical republican virtues, such as disinterestedness, still attract the attention of pundits today as they "reach across the aisle" and seek "bipartisan solutions" to political issues the United States faces. The idea of impartiality still has a certain appeal to constituents as well. Voters are both interested in political unity, and many express a level of exhaustion in polarization and the division that partisanship tends to breed. Disinterestedness has witnessed times of revival in our past; however, it more than resonates in the modern

United States and has real implications in the climate of our most recent political struggles.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One cannot even speak of US politics today without the assumption of party. Political parties reign supreme in the modern realm of politics, but their development was not always welcome, and certainly, their supremacy was never intended. The founding generation disparaged parties as self-interested factions with a penchant for divisiveness and eventual oppression. Ironically, that same generation founded the very first formal parties: the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. This thesis focuses on the classical republican virtue of disinterestedness in the early American republic. How and why did the idea of faction and party transition from "baneful" to helpful—from necessary evil to positive good?[1] The vice has become—if not virtue—then at least vital to the body politic, and the development was rather rapid and early in the republican experiment. What we know today as fundamental and institutionalized, matured within the first few decades of the early republic. Disinterestedness, in practice, quickly went by the wayside, no doubt; but did its theoretical or ideological form disappear? Did this early transformation serve or harm the republic? Are parties custodians or killers of republicanism? Does disinterestedness offer a cure for divisiveness? These questions are

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[1] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed December 22, 2020), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.

often overlooked in the current political sphere, but the answers may provide prudence in a highly polarized society.

Disinterestedness, as a term, has a complicated and ironic etymology; as a virtue, it is perhaps even more complex. From a rare seventeenth-century past participle to a core tenet of classical republican virtue, disinterestedness is perhaps back where it first began, resting soundly in obscurity. Today, the word could easily be mistaken for "uninterested" or "disengaged," but for eighteenth and nineteenth-century Americans, the term held esteem and wide usage. As Gordon S. Wood aptly noted, "They placed the character of republicanism—integrity, virtue, and disinterestedness—at the center of public life."[2] It was a core tenet of republican character, and the founding generation littered their writings with its usage and application. Wood looked to the work of Dr. Samuel Johnson and his 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* for his definition: "superior to regard of private advantage; not influenced by private profit."[3] This self-sacrificial impartiality, anachronistic in many ways and almost as foreign to the modern voter as the term itself, is at the heart of this study.

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[2] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 103.

[3] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity,* ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 83-84; John McIntyre, "Not Interested," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 2007, Accessed July 7, 2021, https://www.baltimoresun.com/bs-mtblog-2007-02-not_interested-story.html; David Bromwich, "The Genealogy of Disinterestedness," in *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 108. McIntyre makes use of Wood and Johnson as well in drawing clarity for his own students, who he admits tend to see the term as synonymous with "uninterested." Quoting from Wood's *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, McIntyre shows both the difficulty of the terminology in modern contexts and shows the difficulties of simply referring to the word as "impartial." Bromwich notes the modern confusion with "uninterestedness" but says that its tendency toward synonymity with "*impartial* or *detached*" is equally erroneous to the "overeducated reader."

Additionally, literary and philosophical works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveal the complexities of the term. They demonstrate the eventual break with Victorian ideals, and provide insight into the literary transmission's impact on the political transmission so central to the application in this thesis. Immanuel Kant, William Wordsworth, William Hazlitt, John Keats, Charles Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Friedrich Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, and countless others struggled to place the term into its proper epistemological context.[4] The discourse surrounding the term's meaning is of central concern; the disagreements and misconceptions regarding disinterestedness demonstrate why the word can be regarded as high virtue to some and high-browed vanity to others.

David Bromwich provides a helpful characterization: "*Disinterestedness*, for the person who keeps to it, ought to mean that his final judgment will be affected by nothing but what he sees, hears, and feels to be the merits of the case. He has no vested interest

[4] Nick Zangwill, "Aesthetic Judgment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., Accessed July 8, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/aesthetic-judgment/; Mark Jones, "Recuperating Arnold: Romanticism and Modern Projects of Disinterestedness," *boundary 2* 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1991), 78; Jacques Khalip, "Virtual Conduct: Disinterested Agency in Hazlett and Keats," *ELH* 73, no. 4 (Winter, 2006), 886; Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit, Project Gutenberg*, 2016 (Accessed July 7, 2021), https://gutenberg.org/files/ 963/963-h/963-h.htm. For Kant, disinterestedness was viewed in light of the aesthetic as a universal judgment of taste, claiming that "pleasure in the beautiful is 'disinterested.'" Wordsworth applies the term in the political realm, going as far as to assert "interests of universal humanity over those of a party or nation." In his study of Hazlitt and Keats, Khalip illustrates that "disinterest, retaining its Kantian flavor, had become successfully incorporated into much late eighteenth-century philosophical thought, gesturing to diverse aesthetic, social, and political structures of critical detachment and objectivity derived from the Enlightenment." Jones calls Arnold's concept of disinterestedness a "frank supernationalism." Dickens' discontent with the ideal is evident in *Little Dorrit* (1857): "He was the most disinterested of men,—did everything for Society, and got as little for himself out of all his gain and care, as a man might." Pater, Nietzsche, and Wilde rejected Arnold's assessment and found disinterestedness to be more synonymous with the idea of "'uninterestedness' and thus…antithetical" by nature. These various studies on poets, essayists, and philosophers of the periods that parallel as well as bookend the historical context of this thesis shed light on the obvious complexities and controversies that surround the term and broader conceptual frameworks regarding disinterestedness. The idea proved much larger than just simply a word in common usage; it sparked debate among intellectuals and evolved drastically by the late nineteenth century.

in what he undertakes to judge, and his thoughts will not be swayed by prejudice, by tormenting fears or habitual associations." This is not strict impartiality or even neutrality, which Bromwich says would be "unimaginable…human nature being what it is," but rather a suspension of self-seeking judgment and action based upon sound patriotic reason and justice on behalf of a larger community.[5] The founders and early leaders of the republic, while it might be convenient to label "idealists," were no strangers to the tendencies toward self-interest; their writings confirm an understanding of disinterestedness in line with Bromwich's insightful definition.

Additionally, the terms "party" and "faction" must be closely examined. Madison, who drew from the work of Scottish philosopher David Hume, used the terms interchangeably, but that was not the case with all the political minds of his day or even of previous generations.[6] The English political theorist Lord Bolingbroke said, "For faction is to party what the superlative is to the positive: party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties."[7] At times the words appear synonymous or at least categorically related evils; at other moments distinguishing between the two is perhaps a

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[5] David Bromwich, "The Genealogy of Disinterestedness," 109; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 55; James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10, November 22, 1787," in *The Essential Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches and Writings*, ed. Robert J. Allison and Bernard Bailyn (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2018), 126. Pangle discusses "the four 'cardinal' virtues, and the third in his list encapsulates the notion of disinterestedness most closely. He calls it "justice (meaning especially reverence for law, unselfish sharing, and public spirit)." Thus, this study will also consider the usage of "justice" in terms of how it relates to the more specific virtue of disinterestedness. For example, in Madison's *Tenth Federalist*, he describes the "medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of *justice*, will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations." Madison's description of favorable representatives in the government contains very similar traits and mentions the idea of justice (among other thoughts) in place of the term disinterestedness. These patriotic leaders would best be able to mediate the various factions of the republic.

[6] Mark G Spencer, "Hume and Madison on Faction," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (October, 2002), 880.

[7] Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, *Patriotism: On the Idea of a Patriot King: And on the state of Parties at the Accession of King George the First* (London: A. Millar, 1749), 162.

method of justifying one while vilifying the other. The evolution was tied in many ways to the shift in the early American republic from the first party system of Hamilton and Jefferson to the second party system of Clay and Van Buren. This thesis will argue that the shift coincided with a sentiment regarding party, namely that parties moved from necessary evils to positive goods; that transition naturally led to a necessity to differentiate between parties and factions. Promoting party and upholding the traditional view of disinterestedness was in some form possible to a mind like Martin Van Buren, whereas faction continued to take on much more negative connotations.

A final matter of terminology and technical concern is the usage of "founders." In the study that follows, "founders" will be used in place of the members of the founding generation and interchangeably at times. Though many of the individuals at hand in terms of documentary evidence would be classified as "founding fathers," that term does not appear in the following pages; it can evoke too narrow a group to work well in this context.[8] For example, there were several lesser-known members of society in the United States, such as minister William Gordon or Dr. Joseph Warren, that wrote and spoke

[8] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 2; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding: Guided to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2009), xi, 135; Andrew Jackson O'Shaugnessy, "Celebrating the Founders," Review of *To Begin the World Anew* by Bernard Bailyn and *A Leap in the Dark* by John Ferling, *William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (July, 2004), 576-77. Pangle says that "the Founders were a widely assorted lot with differing opinions and varying intellectual capacities"—a truth that must be weighed and intentionally considered whenever trying to make any kind of generic statement of an entire generation of people. It is the intention of this study to provide a variety of these "differing opinions and varying intellectual capacities" in order to arrive at a more objective assessment of the diverse period. Gibson identifies the recent trends to expand the term from its traditional usage as referring to just the "elite" or "patriarchal" founders to one that includes some significant contributions from social historians of the era, namely other classes, genders, and even races. Finally, O'Shaugnessy's review notes the continued debate amongst historians regarding the influences of the "founding fathers" relative to ordinary Americans. Recognizing the deficiencies of both sides of the debate, he does offer a word of caution about propping up the "ordinary": "Historians, in an admirable effort to make history more inclusive, might have wistfully described the past in more democratic terms than the evidence will support and attributed too much agency to ordinary people." One will find that the traditional "founding fathers" will not come up lacking in the research that follows, but there is a conscious effort to draw from more "ordinary" accounts when possible.

words of import and impact into the period deserving of recognition for their contributions, though they often fail to make popular lists of what is typically defined as "founder."[9] As Ralph Lerner perceptively noted, "the nuanced sophistications of the few stand in greater need of deflation than the jeers and cries of the many."[10] Though what follows is primarily political and intellectual analysis rather than social history, attention to notions of patriarchy in titles like "founding father" also come into consideration. Consider, for instance, the work of Mercy Otis Warren, an early female voice on the Revolution and its meaning. The usage of "founders" or "founding generation" is admittedly a generic designation in most instances, and where a name can be attributed to the respective source, one will be provided.

This thesis will seek to revisit the lost virtue of disinterestedness as a possible solution to political polarization and eventual republican decline. The founders assumed that their "medium of a chosen body of citizens"—their elected officials and representatives—would rise above the fray of faction to make decisions that would benefit the whole of society, not merely patronize the preferences of a particular party. They could not have foreseen that the expected impartial mediators of factional strife

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[9] Joseph Warren, "An Oration; Delivered March 6, 1775: At the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston; to Commemorate the Bloody Tragedy of the Fifth of March, 1770," *Dr. Joseph Warren on the Web,* (Boston: Edes and Gill, Joseph Greenleaf, 1775), (Accessed July 24, 2021), http://www.drjosephwarren.com /2015/03/warren%E2%80%99s-1775-boston-massacre-oration-in-full-text-our-country-is-in-danger-but-not-to-be-despaired-of/. Warren even recognized his lack of fame and influence at the time compared to some of his more well-known contemporaries, saying, "You will not now expect the elegance, the learning, the fire, the enrapturing strains of eloquence which charmed you when a LOVELL, a CHURCH, or a HANCOCK spake; but you will permit me to say that with sincerity, equal to theirs, I mourn over my bleeding country: with them I weep at her distress, and with them deeply resent the many injuries she has received from the hands of cruel and unreasonable men." Thus, there was an awareness of some sort of hierarchy even amongst those of the founding generation, but this study has still chosen to classify them more broadly.

[10] Ralph Lerner, "The Constitution of the Thinking Revolutionary," in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity,* ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 43.

would take up the helm of partisanship, nor that an executive would eventually do the bidding of one party over another. Nevertheless, those who might have been considered "least likely to sacrifice…the true interest of their country…to temporary or partial considerations" have erased what advantages republics might have had over pure democracies, namely their ability to "control the violence of faction."[11] Many historians have dismissed disinterestedness as an impractical remnant of republican virtue or even diminished its ideological significance. Whether unintentional or perhaps natural for some, but for others, the motives are a deliberate effort to explain and legitimize partisan politics as a positive good in US history. This thesis will insist that disinterestedness was a viable virtue favored by the founding generation, that it evolved through the colonial, Revolutionary, and early republican eras, and that it must be revived and valued to sustain republican governments.[12]

In the eighteenth century, the greatest compliment one could pay his fellow man was that he was "disinterested," one unconnected to any particular faction, group, or interest—one whose duty and patriotism far outweighed any sort of political patronage. That idea stemmed from studies in classical republicanism, a familiar training for the founding generation.[13] Washington, Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe

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[11] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," 121, 126.

[12] In focusing on a singular republican virtue, one runs the risk of overemphasizing its significance by cherry-picking decontextualized evidence from a wide array of sources, seeking to arrive at answers or solutions to modern problems by looking to those of a very different time and place, or some mixture of the two. It is not the goal of this thesis to assert that disinterestedness as a republican virtue was the most significant facet of founding ideologies nor to argue that it was universally understood and accepted by those who spoke or wrote of its value; rather, by examining the virtue in context from both the documents of the period and the analyses of numerous historians over the last century, the goal is to resuscitate a transhistorical truth about popular forms of government.

[13] Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 53, 66. Historiographical trends, of which "republicanism" is, will be discussed at length below. It should be noted, though, that although this study attempts to weave a fuller picture by acknowledging several historiographical paradigms—subscribing to none in particular—there is a clear connection and assumption of a portion of the "republican" school of

all vilified the idea of faction or party; their public pronouncements and private correspondences provide insight into a concept that is all but foreign to a modern audience. Yet these very same administrations ushered in the first party system, so one is left with a resounding "why?"

The development and ascendancy of political parties in the early American republic was either a practical result of popular government or an irresponsible disregard for the lost virtue of disinterestedness. Popular histories have placed the founding generation on pedestals of pristine, impenetrable republican virtue, yet many intrepid historians have challenged that station on a variety of fronts. Did the founders truly value the republican ideal of disinterestedness? Did they really intend to place partyless leaders in positions of power? Were they responsible for vanquishing or vindicating party politics in the great republican experiment? Students of the early American republic need to struggle with these assumptions and disputes in order to understand modern political dynamics, when and where they surfaced, and why one cannot even fathom speaking of politics today without a presumption of the presence of party.

A shift from constitutional theory to constitutional practice was, in part, the reason for the emergence of political parties. We know, for example, that the Madison of the late 1780s had quite the about-face by the early 1790s, as Noah Feldman tells us in his biography of the Father of the Constitution. Feldman's emphasis on Madison's transformations include his shift from "advocate of strengthening centralized government into an advocate for maintaining state prerogatives," as well as being a staunch spokesperson for federalism into an equally effective patron of public opinion and

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thought regarding the founding.

interest.[14] Madison's theory and practice, one will find, were in a constant cycle of research and development—his experiences must be weighed against the ideology he was reading and developing.

Was the transition caused by the development of "legitimate opposition," as Richard Hofstadter detailed in the late 1960s? Hofstadter wrote in the context of what he referred to as the "high pitch" of "discontent with the workings of the American party system," but even amid such political dissatisfaction, he claimed that party's ascendancy was both natural and beneficial to the early republic.[15] Similarly, a context of political discontent and party polarization plagues the US today, which leads one to reassess whether or not Hofstadter's analysis was accurate? Sean Wilentz would certainly concur with his predecessor. His more recent work, *The Politicians & the Egalitarians: The Hidden History of American Politics*, argues that partisanship was fundamental to the early republic and its presence is largely responsible for many of the greatest social changes in US history. Partisanship as an evolving concept and eventual replacement for disinterestedness is at the heart of this research as well.[16]

Perhaps disinterestedness did not truly disappear but rather just devolved to a lesser degree of importance among political leaders and their respective constituents. In his autobiographical work, Martin Van Buren—party apologist to many and major player in the development parties as Americans know so well today—continued to use the term as a virtue to be upheld in the highest esteem. His usage suggests that the ideal continued

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[14] Noah Feldman, *The Three Lives of James Madison: Genius, Partisan, President*, (New York: Picador, 2017), 339, 341.

[15] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), xi-xii.

[16] Sean Wilentz, *The Politicians & The Egalitarians: The Hidden History of American Politic,* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017), xiv-xx, 4-9.

to permeate political rhetoric and literature despite its obvious abandonment in the literal sense. Reconciling this transformation and detailing how exactly the virtue of disinterestedness could coexist in a political climate driven by party discipline relative to one's interests is also a priority of this study.

The thesis will explore the aforementioned questions through the lenses of theory, practice, and evolution of factions and parties in the early American republic. The chapter dedicated to theory focuses on the classical republican ideal of disinterestedness, where it came from, and what influenced the founding generation in their contempt for partisanship. In examining the practice of disinterestedness, one sees the reality and practicality of party in the founding generation through the development of the first party system. Finally, the evolution of disinterestedness in chapter four investigates the presumed legitimization of party through the development of the second party system. Ultimately, the thesis will seek to contextualize the initial treatment of party as something to avoid, to its emergence as a necessary evil in the first party system, and eventual status as a positive good by the time the second party system takes hold.

The founders' classical training led to a belief that factions and parties were destructive rather than constructive forces in popular governments of old. There are a number of factional fixations outside of the classical republican habits that hearkened back to the Greco-Roman tradition. The founders also had a precedent for factional strife firmly rooted in English history. Their formative philosophical underpinnings were decisively attached to their classical and English conceptions of party. Experiences as English subjects taught them first-hand the notions of partisanship (i.e. Court and Country, Whigs and Tories). These influences are examined in the first section,

providing the necessary background and context for understanding the founders' thinking. Classical and Enlightenment thinkers must be examined alongside the founding generation in order to gain a fuller understanding of the development of disinterestedness.

The founders' republican experiment proved parties to be more potent than they expected or desired. The relative unity of the Revolution quickly faded into sectional and regional disputes; the comradery surrounding the writing and ratification of the Constitution was short-lived as well. Many founders continued to write unfavorably about party, but their deeds proved that party might be a useful political vehicle and organizing force in the early republic. Thus, practice trumped theory in many ways. Washington and others noted the increased level and danger of the "spirit of party," memorializing sentiments ironically echoed from the halls of polarized congresses for generations to come.[17] By the time Washington left office, anti-party thinkers like Jefferson and Madison, had already taken major strides in the development of party machinery. This ironic transformation will serve as the basis for chapter three.

Parties took on popular appeal rather quickly. By the late 1820s, a second party system, much more in line with that of today's parties, emerged. Rather than seeing parties as parasitical, though, they had become practical—even preferable—to going without their interested spirit. It is hard to imagine a political realm today without mention of party, and that solidification was well underway by the time of Andrew Jackson's presidency. Chapter four will inquire into the perceived popularization of party, the forces that precipitated this development, and the possible problems that emerged as a result of the transformation.

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[17] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796;" John Avlon, *Washington's Farewell: The Founding Father's Warning to Future Generations,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 32.

In order to discuss virtue and vice—disinterest and avarice—one must explore concepts associated with human nature. The founders were "grounded in a conception of human nature," which bolstered their "deepest arguments" and explain their own conceptions of morality. Human nature, constantly on the thoughts and prominent in the rhetoric of the early republic, is a theme throughout all chapters of this thesis. The founders affixed great responsibility to the leaders and citizenry of the republic, warning against the dangers of unrestrained selfish interest and encouraging checks upon one's wanton desires. Any discussion of classical republican virtue requires an awareness of the founders' philosophical and ideological underpinnings. From the writings of Thomas Gordon to the actions of Van Buren, the issue of human nature permeates this study through the convergence of various passions and interests. The intersection of historiographical debate and human nature in this study centers on whether or not self-interested liberalism can be reconciled with self-sacrificing republicanism.[18]

To most contemporary historians of the early republic, disinterestedness is dead. Those who subscribe to this notion are in good company too, "since," as Alexi de Tocqueville wrote in his 1830s tour of the US, "the period of disinterested patriotism is gone by forever."[19] Many historians view the ideal as incongruent to the development of democratic institutions. While historical authorities of the period at least pay homage to the notion of classical republican disinterestedness, few have focused sustained attention on the virtue itself. Perhaps none has given more consideration to the idea than distinguished historian of the early republic, Gordon S. Wood. Nearly all of Wood's

[18] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 2; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 13.

[19] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1, Translated by Henry Reeve, *Project Gutenberg*, 2013 (Accessed February 19, 2021), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/815/815-h/815-h.htm.

major works address the significance of disinterestedness, and while this study will give substantial attention to his work, the two deviate in one significant way. Historiography teaches us that the separation of time and space massively impedes interpretation. Wood argues at least partially from this premise on his assessment of the ideology of disinterestedness when compared to current understandings of the terminology. At hand is whether or not separation necessitates departure. Or put another way, does the distance of more than two centuries preclude one from recognizing and embracing classical republican virtue? Wood argues that many of the founders "stood for a classical world that was rapidly dying," but this thesis attempts to demonstrate that disinterest did not meet its death in the early nineteenth century, rather it underwent a remarkable transformation. Perhaps more importantly, the application of this study reveals the modern demand for a revival of disinterestedness.

"[O]ld historical problems do not preclude new solutions: indeed, they require them." In the late 1960s, historian Bernard Bailyn noted how woefully inadequate American history and historians had dealt with eighteenth-century politics. Whereas English historiography of the same period placed politics in what Bailyn called "prominence, indeed…dominance," examining with detail "party or faction," Americans had barely examined the rich history, and then only "incidentally."[20] Since Bailyn's comments, historians have seen the treasure-trove of historical analysis, exploring the realm of eighteenth-century politics in a deluge of important works over the last several decades—both from English inspirations and American innovations.

[20] Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), vii, 3.

As with many long historical traditions, the historiography surrounding disinterestedness has experienced the movements of a pendulum. From the great tradition to the old consensus, from the progressives to the new consensus, from the Lockean liberal line to the republican methodology, and finally from the multiple traditions approach to the more modern dispossessed groups or forgotten Founders and federal interpretation or unionist paradigm, the historiographical movements are dizzying.[21] By taking into consideration the forerunners in American political and intellectual history—their magnificent foundations alongside their mistaken flaws—this thesis will attempt the daunting task of treating the topics with measured and balanced analysis. The goal is to avoid conforming to any particular historiographical camp, but rather in the spirit of disinterestedness endeavor to consider the contrasting arguments to form a better, fuller understanding of the subject at hand.

Prior to Charles Beard and the "progressive" interpretations that followed, it should be noted that historians of the nineteenth-century "often celebrated the Framers as disinterested patriots and maintained that the Constitution embodied objective principles of justice…not the product of a single interest or class."[22] However, as Ellen Fitzpatrick observed, one should first look to the work of E. R. A. Seligman, Beard's influential

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[21] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 7-12; Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory: Writing America's Past, 1880-1980*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 54, 56, 68, 189; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, vii-xii, 1-6. Pangle opens his work with a critique of the major historiographical trends and interpretations of the founding generation, their motives, and philosophical foundations. He is consistently critical, perhaps precariously so at times, but also offers valuable perspective from the political science side of study in a subject matter that has not been confined to one particular department nor defined by any one dominant paradigm. Fitzpatrick's historiographical study offers insight into the major trends in the study of American history, highlighting many of the important phases related to this study. Gibson's entire work is dedicated to the historiography of the founding, to clarify the "constellation" or "daunting and dizzying body of literature," and provide a synopsis of enduring and valuable legacies from each approach as well as identify areas of limitation within each framework in order to help chart a path for future studies.

[22] Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 7. Gibson's use of language—"disinterested patriots"—also attests to the relative prominence of the term in the nineteenth century.

predecessor and professor to see the roots of what Fitzpatrick called a progressive "zeitgeist" in turn of the twentieth-century historiography. One only needs to see their respective book titles to see their allegiances: Seligman published *The Economic Interpretation of History* in 1902, and a little over a decade later, Beard released his seminal and much more well-known work, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913). Seligman and protégé, Beard, made waves in the historical community with their assessment of early American history in what Ellen Fitzpatrick categorized as "new interpretations that challenged revered notions of American national history." Simply put, these works emerged during a context when political history ceased to encompass the whole of historical analysis and understanding; the "great-man theory of history" gave way to social history. Also, much of their work was grounded in an effort to help resolve economic issues arising from the industrial age they lived in; likewise, this study's historical reexamination of disinterestedness lends similar tools with which to address contemporary problems in the realm of politics. The context of the writing is key but should not preclude other interpretations through a sort of contextual tunnel vision.[23]

[23] Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory*, 51, 54-56, 68-74; Sam S. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 6, 12; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding,* xiv-x. Fitzpatrick provides a nice overview of the historiographical trends of the early twentieth century; she contextualizes the historians and their respective analyses in a way that brings the modern student of history up to speed on the field's evolution. One comment made here and others throughout the thesis might appear to ring with presentism; however, much historical inquiry is driven by practical and present concerns and should not necessarily be scrutinized on that basis alone when transparency is attempted. Historians W. E. B. Du Bois and Fredrick Jackson Tuner, contemporaries of the period but vastly different in their approaches, have valuable thoughts on this notion. Du Bois remarked, "that it behooves nations as well as men to do things at the very moment when they ought to be done." Turner added, "If recent history, then, gives new meaning to past events…it is important to study the present and the recent past, not only for themselves but also as the source of new hypotheses, new lines of inquiry, new criteria of the perspective of the remoter past." Beard, also pushing the value of presentism, went further in his co-authorship of *The Development of Modern Europe*: "In preparing the volume in hand…the writers have consistently subordinated the past to the present. It has been their ever-conscious aim to enable the reader to catch up with his own times; to read

An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States did not just make Beard's writing "synonymous with the economic interpretation;" it also helped popularize newer interpretations in the public's mind. Grounded in English political history and equipped with the experiences of Ruskin Hall in educating members of the working class, Beard sat out to "lay a mine," as he put it, in the American understanding of its most seminal document, namely the Constitution. His thesis attacked the motives of the framers of the Constitution—that they were not enshrining and ensuring egalitarian principles in their efforts toward "a more perfect union" but rather placing a hedge around their aristocratic authority within the supreme law of the land. Beard had an inherent distrust of the founders' motives, a questioning of how much historians should rely on "professed beliefs," in order to understand the period. In light of Beard's argument, the idea of a disinterested patriot vanished. Beard's work brought to bear the central fears of classical republicanism, those of self-interested mercantile elites, in full force.[24] After surveying the economic interests of the Constitutional framers, Beard concluded: "It cannot be said, therefore, that the members of the Convention were

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intelligently the foreign news in the morning paper." His presentism was acknowledged and intentional; as Fitzpatrick puts it, "he made no attempt to disguise the fact that his political convictions drove his narrative of modern American history." In response to Beard's controversial work, Andrew C. McLaughlin warned that historians should avoid falling victim to "the temptation to find in the past the present, not simply conditions out of which the present came, and to find just what we expect to find and not the almost infinite variety of motive and interest." Wineburg admits that the past may be "a foreign country," but it is "not a foreign plane," arguing that historians can sometimes sacrifice presentism at the altar of reductionism. Historical analysis requires both an acknowledgement of the idea that the past can stand "on its own terms" and that in some ways its terms have dictated present circumstances. Balance is key. Gibson sums up much of the criticism on the historiography of the founding: "contemporary historians contend that…their predecessors' work…[is] skewed by the context in which it was produced and the aims of its authors." This is followed up with important advice for any work in the field—that it be "intimately familiar with the Founders' writings, but also keenly attuned to the theoretical and methodological assumptions, contemporary goals, and outright biases and prejudices of the scholars who interpret them." Finally, beginning the historiography with Beard and the progressives merely follows the structure of most major works of historiography like Gibson as well as Fitzpatrick for the most part.

[24] Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory,* 54, 69-71; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 7.

'disinterested.' On the contrary, we are forced to accept the profoundly significant conclusion that they knew through their personal experiences in economic affairs the precise results which the new government that they were setting up was designed to attain."[25] This was not necessarily, as some Beard critics have assumed, a condemnation, though. Beard goes on to claim that these were "practical men"—that they merely sought to stabilize the government through the only logical means the 1780s afforded them: "fundamental economic interests."[26]

Beard's thesis on the economic motives of the framers of Philadelphia in 1787 did, in fact, "lay a mine" in terms of historiography. His argument still reverberates into the latest studies of the American Revolution and early republic. His chief critics confirm the explosiveness, referring to his work as "a bomb to shatter the post-Appomattox interpretation of the Constitution."[27] He went on to lay even more mines despite a concerted backlash by journalists and historians alike in his economic reassessment of the early republic with *Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy.* Both of these works, as well as the early historiographical trends of the twentieth century, factor into this thesis. Carl Becker, Arthur Schlesinger, Max Lerner, and countless others followed the path that Seligman and Beard charted in their subsequent work, but Beard's

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[25] Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 151.

[26] Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United,* 151, 290; Pope McCorkle, "The Historian as Intellectual: Charles Beard and the Constitution Reconsidered," *The Journal of Legal History* 28, no. 4 (October, 1984), 315, 318-320. Beard not only found the national convention to be full of economically interested, "practical men," he also came to a similar conclusion regarding those who attended the various state conventions. McCorkle's essay points to numerous misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and mistakes anti-Beardians make and have made when examining his work in context, chiefly the inability to read his work closely and thus generalize his progressive assessment of 1787 as purely anti-Constitutional. Beard's contemporaries and followers were cognizant of this dynamic. Max Lerner noted early on that his work was much "more discussed than read." Having the benefit of a century of historiographical critique, this thesis seeks to incorporate a balanced Beardian approach.

[27] Douglass Adair, "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (January, 1951), 53.

fame in the field shifted to near-infamy by the close of the Second World War.[28]

The mid-twentieth-century saw a concerted backlash against Beard's analysis with historians like Douglas Adair helping lead the charge in the late 50s. Madison's *Federalist*, No. 10, an anchor document for this thesis, was a major point of contrast between Adair and Beard, whom Adair acknowledges helped not only reinstate Madison's primacy in American history but also popularize the now oft-cited essay.[29] Beard cites *Federalist*, No. 10 as the basis of his historical inquiry in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* and a necessity in precisely understanding Madison's "political science." Quoting extensively from Madison's assessment of factions, Beard claimed that his thoughts constituted "a masterly statement

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[28] Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory,* 71-2, 88-9; Pope McCorkle, "The Historian as Intellectual: Charles Beard and the Constitution Reconsidered," 314-16; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 123-25. McCorkle provides the profound impact of Beard's work in the field—his *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States'* third place ranking in the *New Republic's* survey "Books That Changed Our Minds." The fact that the book saw seven additions in two decades and that he has achieved a label in classifying historical interpretation, "Beardian," speaks to the sustained influence as well. His popularity held through the Great Depression, as his thesis matched nicely with the economic discontent of the period. However, Beard's fame really turned to infamy in the second half of the twentieth century, and McCorkle looks at what is salvageable and valuable from his legacy. Gibson notes the staying power of the progressive tradition and Beardian contributions as well as weaknesses. Rooted in what Gibson calls "realism," the progressive interpretation offered and continues to offer a down-to-earth, human counterbalance to the heroic, even deified "great-men" school of thought central to unabashed American exceptionalism. Beard and others demonstrated the significance of factors outside of the political sphere in the founding generation, namely economic motives that illustrate that documents like the Constitution are in many ways "antidemocratic." The weaknesses of this framework, though, border on conspiracy. Interests must be considered, but one need not do so at the expense of extinguishing the founders' ideologies. It is not imperative to view these approaches as either-or; it is more beneficial to examine the interplay of both interest and ideology.

[29] Douglass Adair, "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," 48, 53; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 11. Pangle also addresses this connection between Beard and Adair, referring to the former as "the great introducer of Marxist analysis." Of note here from Pangle's historiographical critique is that while Beard's interpretations may have been "simplistic and crude," he at least brought to bear "the decisive importance of Madison's theme in the *Tenth Federalist.*" While this thesis will contend that Beard and others have exhibited a fair amount of tunnel vision, it must be agreed that Madison's purpose in writing the *Tenth Federalist* was at least partially in favor of protecting the interests of the elite class against the dangers of an overzealous majority. In other words, his assessment of factions and their danger to the republic has hidden in plain sight a heavy dose of self-interest.

of the theory of economic determinism in politics."[30] While Adair acknowledged the "brilliant beam of light" Beard cast upon constitutional interpretation, he also lamented the "long shadow" his work seemed to have simultaneously thrown upon the profession for the first half of the twentieth century. Chiefly, Adair accused Beard of gross selectivity in his analysis, thus spotlighting certain elements of *Federalist*, No. 10 whilst obscuring others in what the former contextually and ironically classified as "the most important party tract of the Progressive Era." It is those "others"—those areas left to obscurity in Beardian analysis—that occupy the study that follows.[31]

Louis Hartz's mid-twentieth-century work also played a significant role in the historiography of the American Revolution, establishing a "liberal tradition," wherein the work of John Locke met a revival of American exceptionalism in post-WWII America, the era of "consensus history." Hartz sought to dispel what he considered the myths of reducing founding philosophy "to economic or religious motivations," while championing the notion that "Americans knew only the perspective of Lockean liberalism." In his title work, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of*

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[30] Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, 14-5, 156. In this statement, Beard pays homage to his mentor, Seligman, in defining the "economic interpretation of history. In defense of this position, Beard pointed to Madison's phrase that "The first object of government" was the protection of "the diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate." To Beard, Madison was arguing the primary objective of government (politics) was to serve an economic end. Beard's analysis will thematically factor into a number of pieces in this thesis. His acknowledgment of faction or party influences, something Madison also considered "natural," is not the end or even the purpose of the *Tenth Federalist's* argument. Stopping at this point is a gross misreading of the overall aim Madison sought to achieve in this essay, namely controlling the "baneful effects of faction," not establishing their normalcy in a free government.

[31] Douglass Adair, "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," 48-50; Sam S. Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, 12. Adair's accusations address the manner in which presentism ceases to equip audiences with a full or contextually sound interpretation of history and begins to merely serve as a modern tool of political rhetoric. He shrewdly noted, "that every generation sees mirrored in the Constitution its own deepest political interests." Again, while this thesis originated within the context of twenty-first-century political polarization, what follows is not purely an attempt to patch together a quilt-work doctrine of lost disinterested virtue. As Wineburg noted, the historian's job is to reconcile this paradox.

American Political Thought Since the Revolution, Hartz goes as far as to say that Locke represents "a massive national cliché" in American political philosophy. Americans' lack of a "feudal stage" or aristocratic putsch, in Hartz's eyes, made their experience "unique" and set apart from the basis of a Marxian argument. Hartz was a student of Tocqueville, and his answer to the Marxian progressives like Beard lay in the pages of *Democracy in America.* Hartz's rejection of a direct comparison to the European models, either of the *ancien régime* or classical republicanism, made his work distinct but also led to a renewed effort to establish ties to the civic humanist tradition. Was the founding primarily a product of classical liberalism or classical republicanism?[32]

Historians of the classical republican tradition Bernard Bailyn, J.G.A. Pocock, and Gordon S. Wood factor into both the republican interpretations of the founding era as well as the scholarship within this thesis, but their predecessors and critics must also be considered and granted attention in evaluating the period and predominant thinking in regards to the classical republican virtue, disinterestedness. While the radical Whig tradition failed to make major waves in eighteenth-century England, Bailyn and scholars of the republican school acknowledge quite a different acceptance and integration of such

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[32] Ellen Fitzpatrick, *History's Memory,* 189-90; Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1980), 140; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 26-8; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 1-2, 13, 15-16, 126-28. Pangle accuses Hartz of "grave oversimplifications" for only scratching the surface of Tocqueville, Locke, or "any other thinker's texts and arguments." Following in Hartz's footsteps, New-Lockean historians like Joyce Appleby exhibit the legitimacy of the liberal interpretation, contending that capitalism was the mechanism whereby they exercised egalitarianism most obviously. The natural rights tradition is alive and well in modern American political discourse, as it provides a logical "explanation for the course of American political development," and "[t]o judge it by its later effects, then, is to fail to see the novelty, promise, and politics on which it was initially defended." Gibson addresses the presence but weaknesses of the liberal tradition before WWII and the manner in which it fit nicely within the context of the consensus movement during the Cold War era. His assessment of the Lockean approach also convincingly argues for its pervasive staying power in reform movements from the eighteenth century into the last decade; such documents as the Declaration of Independence continue to inspire and inform leaders within these movements.

thought in the American colonies on the eve of the Revolution—one marked by Country Party political thought more than "Lockean liberalism." In Pocock's analysis, a line connecting Florentine civic humanist thought to England is drawn through the work of James Harrington. Harrington applied the Machiavellian "ancient citizen" to the "English freeholder," according to Pocock, thus creating a conduit from seventeenth and eighteenth-century civic humanism to the republicanism inherent in the English Whigs or "Country Party"—those radicals of "post-civil war England."[33] Those radicals are given substantial attention in the chapter that follows. Wood carries the same classical republican thought through the post-Revolutionary period and into the creation of the Constitution. These scholars reject Hartz's liberal tradition, claiming instead that republicanism lay at the heart of founding philosophy. The assessments and assumptions of the republican school of thought remain a central part of historiographical debate.

Criticizing both the progressive's conflict interpretation and the "consensus" of his own generation, Hofstadter's *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*, details the evolution of United States' party politics from its early disdain as a necessary evil to its eventual permanence as a positive good.[34] His important work narrates the rise of party politics—an ascendancy he claims was both natural and beneficial to the early republic; he logically links the backdrop of English party politics, namely the Whig and Tory traditions, to the Revolutionary generation's distaste for partisanship. The Constitution, he claims in his second chapter,

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[33] Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 28, 26; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 28. Pangle acknowledges that Wood is the most "sober" of the republican school of thought, noting his reassessments and openness to other influences, yet holding republicanism as the central paradigm of founding thought.

[34] John William Ward, Review of Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 46, no. 1 (Winter, 1970): 174.

was "against parties" as well. However, in subsequent chapters, Hofstadter explains how experience not only proved the idealism of the founders impractical but also showed just how useful party organization could be.[35]

Hofstadter's claim that although figures like Jefferson may have loudly proclaimed the "anti-party cant of their age," they "would have the happy inconsistency to act in disregard of it," is echoed by many modern historians.[36] Wilentz confirms Hofstadter's work and builds on it by providing a glimpse into pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania, where an already entrenched political polarization was at work, despite the "cant." In *The Politicians & The Egalitarians*, Wilentz deems such inconsistencies as politicking more than true anti-party sentiment—an appeal to "general distrust" of parties "in order to assail their opponents."[37] In his essay on the historiography of the period, historian Woody Holton speaks of the contested nature of things that have previously been cherished as "facts"—these instead, Holton says, look more like a "series of debates." However, the idea of party opposition does not factor large on the contested radar of current historiographical trends in the early American republic—earlier historians like Hofstadter shattered the assumption of politicians above party, and those notions are not widely debated as much topics that fall more in the vein of social history. *The Idea of a Party System* fits neatly into what Holton refers to as the "master narrative," thus it does not tend to garner the attention and contention that current historiographical trends follow.[38]

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[35] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System,* xi-xii, 53.

[36] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 16.

[37] Sean Wilentz, *The Politicians & The Egalitarians*, 5.

[38] Holton, Woody, "American Revolution and Early Republic," *American History Now*. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 24, 26-33. Holton details debates surrounding Native American, African American, gender, and class studies (agency vs. acquiescence) more than those elite parties that structured the Constitution and remained at the helm of

Interestingly, in his examination of Madison's oft-cited treatise against faction, *The Federalist,* No. 10, Hofstadter leaves out an analysis of Madison's full vision for the maintenance of parties. Though he goes farther than Beard's selectivity, by focusing purely on what Madison proposed in controlling majority oppression of minority rights through a large and extended republic, the reader is never introduced to the idea that Madison's constitutional republic would, "refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations."[39] The check on the power of a majority faction or party, would not be possible by way of its size alone; it would take the virtue and vigilance of its elected officials as well. Hofstadter never fully examines this component, brushing it off as "useless to rely on enlightened statesmen." What Madison considered contingent, Hofstadter and others like him have quickly dismissed.[40]

Additionally, in claiming a practical need for party organization and demonstrating a natural propensity toward party affiliation, a central component to arguments from historians like Hofstadter, Wilentz, Wood, and Holton, one might inquire: if parties are requisite to free societies, why were they not prerequisite for the Revolutionary generation that gained and sustained independence? One almost gets the impression that this thinking might embrace a new American creed: "divided we stand; united we fall." Perhaps many have also gone too far in the assumptions that legitimate opposition will remain constructive, responsible, and even constitutional in a republic, as

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power for the period.

[39] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10, November 22, 1787," 121.

[40] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 64, 66.

historians like Hofstadter offer no logical alternative to a delicate balance between *two* parties and quickly dismiss the idea of a system with three or more parties. Furthermore, one could also claim that the idealism the founders placed upon the spirit of unanimity, a sentiment Hofstadter repeatedly rebukes, merely transferred to a new idealism of the second and subsequent generations, namely that of faith in the spirit of party comity. As we know, once sectionalism and party crossed paths in the mid-nineteenth century, what was once akin to sportsmanlike competition transformed into battlefield brutality.[41]

Another historiographical issue is the continuity of a strict dichotomy in politics. Some would trace a clear line of the two-party system from the patrician vs. plebian to Court vs. Country to Tory vs. Whig to loyalist vs. patriot to federalist vs. anti-federalist to Federalist vs. Republican. These contrasted parties from Rome to England to the United States provide a simple framework to examine party continuity historically, but they can also oversimplify a much more complex realm of politics that is dependent on context, coalitions, and complex competing interests. Perhaps no one has done more to complicate this straight line of contingency more than Wilentz who masterfully muddies the waters of factional disputes, disrupting the strict dichotomy model from the colonial

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[41] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 262; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic: 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1998), 606-07; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 119, 123, 125; Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 273. Of course, Hofstadter's work centers around "legitimate opposition," and future historians would almost certainly take this as a given in many ways. Wood concludes his analysis with "The End of Classical Politics," where he acknowledges the rise of party prominence and a greater reliance on the Lockean "social contract." Wilentz points out a "pattern" in the early republic, whereby Federalism's relative strength bred democratic opposition that would later develop into radical and moderate forms of republicans. Once Federalism faded from the mainstream political sphere, republicans simply split in two, forging the beginnings of the second party system. Finally, Holton hits on the philosophical underpinnings of party present not only in Philadelphia but also in both parties as they exist today; the nation has always teetered on how much power should be granted to federal authority and how much should rest with its citizens. Both parties, though changing names periodically throughout American history, have exhibited either distrust of federal authority or disdain for populist control.

period through the early republic in his impressive volume *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*.[42]

Much of the historiographical debate surrounding a subject such as classical republicanism or civic humanism has traditionally centered on origins or foundations of the founders' thought or philosophy.[43] Was the American experiment the result of Machiavellian or Lockean philosophical underpinnings? How does one reconcile both the traditional ties to republicanism with the emerging liberalism of the period? Did the liberal philosophy defeat or replace republicanism and with it the notion of the necessity of disinterested virtue? What was once considered "the putatively hegemonic status of the liberal tradition," found contention in the mid-twentieth-century.[44] The discourse

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[42] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy,* 15; James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24, October 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/ documents/Madison/01-10-02-0151. Wilentz provides a detailed look into the dynamics of "country democracy" and "city democracy," as well as the recognition of varying geographical interests "from New England through the South," illustrating the need for viewing party politics at least partially through the lens of urban vs. rural and sectional struggles. Within these various interests, factions abound. Here, too, one can easily see a connection to Madisonian theory prior to the development of these various interests in the early republic: "In all civilized Societies, distinctions are various and unavoidable. A distinction of property results from that very protection which a free Government gives to unequal faculties of acquiring it. There will be rich and poor; creditors and debtors; a landed interest, a monied interest, a mercantile interest, a manufacturing interest." The causes of faction are innumerable and unstoppable in free societies. Thus, to distill this great diversity of interests into any sort of strict dichotomy is erroneous and gross oversimplification, even negligent. "These classes may again be subdivided according to the different productions of different situations and soils, and according to different branches of commerce and of manufactures. In addition to these natural distinctions, artificial ones will be founded on accidental differences in political, religious and other opinions, or an attachment to the persons of leading individuals." On the other hand, coalitions of factions and interests, namely parties, when distinguished from the more negative and perhaps smaller categorical component, faction, have tended to fit conveniently into the two-party systems that have been part and parcel to US government from the very beginning until now. These issues—the diversity of interests and factions, the distinguishing characteristics between faction and party that many outside Hume and Madison make, and the development and near-natural tendency towards two-party systems will be discussed at length in what follows.

[43] Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 126. Gibson says that "the central debate in post-World War II scholarship on the American Founding has been over how best to conceive of the intellectual origins of the American republic." Most historians gravitate toward a liberal or republican framework.

[44] Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, "The Republic of the Moderns: Paine's and Madison's Novel Liberalism," *Polity* 38, no. 4 (October, 2006), 448-450. Kalyvas and Katznelson assess the motives of the "neo-republicans" as "elegiac"—that their obsession is based on a motive of "lamenting the victory of liberalism and wistfully longing for a renewed republicanism."

shifted in the post-1960s, following the instrumental work of Hofstadter, Wood, Pocock, and others, to debates on departure—when and how much did the founders deviate from classical republican roots? The coming of the Constitution's bicentennial celebration of the late 1980s saw a flood of scholarship about the meaning and legacy of that seminal document, and with this rejuvenated study in the field came historiographical debate. Out of the deluge of writing came a number of questions.[45]

Thomas L. Pangle criticized the growing consensus surrounding classical republicanism, unapologetically calling out the hermeneutical failures of this trend, especially Wood and Pocock, in his work *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*. He, as the title suggests, sees the break with "classical" republicanism to be early and decisive—that the failure of historians to see this is tied to hermeneutical deficiencies to adequately and accurately examine the classical republican inspirations that influenced the founders paired with the lack of a deeply motivating and urgent set of circumstances that clearly influenced those men and women. Historians, Pangle argues, lack not only the same capacity as the founders to grasp earlier political philosophy but also the "passion" to do so seriously. While Pangle clearly tends toward the Lockean tradition as the most important influence in the founding documents, he argues for a much more "multifaceted" approach that at times harmonizes both Lockean and Machiavellian camps while also considering the experiences that surrounded the founding generation—circumstances that differ greatly from those of the modern US historian.[46]

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[45] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism,* 1, 28.
[46] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 1-2, 28-9.

The pendulum seems to have rested somewhere in between the republican and liberal traditions in much of today's discourse. Instead of focusing on a philosophical dichotomy, historians have begun to examine the interplay between the various traditions. Neo-republicans like Wood have "moderated" their approach, a "multiple traditions" method has become a mainstay of the scholarship, and the latest studies involve expanding the realm of topics to include the dispossessed, the forgotten, and the wider context of the Atlantic world. Neo-Lockeans, like Joyce Appleby, also admit the "multiplicity of traditions," but find founding thought to be anchored in liberalism. While these new approaches have breathed new life into the historiography, there is still sustained interest in attention paid to the older, aforementioned paradigms—what failed to kill them apparently made them stronger. Alan Gibson, who attempts to provide an overview of founding historiography from Beard through the early twenty-first-century in his invaluable work *Interpreting the Founding: Guide to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic,* suggests that a "modern study" should focus on "the accretion of contested perspectives, not the replacement of one by another." The goal of this thesis is to offer just this sort of approach.[47]

[47] Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, "The Republic of the Moderns," 450; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, xiv-xv, 16, 127, 130-32; Holton, Woody, "American Revolution and Early Republic," 24, 40. Gibson says that the historiography of the founding "has never been closed to alternative perspectives and is no longer dominate by a single school of interpretation." The goal is to not simply dismissed past approaches as "ruins" but rather mine them for their "enduring insights." It is a challenge to bring the various traditions into a "single view," but it should be an intentional aim of modern scholars to do so. Holton also notes the uptick of diversity in founding-era scholarship—"a wide range of topics that did not even exist thirty years ago." It is now a markedly contested history where the days of consensus even around such "cherished assumptions" as the American Revolution have faded—something that Holton notes. This thesis explores a variety of perspectives and interpretations, but there are arguably a lot more questions raised in modern historiography than answers—an attempt will be to balance the modern trends of expansion (especially in regards to lesser-known members of the founding generation) with the enduring principles of the various historiographical schools.

Pangle's harsh criticism of the current or perceived historiographical consensus should perhaps be mitigated, but his challenge and approach are intentionally considered in the following thesis, namely that in order to see the founding generation "in their own terms and spirit…demands of us that we truly open ourselves to the possibility that political debate or argument is not simply or entirely reducible to 'ideology.'"[48] There is a need to connect the founding generation's ideology and experience, not simply pit these two approaches against one another. Only then can one begin to more fully grasp the radical transformations of the American Revolution and its profound legacy upon world history.

Perhaps the two most seminal documents that offer as much of an apology of disinterestedness as one might expect to find in founding writings, namely James Madison's *Federalist,* No. 10 and George Washington's Farewell Address, deserve special attention. The former saw renewed popularity following the groundbreaking and controversial work of Charles Beard, whereas the latter formed an earlier lot of American historical canon with perhaps reinvigorated attention today.[49] Any student of the early republic has to feel some sense of shock and perhaps awe when first encountering these seemingly ethereal pieces of American political history and philosophy. What might strike one as more surprising is that these two popular pieces were common refrains not

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[48] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 28-9, 38. Pangle calls the "post-sixties" consensus an "infatuation with 'classical republicanism'" and further ascribes "ignorance" to historians in this camp for their lack of understanding of the "original texts" upon which they base their arguments.

[49] Douglass Adair, "The Tenth Federalist Revisited," 48; Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 11; John Avlon, *Washington's Farewell*. Adair and Pangle both point to Beard's importance in the study of *The Federalist*, No. 10 as well as attention paid to Madison, who to that point was not given the attention he appropriately receives today. Avlon is one important example of how modern popular histories have helped to renew interest in an address that used to hold much more prominence in the halls of Congress, public memory, and even public education.

only of the founding generation but also of their English counterparts and Greco-Roman archetypes. Disinterestedness is a virtue and concept that has faded into obscurity for the modern audience, but as this thesis will demonstrate, it was a word that held weight in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Though party appears part and parcel of the American experiment, especially 250 years later, the question still remains whether or not the transformation from a necessary evil to a positive good was helpful or harmful. Has the forgotten virtue of disinterestedness plagued the country in its darkest hours, or has it propelled the nation forward through the difficulties of democratic disagreement and changes wrought through conflict and compromise? The application of this thesis should inform those of a modern generation of the potential problems and solutions those of a much earlier era felt deserved much attention, thought, and inquiry.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF DISINTERESTEDNESS

> There seems to be one never-failing test whence to distinguish a public spirited Man; even an honest and disinterested heart. This is a sort of constitutional Virtue, and whoever has it is secure against many of the most dangerous temptations. The love of money and of power are violent passions, and few who are strongly possessed with them can safely trust themselves. How naturally does the avaricious man listen to any scheme for filling his coffers? How eagerly does the ambitious man enter into measures for inlargeing his figure and power? How apt are both to flatter themselves that they deserve all that they can possibly possess, that whatever they can grasp is but their due, and that therefore they can never grasp too much? Blinded by these favourite inclinations, they can bear nothing that thwarts them; and, as they thus state the account on one side only, the balance must be eternally one way.[1]

Thomas Gordon's unnamed inspiration for the words above had their finger on the pulse of the British Commonwealth, and yet these keen observations derive from an ancient source. In *Discourses Upon Tacitus,* the insightful Scot perceptively parallels both Roman and British experiences; those parallel experiences provide yet another line of valuable comparison when placed side by side with the early American republic. The statement is laden with classical republican jargon—words and ideas all too familiar to the founders: the "public spirited Man," the "honest and disinterested heart,"

[1] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four Volumes: To which are prefixed, Political Discourses Upon That Author,* Vol. 3, edited by Thomas Gordon (London: T. Woodward and J. Peele, 1737), 197-98; Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development, and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1959). Caroline Robbins offers an extensive review of the classical tradition in English history, filling in the gaps of those predecessors and inspirations behind writers like Trenchard and Gordon.

"constitutional Virtue," the "violent passions" of "money" and "power," "the avaricious man," "the ambitious man," self-flattery, and the "favourite inclinations" of human nature are familiar phrases in the founders' writings. These classical concepts lay the groundwork for understanding the theory of disinterestedness as it would have been understood among the founding generation—a generation versed, indeed immersed, in the application of ancient history as well as the political philosophies of the Enlightenment.[2] As Gordon Wood observed, "They placed the character of republicanism—integrity, virtue, and disinterestedness—at the center of public life."[3]

Gordon, of course, co-authored a set of much more well-known essays with his journalistic partner John Trenchard, under the pseudonym Cato. Those essays were among the most prominent pieces of pre-Revolutionary literature in the English colonies, and self-adulation or not, their writings stood and continue to stand "as impartial lessons of liberty and virtue."[4] The eventual rebellious Americans not only shared a

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[2] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 1; Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, 53; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic,* 51. Pangle builds his analysis with the premise that the Enlightenment, more than any other era, provided the impetus for the founding generation's "distinctive political culture." In contrast, Richard details the classical "models" and "symbols" that the founding generation latched onto. Imperfect or "imprecise" as they might have been, he acknowledges their significance in providing "models of personal behavior, social practice, and government form." This thesis will integrate the two notions, rather than segregate the two schools of thought, in an attempt to demonstrate that while the immediate context of the Revolution was indeed linked to Enlightenment minds and theories, those very philosophies derive from ancient sources in many striking ways. Though ever-present, Wood notes the deliberate selectivity of the founders and their contemporaries, "focusing on decline and decadence." Thus, the lessons from antiquity were just as much warning and caution as models to be immolated. Wood gives a brief assessment of Edward Gibbon's work in this context, and his six volumes on Rome's decline provide an interesting point of comparison related to the language of the founders and their application of classical principles in this thesis. Gibbon's work was of much more interest and import to classically educated Americans for its instructive purposes and wise counsel to those who wished to erect a government on their earlier models.

[3] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 103.

[4] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, Vol. 1, edited by Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), 10. Gordon's opening statements include remarkable foresight: "I flatter myself, that, as these papers contain truths and reasons eternally interesting to human society, they will at all times be found seasonable and useful. They have already survived all the clamour and obloquy of party, and indeed are no longer considered as party- writings, but as impartial lessons of liberty and virtue." True to the disinterested

predominantly English heritage, they also ironically owed much of their justifications for independence to British compatriots like Trenchard and Gordon. The duo's works "formed some of the most widely distributed political reading of the contemporary American colonists," and Americans of the founding generation "published, republished, read, cited and even plagiarized these radical writings."[5]

One can see why that might be the case when looking at how well the dynamic pair propagated classical republican parlance. There is an unabashed appeal to a "pubick justice," "publick virtue," "publick welfare," and "publick good" throughout the *Letters*.[6] That very appeal to the greater or "publick" good of society is pitted in direct opposition to the evils of faction or party: "Let us exert a spirit worthy of Britons… whilst lesser animosities seem to be laid aside, and most men are sick of party and party-leaders."[7] The "public spirit" stood directly opposed to the "spirit of party"—disinterestedness, the mechanism for achieving public spirit over party spirit.[8] The discontent with party is palpable in *Cato's Letters*. One could very easily employ the same statement at various times in American history and especially in current discourse—where constituents seem

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tradition, the authors sought to set themselves apart not only by way of a pseudonym but also by way of an intentional disconnect from any party and deprecation of party itself. Gordon goes on to write, "The pleasing or displeasing of any party were none of the ends of these letters, which, as a proof of their impartiality, have pleased and displeased all parties; nor are any writers proper to do justice to every party, but such as are attached to none." Detachment from party was a clear objective of the duo, and their writings provide quite a doctrine of disinterest.

[5] Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic,* 17; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 467-68.Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics*, ix, 40. Bailyn said the pair was among "[t]he most effective writers" of the period. In seeking to understand the politics of the eighteenth-century British colonies or pre-Revolutionary America, he also points out that the colonies must be seen in light of "a more comprehensive British pattern and cannot be understood in isolation from that larger system." Thus, writers like Trenchard and Gordon, among a host of other British influences, should be examined as important linkages in telling the story of early American politics.

[6] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, Vol. 1, 11, 12, 18, 30.

[7] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, Vol. 1, 85.

[8] Sallust, *The Works of Sallust, Translated into English with Political Discourses Upon that Author. To which is added, a translation of Cicero's Four Orations Against Catiline*, edited by Thomas Gordon, (London: R. Ware, 1744), 12, 44, 47.

more polarized than ever before. What was the origin of this discontent that led to the elevation of disinterestedness? The causes are ultimately linked to corruption. The foundation of disinterestedness is vested in virtue, and it is a necessary component of any legitimate government's ability to maintain the general welfare. When corruption intrudes, the pubic good is jeopardized by interested demagogues and parties.

In the immediate context, the cause of the discontent for Old Whigs or Commonwealthmen like Trenchard and Gordon faced off against rival Tories who advocated for divine right and a wealthy ruling class in both the church and state. Two timely events likely influenced much of the journalistic campaign of the 1720s, namely the Bangorian Controversy in the Church of England and the corrupt scheming of the South Sea Company. Especially in the immediate context of the South Sea corruptions, one could see a direct correlation to Gordon's quip: "How naturally does the avaricious man listen to any scheme for filling his coffers?"[9] Targeting corruption and avaricious behavior in the highest ranks of church and state cast the duo in a rather anticlerical and antimonarchical tone.[10] The works, however "Old-Whiggish" in nature they might be classified, stand vehemently against the idea of any party (including the Whigs) or of those whose character might adapt to self-interest whenever power was at stake.

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[9] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four Volumes*, Vol. 3, 197.

[10] Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman,* 84, 105-6, 111; Ronald Hamowy, "Cato's Letters, John Locke, and the Republican Paradigm," *History of Political Thought* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1990), 280; J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 469. More specifically, as Hamowy demonstrates, "A group of unscrupulous financiers had combined with a government riddled with corrupt ministers to defraud large number of investors in a company whose solidity appeared guaranteed by the fact that the company's chief asset was the credit of the government itself." Bribery was among the most frequent charges of corruption against the ministers involved in the scheme. Pocock parallels the English example with the specific Roman issue. Rome's "South Sea Company" was "Spurius Melius"—whom Pocock says "was heroic Rome's chief enemy within" for seeking "to bring the people into dependence by monopolizing the corn supply."

The connection between party and corrupt rulers, magistrates, and representatives of the people, which at first might seem coincidental, hearkens back to the ancient concept of the "courtier." To Thomas Gordon, "the life of a courtier" had "no other care than to get money for their supply, by begging, stealing, bribing, and other infamous practices." John Adams would later define courtier as "one who applies himself to the Passions and Prejudices, the Follies and Vices of great Men in order to obtain their Smiles, Esteem and Patronage and consequently their favours and Preferments."[11] Edward Gibbon places the title alongside descriptions of artful diversions of the public mind, flattery toward disgraceful acts of emperors for personal gain, and behind-the-scenes conniving to, in effect, rule by proxy.[12] The courtier is contrasted as the exact opposite of the disinterested representative, for as Gordon further notes, "Their offices are more or less esteemed, according to the opportunities they afford for the exercise of these virtues." Interestingly, Gordon uses the word "virtue" to describe what readers would readily equate with vice, but in the context, the courtier's virtues are the disinterested patriot's vices. The courtier was known for flattery and lip service to the ruler or ruling party; their aim was self-interest and self-promotion. The potential danger, which Gordon and the founders would tap into, lay in the idea that once this symbiosis of courtier and corruption exists in a republic, "nothing pure can come from it," and the door is opened for tyrannical rule—"[n]ot only matters of favour, but of justice too, will

[11] John Adams, "The Diary of John Adams: 1772. Feby. 9. Sunday," *Founders Online,* National Archives (Accessed July 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-02-02-0002-0001-0003. Wood pulled from Adams's definition in his assessment of the notion of a courtier.

[12] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, *Project Gutenberg,* 2008 (Accessed August 8, 2021), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25717/25717-h/25717-h.htm. The story of Cleander in the reign of Commodus stands out as a stark example of the traits and dangers of the courtier.

be exposed to sale."[13] Courtiers represented conduits of corruption in a republican form of government.

Both Wood and Pocock also contrast the vice of the courtier with the virtue of the disinterested public servant in both ancient and English traditions. In *The Creation of the American Republic*, Wood says that "Nothing was more despicable to a Commonwealthman than a 'Courtier,'" and he further iterates in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*: "Republican America would end the deceit and dissembling so characteristic of courtiers and monarchies." Wood counts the colonial disdain for courtier culture amongst the leading grievances eventually employed against mother England.[14] Pocock buttresses the same belief: "Forces usually identified as those of corruption—courtiers, placemen, exclusive trading companies—operate to maintain the present system" because maintaining the status quo ensured maintaining positions of power and influence—a central theme that Trenchard and Gordon targeted in *Cato's Letters*. Religious connections were ripe as well. Those corrupt courtiers might be likened to their counterparts in the church, namely priests and monks. In a context where church and state many times flowed in the same stream, the parallels between the anticlerical and antimonarchical can be uncanny and helpful in establishing the sentiment of the period writers.[15] A contemporary of the English essayists, Benjamin Franklin, or rather Silence Dogood, would later build on this idea: "For the Priests had combined with the Ministers to cook up Tyranny, and suppress Truth and the Law." Courtiers were

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[13] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, Vol. 1, 135-136.

[14] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 235; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, 78-79.

[15] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 473-475.

nothing other than “the slaves of a party”—an intolerable attribute for a classical republican.[16]

From the courtier comes the notion of a “Court” party which in English tradition is contrasted with that of a “Country” Party. Pocock juxtaposes the two ideologies. Central to the Country tradition was the idea that “real property and an ethos of civic life” stand in “relation to a *patria, res publica* or common good;” this ideology was constantly under threat from “corruption operating through private appetites and false consciousness.” Thus, the Country paradigm’s “propertied independence” relied upon civic virtue of which disinterestedness was a central component. Without a virtuous citizenry, the common or public good might easily fall victim to corruption. The Court tradition by contrast “stressed the ego’s pursuit of satisfaction and self-esteem” through “credit as a measure of economic value.” Interestedness was a given, even a necessity, in this tradition. The mechanism for control, though, was through a strong executive power.[17] In this instance, the Court philosophy relied upon the disinterestedness of the central authority more so than that of the citizenry or the representatives of the people. These two parties had eerily similar attributes to those of the Hamiltonian Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans to be discussed in the next chapter. For now, though, it is necessary to see the continuity of classical republicanism’s disdain of party; the Court vs.

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[16] William Gordon, *A Sermon Preached before the Honorable House of Representatives On the Day intended for the Choice of Counselors, Agreeable to the Advice of the Continental Congress*, *WallBuilders* (Accessed July 21, 2021), https://wallbuilders.com/sermon-election-1775-massachusetts/; Benjamin Franklin, “Silence Dogood, No. 8, 9 July 1722,” *Founders Online,* National Archives (Accessed November 1, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/?q=cincinnatus&s=1111311111&sa=&r=1&sr=; Prov. 19:6 (KJV) says, “Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.” Biblically speaking, the courtier tradition had ancient roots.

[17] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 486-487. Pocock’s premise is, of course, to tie these notions to the Machiavellian tradition, which he fleshes out in detail in the midst of defining Country and Court Parties.

Country connection contains a foundation from which to establish the detrimental divisions parties tend toward, and this tradition traversed the Atlantic in the colonial period. The Country Party ideology resonated with many of the founding generation.[18]

Any work of classical republican canon, which *Cato's Letters* would certainly become, could not espouse party above patriotism or promote partisanship above virtuous republicanism. As Caroline Robbins pointed out in *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, "Cato maintained that parties in England varied and changed their character just as they were in or out of power."[19] "Tories," as Gordon says in a letter entitled "Of Parties In England; How They Vary, And Interchange Characters, Just As They Are In Power, Or Out Of It, Yet Still Keep Their Former Names," "are often Whigs without knowing it; and the Whigs are Tories without owning it."[20] Party was not to be trusted; one must trust in the virtuous nature of both leaders and constituents to sacrifice self-interest on the altar of public good—this was the idea inherent in the aforementioned "public spirited Man."[21]

For someone like Gordon, delving into the works of classical writers like Sallust, Tacitus, and Cato afforded an opportunity to not only offer English audiences English translations of the classics but also an avenue for contemporary political commentary.[22] Party is a leitmotif in his writings. In his translation of Sallust, Gordon comments

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[18] Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 28.

[19] Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman,* 116.

[20] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, Vol. 3, edited by Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), 137.

[21] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four Volumes*, Vol. 3, 197.

[22] "Thomas Gordon on how the 'Spirit of Party' substitutes party principles for moral principles, thus making it possible for the worst to get on top (1744)," *Online Library of Liberty,* Accessed July 12, 2021, https://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/thomas-gordon-on-how-the-spirit-of-party-substitutes-party-principles-for-moral-principles-thus-making-it-possible-for-the-worst-to-get-on-top-1744; Sallust, *The Works of Sallust*, 11-12.

extensively on party. In fact, his opening discourse is entitled, “Of Factions and Parties.” It is important to note that while modern readers and even some writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries might distinguish between factions and parties, Gordon did not. In this discourse of the interchangeable terms, one sees a litany of anti-party statements: “Whatever Party conquered, still used their Victory with Violence and Inhumanity;” “There is a sort of Witchcraft in Party, and in Party Cries, strangely wild and irresistible;” “the epidemical Madness of Party!;” “they are praised, or condemned, not because they are Right or Wrong, Beneficial or Hurtful, but because they come from this Party, or the other;” “Party, as I have already said, always implies Anger, which is never a fair Reasoner, nor a sure Guide;” “Each Party think themselves innocent as Angels, and the other Party as black as Devils.”[23] This only scratches the surface, but one gets an immediate and repetitive negative characterization from Gordon’s writings, and it is notable that these party characterizations remain relevant in modern discourse.

In Gordon’s more oft-cited and earlier writings, namely *Cato’s Letters*, one sees the same distasteful assessment of parties. “‘Tis worth no man's time to serve a party, unless he can now and then get good jobs by it.’” For parties have “all professed to have in view only the publick good; yet every one shewed he only meant his own.”[24] “No candid man can defend any party in all particulars; because every party does, in some particulars, things which cannot be defended; and therefore that man who goes blindly in all the steps of his party, and vindicates all their proceedings, cannot vindicate himself.”[25]

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[23] Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 1-10. Gordon, like Madison saw party and faction as synonymous. Whether or not these were seen as interchangeable terms is given significant attention in what follows, as it is central to the entirety of this thesis.
[24] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, Vol. 1, 83.
[25] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters,* Vol. 1, 11.

Party patronage stood in stark contrast to public good from the Commonwealthman's classical republican perspective, and again, these strongly worded anti-party cants could easily be employed in today's political discourse.

Cato's Letters provide the essence of the disinterested patriot because to Trenchard and Gordon, the real Cato represented the epitome of that character. Cato, the definitive "honest and disinterested heart," was "unbiassed by pique or favour to any man," was "upright and impartial," "courted no man's fortune," and "dreaded no man's resentment." Of Cato's detractors, the pseudonymous pair claimed, "by making him of every party, they shew him to be of none; as he has shewed himself to be of none."[26] Disinterestedness must be cast in contrasting colors from party interestedness. Cato, the inspiration for essays bearing his name, exemplified this virtue to its fullest—one willing to censure at risk of life and limb for the good of the community rather than for personal passions or interests, or as Plutarch said, one who "employed their whole lives perpetually in the service of their country."[27]

The preeminent Roman citizen, Cato, also inspired Joseph Addison's theatrical by the same name—a play perhaps unrivaled in popularity among American colonists. It was a medium in which the masses, regardless of class, might be exposed, nay enlightened, with the virtues so foundational to popular forms of government, namely the republic. The oft-cited piece was laden with quotable quips seen from Franklin's early writings to Mercy Otis Warren's stab at playwrighting—from Patrick Henry's most

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[26] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four Volumes*, Vol. 3, 197; John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters,* Vol. 1, 12, 144.

[27] William W. Goodwin, ed., *Plutarch's Morals: Translated from the Greek by Several Hands, 5 Volumes*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1878), 94-5.

famous words to Washington and Hamilton's correspondence and public addresses. It even found prominence in Washington's revered Farewell Address. Amid the dual tragedy, Cato's suicide and Rome's departure from republicanism, the "drama offered a ray of hope," wrote Forrest McDonald, through pubic virtue and the example of the character Juba—a man Washington aspired to emulate.[28] Whether in the popular form of a play or the mode of essay, Cato's character clearly had a profound impact on early eighteenth-century British Whigs and their American compatriots turned rebels by the latter third of that momentous period.

Cato's Letters, though originally fitted for a South Sea scandal among British ministers and financiers, found its resurrection in the move toward independence, where this study of disinterest begins to take form in terms of its impact on the founding generation. The aforementioned Franklin may have been a key linkage between the classical republican virtue championed in *Cato's Letters* and the young American revolutionaries he so often found prominence among for his sage wisdom and republican roots.[29] Carrying on the legacy of pseudonymous writing, "Silence Dogood" or Franklin,

[28] Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, ed., *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, with a Foreword by Forrest McDonald (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), vii-x. McDonald's forward provided an overview of the play's significant reach and impact.

[29] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 13-15. Wilentz places Franklin at the center of political life and influence at the time of the Revolution. His involvement in Pennsylvania's new constitution, his contributions to the Continental Congress and delivery of the Declaration of Independence, and his impact on the Articles of Confederation positioned him as both the most seasoned and experienced political leader in 1776. His inspiration from the 1720s through his leadership in the 1770s help bridge the gap between theory and practice in this study. Wilentz elaborates specifically on Franklin's progressive and lesser-known work on the Pennsylvania state constitution, a document that called on a government for the "common benefit, protection and security of the people, nation, or community, and not for the particular emolument or advantage of any single man, family, or set of men, who are only part of that community." Clearly, there was an early and explicit recognition that the public good should remain a priority above any faction that might arise based on varying local or state interests. However, Wilentz also points out that Franklin and Pennsylvania represented a far different picture than the Continental Congress and the future United States—"one group defining a nation, the other defining a state; one with a patrician tone, the other decidedly plebian." Nevertheless, it is helpful to include Franklin as a sort of liaison generationally and politically; very few founders could span this gap. He not only pushed for disinterested public good, but he

noted the work of Trenchard and Gordon from only a year earlier in his July 1722 article, saying, "I shall conclude with a Paragraph or two from an ingenious Political Writer in the *London Journal*."[30] Dogood and the English Cato contain some strikingly similar themes.

The very nature of the Silence Dogood essays bear an uncanny resemblance to those of Trenchard and Gordon—they both use the press to argue on behalf of republicanism. However, this was perhaps due more to the circumstances of colonial America in the summer of 1722 than an intentional thematic approach by Franklin. The title of the abovementioned essay printed in the *New-England Courant* was "Corruptio optimi est pessimal" (Corruption of the best becomes the worst); it was printed the same month Franklin took over printing for his jailed brother, James. Interestingly, while Franklin biographer Walter Isaacson notes the "rubs" against Massachusetts authorities and the defense of free speech, a marked change in subject matter from other Dogood essays, he fails to point out the clear connection to Trenchard and Gordon's writings. Though Isaacson acknowledges the quotations from "the English newspaper," as he vaguely calls it, he does not mention that the quotations came directly from Gordon's essay of February 1721, entitled "Of Freedom Of Speech: That The Same Is Inseparable From Publick Liberty."[31] Franklin's work provides an early entry point into viewing the inspiration of *Cato's Letters* in the American colonies and also serves as a precursor to how the press might be used as a tool for spreading republican ideas. Later, and

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also embodied that virtue to a large extent. As Wilentz notes, "he may have been the only Pennsylvanian with the prestige, wit, and political skill to bring together the disparate elements."

[30] Benjamin Franklin, "Silence Dogood, No. 9, 23 July 1722," *Founders Online,* National Archives (Accessed July 20, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0016.

[31] Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 31-32.

ironically, this medium becomes a major component of party machinery as examined in next chapter.

Additionally, within the same decade Trenchard and Gordon released their 144 essays, a young Franklin wrote, “But what is Wit, or Wealth, or Form, or Learning when compar’d with Virtue? ’Tis true, we love the handsome, we applaud the Learned, and we fear the Rich and Powerful; but we even Worship and adore the Virtuous.” In this piece, Franklin explores the original, Roman “Cato,” recognizing the value of virtue: “Virtue alone is sufficient to make a Man Great, Glorious and Happy.”[32] Clearly, both Franklin and his European counterparts shared a common admiration of Cato’s work and virtue in the Roman Republic and sought to apply those lessons to their respective republic, England. The popularity of Trenchard and Gordon in the American colonies was most definitely aided in the backing of one whom Isaacson has called “the most popular writer in colonial America.”[33] When Franklin quoted from *Cato’s Letters*, though, it is important to note that he was acting as a British colonist, not an independent or revolutionary American. However, as the colonies moved toward independence, the essays held even more importance; now these writings could be employed in the defense of revolution. Franklin may have been one of the earliest conduits of Cato’s Letters, but he would certainly not be the last, nor would he be the most prominent.

One thing that resonates within the historiography of the early republic is the idea that the American Revolution and republican experiment realized many of the ideals that writers like Trenchard and Cato, as well as their numerous predecessors, inspirations, and

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[32] Benjamin Franklin. “The Busy-Body, No. 3, 18 February 1729,” *Founders Online,* National Archives (Accessed July 20, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0037.

[33] Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, 28; John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, Vol. 1, 79.

contemporaries, sought: the fulfillment of classical republicanism. The colonial struggle for independence, which led to the creation of the United States of America, brought their work to fruition in a manner that England fell shamefully short of during the eighteenth-century. Bailyn argued that what "would become the Revolutionary ideology, had acquired in the mid-eighteenth-century colonies an importance in public life that they did not then have, and never would have, in England itself."[34] From that assessment of Revolutionary ideology came just that, revolution, which "was…more than any other single event," what Wood argues "made America into the most liberal, democratic, and modern nation in the world."[35] Richard expressed it this way: "Such modern British authors as Joseph Addison and Thomas Gordon engrafted onto the themes of Plutarch, Tacitus, and the other ancient authors the English dialect essential to their vitality within the British empire." There was a clear application for these Commonwealthmen and their classical republican models, "[b]ut the founders viewed America as the only land in which classical ideals could be translated into reality."[36] Finally, Robbins says, "The American constitution employs many of the devices which the Real Whigs vainly besought Englishmen to adopt and in it must be found their abiding memorial."[37] That "abiding memorial" is the subject of what follows, and one key component was the fulfillment of the disinterested ideal.

Like Bailyn, one is likely intrigued by this notion that the American experience offered an environment whereby English ideals, albeit sometimes quite radical, might be more fully realized. Why is that? It at least borders on a notion of American

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[34] Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), x.
[35] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 7.
[36] Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, 82.
[37] Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman,* 2.

exceptionalism; no doubt, for some historians it is the foundation of it. However, historians who may have been influential in writing what Bailyn classified as a "heroic interpretation" were not alone.[38] Those who participated and witnessed the radical and revolutionary transition from colonies to country were ensconced in the same language—the same exceptionalism—from the outset. From Thomas Paine's famed linkage between "the cause of America" with that "of all mankind" to Mercy Otis Warren's comment that "Providence has clearly pointed out the duties of the present generation, particularly the paths which Americans ought to tread," one sees the language of heroism and exceptionalism.[39] This was not merely the invention of unabashed American apologists or "a centerpiece of consensus historians" generations later; it is an inherited tradition that existed from the earliest days of the republic until now.[40] While heroic exceptionalism is not lost today, nor a matter of even later development, the concept of disinterestedness requires revival in the modern mind. It carried over from the colonial period into the Revolutionary era and even into the early republic, but it is nearly absent in twenty-first-century discourse.

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[38] Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), x, 3. In preparation for his lectures at Brown University, which became a large portion of *The Origins of American Politics*, Bailyn asked transparently, "what differences were there between the political processes in eighteenth-century America and eighteenth-century England that could explain the significantly different receptions of the same political ideas?" That same question has to be addressed here; it not only acknowledges the British influences but perhaps more importantly invites inquiry into the context of place.

[39] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings,* edited by Mark Philp. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3; Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations,* edited by Lester H. Cohen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1994),

[40] Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding*, 15-16. Gibson addresses the rise of consensus history and its brand of "American exceptionalism," but he wisely points out that exceptionalism is not a one-sided interpretation in favor of these elitist tendencies. In contrast to the generalized notion of American exceptionalism that focuses on "the United States' uniqueness," he notes that it also is pursued by scholars who address the notion that it "has masked class antagonisms, limited the American political imagination, and given it a dogmatic character."

On the eve of the Revolution and in the midst of the Stamp Act crisis, John Adams commented, "Let us study the law of nature; search into the spirit of the British constitution; read the histories of ancient ages; contemplate the great examples of Greece and Rome" in order to discover that it was "[t]he hope of liberty for themselves and us and ours, which conquered all discouragements, dangers and trials!"[41] Like Gordon saw early eighteenth-century England as a republic analogous to those of Greece and Rome, so too did Adams and his contemporaries of the founding generation in America see their cause duly linked with England and the ancients.[42] For Adams the Revolution represented the mechanism whereby the founders could fully realize their classical republican ideals through independence. Dr. Joseph Warren encapsulated the sentiment in his 1775 oration this way: "I must indulge a hope that Britain's liberty, as well as ours, will eventually be preserved by the virtue of America."[43]

Within the Revolutionary struggle, though, one finds division among those who wished to remain under the security and prosperity of England and those who sought independence from the mother country, oftentimes classified as simply loyalists and

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[41] John Adams, "VI. 'A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law,' No. 4, 21 October 1765," *Founders Online,* National Archives (Accessed July 24, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Adams/06-01-02-0052-0007.

[42] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1; Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, ed., *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, vii. This was not a new development. The same period saw Gibbon's massive undertaking in detailing *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a work one editor of the six-volume mass lauded because the English historian had "bridged the abyss between ancient and modern times, and connected together the two great worlds of history." McDonald's forward to Addison's *Cato* is also instructive here: "Political theorists abounded, but the dicta of Locke and Montesquieu were not applicable to American conditions, nor were those of Plato and Aristotle. The Scotsmen David Hume and Adam Smith were relevant but far from adequate. By default, that left the history of the ancient Roman republic, and all educated Americans were familiar with that history, but its essence was a tragic tale of decline into tyranny." The glory of the Roman republican model was what the founding generation sought, albeit with the upgrades that naturally flow from Enlightenment and contemporary theorists. The early was not purely modeled on anyone republic or theorist, and arguing against the eclectic nature of the American experiment is quite frivolous.

[43] Joseph Warren, "An Oration; Delivered March 6, 1775."

patriots, or perhaps Tories and Whigs. It is important to recognize that although these classifications are not necessarily indicative of political parties, their respective allegiances had a definite bearing on the parties that first developed following independence. "Farewell education, principles, love of our country, farewell; all are become useless to the generality of us: he who governs himself according to what he calls his principles, may be punished either by one party or the other, for those very principles." The sentiments of J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur in his "Letters from an American Farmer" shed some light on the growing division of interests in the period leading to the Revolutionary War.

Crèvecoeur expressed concern for common rural interests despite, as Wilentz points out, his elite status and mercantile connections.[44] Still, his words resound with a sense of already-growing divisiveness in the colonies that may have had more to do with economic interests than political loyalties: "Whatever virtue, whatever merit and disinterestedness we may exhibit in our secluded retreats, of what avail?" The despondency is instructive. For Crèvecoeur, the struggle to reconcile "individual independence with mutuality" within a larger community was real enough to render him an American apologist before the war and a loathed loyalist during the affair.[45] His

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[44] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 15.

[45] J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, "Letters from an American Farmer: Letter XII - Distresses of a Frontier Man," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed July 30, 2021), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ 18th_century/letter_12.asp; Myra Jehlen, "J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur: A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Summer, 1979), 206, 208, 215-220. Jehlen contextualizes and explains Crèvecoeur's inherent contradiction in light of newer interpretations of the American Revolution—whether it was just about an external conflict for nationhood or an internal struggle for egalitarianism. Interestingly, in a piece outside of his "Letters from an American Farmer," known as "The American Belisarius," Crèvecoeur employs the common Roman symmetry between his own experiences and the classical model. Crèvecoeur wrote this during the Revolutionary War, and it is clear from Jehlen's assessment that he meant to compare his own loyalist position with that of the Roman Belisarius who endured endless insults from his rivals and loss of property, though he refused to use his power to retaliate. S.K., the character Crèvecoeur employs as the American Belisarius, also represented the ideal of a disinterested man—a successful farmer who refused to enter the marketplace for

writings suitably achieve a commentary upon both Revolutionary politics and the complicated ideological trends that shaped the early republic.

In Crèvecoeur, one also sees a vastly different style of disinterestedness from that of Adams, Madison, and the like. He equated the truly disinterested patriot with a monarch, a view much more attuned to the ancient concept that one might find in the symbolism of the original Cato or the writings of Aristotle.[46] As Wood put it, "The British king was the ultimate disinterested republican leader, the 'sovereign umpire' of the realm," and "[g]ood monarchists inevitably accepted, at least rhetorically, the civic humanist ideals of disinterested public leadership."[47] Thus, Crèvecoeur could view the American Revolution as based upon the motives of self-interested factions. Of those self-proclaimed patriots, he questioned, "Why permit the radiance of so many heavenly attributes to be eclipsed by men who impiously affix to their new, fictitious zeal the sacred name of liberty on purpose to blind the unwary, whilst, ignorant of Thee, they worship no deity but self-interest, and to that idol sacrilegiously sacrifice so many

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profit or financial gain but used his self-sufficiency to be a friend to his neighbors in time of need. Jehlen puts it succinctly, "What he saw as best about America—or more to the point, what had been best about it before the Revolution—was that a good man could become wealthy without engaging in imperialism or even commerce: without having to deprive his equals of the substance he acquires." This agrarian disinterestedness is reminiscent of Jefferson's vision. One of his reasons for departure during the Revolution was based on what he saw as a departure from this virtue; as Jehlen says: "For the American revolutionaries, enlightened self-interest reflected the natural moral order, but to Crevecoeur its mercantile expression was little better than theft."

[46] Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, ed., *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected* Essays, 50; Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle,* Vol. 1, translated by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 157, 46. *Cato: A Tragedy* provides a glimpse into this notion:

> "Honour's a sacred tie, the law of kings,
> The noble mind's distinguishing perfection,
> That aids and strengthens virtue where it meets her,
> And imitates her actions, where she is not:
> It ought not to be sported with."

Aristotle argued, "The first governments were kingships, probably for this reason, because of old, when cities were small, men of eminent virtue were few from being ruled 'at a distance' as anything else." And further, "When a family or a single person is pre-eminent in virtue, they are the natural kings and lords of the state."

[47] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 98, 104.

virtues?"[48] Crèvecoeur's loyalty to England had as much to do with the advantages of safety and security of an indomitable navy, the mutually assured markets of the empire, and the independence enjoyed from the distance of English rule than anything else. Why would someone in his circumstances question the *ancien régime*? As Wood pointed out, "[t]he English thought they lived in a republicanized monarchy, and they were right."[49] Crèvecoeur boasted the benefits of one of the freest peoples of the eighteenth century; this blend of English constitutional monarchy was naturally treasured by a great many colonists who saw no reason for revolt.

Understanding Crèvecoeur's perspective on the disinterested monarch also helps explain a larger transition at play in Revolutionary America. Republicanism, once a fruitful philosophy growing amidst monarchy, became a competitive and eventually dominant weed, seeking to choke out the latter. Republicanism not fully achieved in the British model, thus traversed the ocean where the United States offered fresh soil in which the transplanted seed could grow and flourish in the freshly tilled post-Revolutionary American landscape. The failure of the British monarchs and parliament to embody disinterestedness led to a better model, one which could be wholly realized in the United States. Failure to reform led to revolt, and the Revolution brought these republican values to fruition.

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[48] J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America: More "Letters from an American Farmer*," edited by Henri Louis Bourdin, Stanley Thomas Williams, Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, Ralph Henry Gabriel (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 1925), 174, 237-38; Myra Jehlen, "J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur: A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America," 218-19;

[49] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 98-109; Baron de Montesquieu Charles de Secondat. *The Spirit of the Laws,* Vol. 1. (London: T. Evans, 1777), 102. Though no specific designation is given in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, Wood identifies his statement as referring to England, saying that "it may be justly called a republic disguised under the form of monarchy."

Thus, one sees in the Declaration of Independence Lockean ideas surrounding the relationship between a "prince" and "the people" more than a parliament and the people. McDonald addresses the point in *States Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio, 1776-1876*: "In Locke's scheme of things, the compact that establishes and legitimizes a political society is…between the ruler and the ruled." That same concept can easily be traced through the language of the Declaration of Independence, but the adaptability of such a theory to the reality of colonial society and then the United States under the Articles of Confederation proved irrelevant and impractical. Their "hypothetical compact," as McDonald puts it, was not with a monarchy; it was at first one amongst "sovereign states" and then evolved into "a compact among peoples of different political societies…undreamed of in political philosophy."[50] The evolution which took place precipitated another transition in terms of disinterestedness.

In what Wood appropriately calls "The Republicanization of Monarchy," the transition from monarchy's coexistence with republicanism to monarchy in contention with republicanism parallels the transition of familial parties to broader political parties. Both monarchs and familial parties had a legacy of inherited and even divine right rule; this hereditary elitism, fundamentally challenged by enlightened revolutionaries, made coexistence impossible. Although Wood argues for republicanism's radicalism, he demonstrates and contextualizes how republicanism blended into the monarchies of eighteenth-century Europe as well. As much as the colonies eventually sought a different path than mother England, she still stood as the strongest model for all things government in the new nation; the apple did not fall far from the tree. Thus, what Wood argues was

[50] Forrest McDonald, *States Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio, 1776-1876,* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 7-9.

an upending of the *ancien régime* in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* he acknowledges was also an "Easy Transition to Republicanism" in *The Creation of the American Republic.*[51] What united the colonists of varying interests across the Atlantic seaboard more than anything else was their disdain for corruption, and corruption was the logical result of divine right and elite entitlement. The only cure for corruption—virtue.[52] Jefferson called out the English monarchy's propensity toward corruption, contrasting the king's depravity with the virtue of the American colonist: "Let those flatter, who fear: it is not an American art. To give praise where it is not due, might be well from the venal, but would ill beseem those who are asserting the rights of human nature."[53]

Minister William Gordon admonished the Massachusetts House of Representatives in their choice of members to the Continental Congress in 1775, urging them to cling to the virtuous character of their ancestors who had first settled the American shores in New England. In fiery Jeremiad fashion, the impassioned preacher proclaimed, "And let but the several members of this honorable house of Representatives exert themselves in their public legislative and private capacities, to bring back the manners of the people to what they were originally, so that our children may be as aforetime, virtuous, disinterested, patriotic and pious; and to extirpate those vices that have crept in unawares among us." Clarion calls for unity often presented the perfect context for inserting the disinterested virtue. "The first settlers," he advised, "were

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[51] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 95-99; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, vii, 66-76, 91; Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, 19. Paine also noted the transition, saying, "The nearer any government approaches to a republic the less business there is for a king."

[52] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 507. Pocock argues that "[c]orruption, which threatened the civic bases of personality, was irremediable except by personal virtue itself."

[53] Thomas Jefferson, "Draft of Instructions to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress, July 1774" *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0090.

disinterested, were not actuated in the choice of Representatives or Counselors by low selfish motives, a view to their own particular advantage, or the aggrandizing their own relations…in a word, that next to the glory of God and the interest of religion, they labored to serve the public, and not themselves of it."[54] In the minister's mind, from both a practical and providential point-of-view, this was the classical ideal the revolutionaries would have to cling to in order to preserve liberty for future generations.

This kind of religious perspective animated many of the leading revolutionary voices. There was a strong sense that the American colonies represented an opportunity for a new Jerusalem—an opportunity for a contemporary chosen people of God to prosper in a new promised land, namely America. That belief, neatly intertwined with notions of American exceptionalism, persisted well into the early republic and even beyond. As William Gordon saw it, "The earliest days of a state are generally the most pure and religious." There was a sense of urgency in his message; there was also a strong sentiment that the revolutionaries had been afforded a unique historical and providential opportunity to, as Wood stated, "be the agencies of revolution"—to realize republicanism's route of monarchy.[55] That route, though, was based upon a version of disinterested virtue quite different from that of Crèvecoeur.

The transition of disinterested virtue from trust in the honor of an impartial leader to a concept which placed far more stock in the attributes of the people paralleled the failure of the "natural aristocracy" so many political minds of the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries thought of as the best arbiters of popular government. Pocock noted

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[54] William Gordon, *A Sermon Preached before the Honorable House of Representatives On the Day intended for the Choice of Counselors, Agreeable to the Advice of the Continental Congress.*

[55] Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, 119.

the divergence, cited *Cato's Letters* as a logical origin for the colonists-turned-revolutionaries, and looked to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* as a decisive breaking point.[56] What once provided a model of disinterested virtue became nothing more than pretentiousness and corruption. *Cato's Letters* demonstrated the departure in the context of public ministers scheming amongst both factions in a manner that merely preserved power: "They will create parties in the commonwealth, or keep them up where they already are; and, by playing them by turns upon each other, will rule both…they will make themselves the mediums and balance between the two factions; and both factions, in their turns, the props of their authority, and the instruments of their designs."[57] Paine noted the problem in three points:

> First.—The remains of monarchical tyranny in the person of the king.
> Secondly.—The remains of aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the peers.
> Thirdly.—The new republican materials, in the persons of the commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England.[58]

The dual blight of monarchy and aristocracy prevented any pure disinterested view of power in the English model. For Trenchard and Gordon, the situation may have appeared hopelessly chimerical and destined to the fate of the ancient republics, but for Paine and his colonial sympathizers, America offered an opportunity to institute "republican materials" absent of the lethal mixtures of monarchy and aristocracy. The united colonies could begin with the republican model based upon the virtue and sacrifice of the masses rather than the preordained righteousness of a select few.

Even amidst the Harringtonians, perhaps the pinnacle of English republicanism for that era, one merely sees the replacement of hereditary aristocracy with natural

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[56] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 515.
[57] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters,* Vol. 1, 88.
[58] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, 8.

aristocracy, and in both cases, there was a clear reliance upon deference. Today's sense of corruption and patronage would vary greatly from a society reared in monarchy and the expected public responsibilities: "Public institutions had private rights and private persons had public obligations." Deference, however, runs in two directions according to the classical republican model; the many most obviously must defer to the few, but those same few find themselves subject to the judgment of the many. Pocock noted this crucial symbiosis, saying, "there is a point at which deference and virtue become very nearly identical." The departure, though, is made obvious when the few are overcome by corruption, where the many claim virtuous consent as paramount, and where there becomes "a threat to the concept of virtue itself."[59]

Wood and Pocock concur that a classical republican model failed in establishing a natural aristocracy, thus leading to a more liberal movement, one in which the virtue of the many would be of more import in sustaining the republic than reliance on the disinterested patriotism of a few. "[T]he most enlightened of that enlightened age," Wood claimed, "believed that the secret of good government and the protection of popular liberty lay in ensuring that good men—men of character and disinterestedness—wielded power."[60] Pocock added, "Men who were equal must practice virtue or become corrupt."[61] The founding generation felt strongly that a republican form of government was contingent upon disinterested character.

Comparing the ideas of deference and disinterestedness can be enlightening in this context. In the classical sense, the deference of the majority relied upon the

[59] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 80-1; J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 515-16.
[60] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 109.
[61] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 516.

disinterest of a minority of leaders and vice versa, and the critical balance between these two republican staples is what allowed for longevity in a popular form of government such as a republic. But the balance began to tip in favor of the many over the few in *Cato's Letters*. As Gordon bluntly put it, "Besides, there are not such mighty talents requisite for government, as some, who pretend to them without possessing them, would make us believe," and, "[g]reat abilities have, for the most part, if not always, been employed to mislead the honest, but unwary, multitude, and to draw them out of the open and plain paths of publick virtue and public good." The distrust of the few and the belief in a natural propensity toward corruption prompted American revolutionaries to look toward trust in their fellow man more than their leaders by presumed birthright. Deference and disinterest came to be viewed as virtues of the many: "they can serve no end by faction; they have no interest, but the general interest" and "[t]he first principles of power are in the people; and all the projects of men in power ought to refer to the people, to aim solely at their good, and end in it." Of the few, he warned:

> The same can rarely be said of great men, who, to gratify private passion, often bring down publick ruin; who, to fill their private purses with many thousands, frequently load the people with many millions; who oppress for a mistress, and, to save a favourite, destroy a nation; who too often make the publick sink and give way to their private fortune; and, for a private pleasure, create a general calamity…They have no notion of miseries which they do not feel.[62]

A disconnect between leaders and the masses was of primary concern, an anxiety not taken lightly. While often cited as uniquely American ideas, these powerfully, even revolutionary, notions came from Englishmen in the early eighteenth century; they would find new impetus, though, in American colonists following the end of the French and Indian War.

[62] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters,* Vol. 1, 123-24.

The bent toward "public virtue" was not without immense challenge, though. Wood notes the "enormous burden" citizens carried in their tremendous expectations. "[T]o suppress their private wants and interests and develop disinterestedness—the term the eighteenth century most often used as a synonym for civic virtue" was no small ask of the citizenry; the transition from monarchical disinterestedness to the disinterest of the people naturally made the republic much more delicate, even more "liable to corruption," and "demanded far more morally" from citizens than the conditions of historical monarchies.[63] Republicanism remained just as frail if not more fragile than monarchy; there was nothing guaranteed about the durability of such a government, especially amidst the pains of childbirth, namely the American Revolution.

That momentous break with mother England was also a break with the traditional notion of disinterestedness. Though signs of the decline of monarchical and aristocratic virtue arose in the early eighteenth-century from popular writings like *Cato's Letters*, Pocock recognized that the 1780s brought "an audible note of dismay in the American writings"—one that necessitated civic virtue on a whole new level.[64] Cries for liberty must be met with civic dignity, and disinterestedness took center stage as a primary mechanism for maintaining the crucial balance between personal autonomy and public duty.

Before going further into the founding of the United States at the close of the Revolution, there is an interesting connection and common thread between Trenchard and Gordon's *Cato's Letters* and Paine's *Common Sense* when it comes to a shared language that should be acknowledged. The title track alone, "common sense," is explicitly used

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[63] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 105.
[64] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 516-17.

ten times in volume one, thirteen times in volume two, ten in volume three, and twelve times in volume four of *Cato's Letters*—often in the context of "virtue," "liberty," and "happiness." The connections to Paine's writings alone are uncanny, but when coupled with Paine's numerous contemporaries, references to the pervasive and powerful arguments of the dynamic English duo become much more than coincidence and even corroboration. Their prudent criticisms stand out as clearly as any other revolutionary influence.

Versed in the criticisms of a century's worth of radical Whig literature, Wood perceptively noted that the infant republic was not full of "naïve utopians; they were…realistic about human nature," and one such reality was a popular form of government's propensity toward factional strife.[65] Pocock lists faction amongst the worst of the corruptive influences associated with government. As he put it, "government figuring paradoxically as the principal source of corruption and operating through such means as patronage, faction, standing armies…, established churches…, and the promotion of a monied interest," continually endangered a virtuous citizenry necessary to republican societies.[66]

Under the Articles of Confederation, local and state interests wreaked havoc on the loosely established nation. Once united in the common interest of ridding themselves of English authority, the makeshift government now pitted state against state and one regional concern against another. As Wood noted, "Republicanism was not supposed to stimulate selfishness and private interests, but was to divert and control them;" however factional interests flourished following independence, and the founding generation

[65] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 81.
[66] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 507.

scrambled to shore up the excesses of liberty threatening to ruin the infant republic.[67] In the midst of this crisis, Americans turned once again to their leaders for what they hoped would be a quick and decisive end to the various divisions crippling everything from the economy to international image. "Central to this ideal of leadership was the quality of disinterestedness—the term the Federalists most used as a synonym for the classic conception of civic virtue: it better conveyed the increasing threats from interests that virtue now faced."[68] Those threats precipitated the Philadelphia Convention of 1787.

It is in this context that Wood points out an important and common myth related to Madison, the avowed "Father of the Constitution" and bookkeeper of that momentous meeting:

> Despite his hardheaded appreciation of the multiplicity of interests in American society, he did not offer America a pluralist conception of politics. He did not see public policy or the common good emerging from the give-and-take of hosts of competing interests. Instead he hoped that these clashing interests and parties in an enlarged national republic would neutralize themselves and thereby allow liberally educated, rational men, 'whose enlightened views and virtuous sentiments render them superior to local prejudices, and to schemes of injustice,' to promote the public good in a disinterested manner.[69]

Madison's post-independence experiences as well as his studious pursuit of a republican cure led him to such a reconciliation—one that presupposed the absence rather than the presence of parties. As Gibson noted, "The constitutional reform program that Madison developed before the Philadelphia Convention was the product of his political experiences and intensive studies of ancient and modern confederacies," and, "[a]s a man between two political spheres—that of the state of Virginia, where he served as a congressman, and that of the Confederation, where he served as a delegate"—Madison

[67] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 70.
[68] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 83-84.
[69] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 92.

was poised to see both pitfalls and potential in a more formal federation of states. His political model was born out of both republican experience and republican ideology.[70] It would be hard to imagine a more complicated tension of interests. On the one hand, Madison sought to please Virginians, arguably and perhaps logically the most influential of all of the early states, and on the other hand, the dutiful delegate considered the momentous opportunity at hand in the newly formed United States—a chance to stabilize and realize a lasting republic. In this context, Madison's theory of disinterest was put to the test on a personal level.

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 revealed the fissures of faction. Beard noted very early on that undeniably, "there was a deep-seated conflict between a popular party based on paper money and agrarian interests, and a conservative party centered in the towns and resting on financial, mercantile, and personal property interests generally."[71] Beyond this assessment, one only need look to the economic factors at play in Daniel Shays' rebellion to see just how economic interest groups might pit one faction against another in a quite violent manner. Those tumultuous events in Massachusetts were fresh on the minds of the delegates, and popular unrest, no doubt, was a primary motive behind the meeting. Wood, however, argued that republican ideology shaped the decision-making more than pure economic interests. The federalists' perception was based around the stereotype that antifederalists merely targeted creditors and refused to pay the debts they owed; antifederalists thought the federalists were simply pretentious elites who sought to maintain aristocracy and their higher stations.[72] Regardless of one's

[70] Alan Gibson. "Madison's 'Great Desideratum': Impartial Administration and the Extended Republic," *American Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (September, 2012): 184-5.

[71] Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United,* 292.

[72] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 108-9.

interpretation—Beardian or republican, experience or ideology—federalists and anti-federalists as they were loosely known, parted ways on a number of issues that intensified in the first administration.

The framers of the Constitution—those 55 delegates from the member states of the Confederation—did not want to walk away from their summer-long meeting, which might have more appropriately been named the Constitutional *Convection* for both its crucible of ideas and seasonably heated atmosphere, with permanent division and an ultimate failure of their republican experiment. They wanted to see to fruition those classical republican ideals they so banded around and asserted in the struggle for independence.

Whether for the magnanimity or against the machinations of the Convention, contemporaries held "diligently to study the histories of other countries" "as the best method of obtaining…wisdom." As the *Pennsylvania Centinel* article put it, "Happy are the men, and happy the people, who grow wise by the misfortunes of others." Interestingly, this article represented an anti-federalist perspective, which contextually took issue with the Convention for its secrecy and lack of a bill of rights that would explicitly protect the freedom of the press.[73] The failure of past republics had to have been on the minds of both the leadership in Philadelphia as well as the citizens of the states as they placed their hope in this Convention. They would be banking on disinterestedness for a solution.

[73] George Bryan, "Centinel, no. II: To the people of Pennsylvania. Friends, countrymen, and fellow-citizens, as long as the liberty of the press continues unviolated," *Pennsylvania Centinel*, Philadelphia, 1787 (Accessed July 24, 2021), https://www.loc.gov/item/90898133/.

Franklin's closing remarks at the Constitutional Convention are noteworthy here. Ever one to employ self-deprecation and humbly offer a rather plain, yet balanced and disarming opinion of the newly forged document, Franklin said in disinterested form, "The Opinions I have had of its Errors, I sacrifice to the Public Good." This statement captured the essence of the disinterested patriot—one willing to lay aside personal opinions for the furtherance of a larger community. He further noted that "[m]uch of the strength & efficiency of any Government in procuring and securing happiness to the people, depends…on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government, as well as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its Governors."[74] Disinterested virtue had not only played a significant role in the formation of a new charter of government amidst the various divergent interests of the thirteen states, it also would be an essential attribute of the citizens and leaders of this new country and government moving forward.

As the elder Pennsylvania patriot, left the Convention, he is famously said to have remarked to a restless resident regarding the style of the new government: "A republic, madam, if you can keep it." The Convention, though wrought out of the dissensions of the young confederation at least provided hope in a new republican form of government—one whereby, it was thought, disinterested patriots would place public good above party interests. Franklin expressed that hope at the close of the three-month session by saying that he had "the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting

[74] James Madison, "Madison Debates, September 17," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed July 24, 2021), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/debates_917.asp; Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, 457-59. Madison recorded Franklin's final speech to the Convention. Isaacson offers some further insight into the context of the speech, its reception, and Franklin's disposition in such circumstances.

sun" which he had contemplated when looking at the sun on the back of Washington's chair at the Convention.[75]

Not all outlooks were so bright. In a letter to his mentor and fellow Virginian, Jefferson, Madison anxiously opened with perhaps a silver lining to an otherwise challenging delegation: "Adding to these considerations the natural diversity of human opinions on all new and complicated subjects, it is impossible to consider the degree of concord which ultimately prevailed as less than a miracle." The Convention had miraculously ended in a temporary settlement toward a stronger federal union, but it was nowhere near the government Madison had envisioned. The only thing certain for Madison was his uncertainty: "There are but few States on the spot here which will survive the expiration of the federal year; and it is extremely uncertain when a Congress will again be formed." Madison's apprehension centered on the federal government's lack of supremacy.[76]

This "evil," as Madison saw it, was that "of imperia in imperio"—literally, "states within the state." That the federal government's power was wanting was, of course, the central issue behind the secretive meeting, but Madison feared it was still greatly lacking in one major area, namely its ability to overrule any individual state's prerogative when deemed necessary to the efficacy of the union. He called it the "negative." Most know it today as veto power. Whereas states had sovereignty and near-complete autonomy under the Articles of Confederation, the federation under the new Constitution was intended to at least "subordinate" states to a central authority or "keep the States within their proper limits" according to Madison and many of his fellow delegates. However, in Madison's

[75] Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, 458-59.
[76] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787."

view, the lack of a federal "negative" was potentially a fatal flaw, one that he elaborated on in detail in his lengthy correspondence to Jefferson.[77]

In true Madisonian brilliance and style, he laid out a multifaceted argument in favor of the federal "negative." Fully one-third of the seventeen-page monstrosity is dedicated to the shrewd Virginian's political views regarding this crucial component of centralized control. Perhaps part of his longwindedness can be attributed to the fact that Jefferson would take convincing; in previous correspondence, the elder statesman had shot down the notion of a "negative," writing in late June, "Primâ facie I do not like it. It fails in an essential character, that the hole & the patch should be commensurate. But this proposes to mend a small hole by covering the whole garment." Jefferson's garb metaphor applied to the notion that most state concerns were by nature so local or regional—so absolutely out-of-touch in terms of their need of national oversight or influence—that a negative was overkill pure and simple. It was impractical at best and tyrannical at worst: "This proposition then, in order to give them 1. degree of power which they ought to have, gives them 99. more which they ought not to have, upon a presumption that they will not exercise the 99."[78] Thus, Madison had some persuading to do, so he went to work with his most adept method, namely thoughtful, argumentative prose.

Madison's delayed and detailed response is both intriguing and enlightening. The correspondences in the interim appear to focus on the anxieties each felt—one in the

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[77] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787;" Alan Gibson. "Madison's 'Great Desideratum': Impartial Administration and the Extended Republic," 181; Forrest McDonald, *States Rights and the Union*, 18.

[78] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 20 June 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0037.

middle of the heated debates of the Convention—the other hanging on every word from his fellow Virginian as he waited anxiously in Paris, which itself was on the brink of revolution. In July, Madison described his vow of silence as a delegate as "mortification;" he was not at liberty to expound upon the details of the proceedings even with his closest confidant, though he did consider a "Cypher" to relay the pressing information to his friend. Jefferson responded in August with an update regarding several European books Madison sought, no doubt, for his continued research and thirst for the latest and greatest works of political philosophy—works that would give the always studious Madison "a just idea of the wheels by which the machine of government is worked here."[79]

In September, one gets an explicit idea of Madison's anxieties and uncertainties regarding the Convention: "I hazard an opinion nevertheless that the plan should it be adopted will neither effectually answer its national object nor prevent the local mischiefs which every where excite disgusts agst the state governments." The "national object" to quiet the excitements of the previous winter when it appeared abundantly obvious that the economic situation which impelled Daniel Shays and fellow farmers to rebellion in Massachusetts was yet to be resolved. Related to those issues and compounding the direness of the situation in the fragile union was the inability of states to bring about domestic tranquility among a diversity of interests and in countless locales. Madison

[79] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 18 July 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0062; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 2 August 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0080; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 15 August 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders. archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0096; James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 6 September 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Madison/01-10-02-0115.

then foreshadowed the aforementioned lengthy dispatch of October 24: "The grounds of this opinion will be the subject of a future letter."

It was here that Madison not only gave Jefferson a rounded argument for the federal negative, but as Gibson points out, the letter also provides key insights into the Sage of Montpelier's consistent belief in disinterested, impartial administration: "The great desideratum in Government is, so to modify the sovereignty as that it may be sufficiently neutral between different parts of the Society to controul one part from invading the rights of another, and at the same time sufficiently controuled itself, from setting up an interest adverse to that of the entire Society."[80] His use of "neutral" is indicative the sort of disinterestedness the founders expected to inherit from the Revolutionary transition, namely the move from the ideal of an impartial monarchy to an impartial republic—from the disinterestedness of a "Prince" to that of a national legislature:

> In absolute monarchies, the Prince may be tolerably neutral towards different classes of his subjects, but may sacrifice the happiness of all to his personal ambition or avarice. In small republics, the sovereign will is controuled from such a sacrifice of the entire Society, but it is not sufficiently neutral towards the parts composing it. In the extended Republic of the United States, the General Government would hold a pretty even balance between the parties of particular States, and be at the same time sufficiently restrained by its dependence on the community, from betraying its general interests.[81]

Madison's theorizing hinged upon an "extended Republic," a concept he had already detailed at length in this letter. The republics of old, those classical models so prevalent and so highly esteemed by the founding generation, were effectively dismantled by the ruinous effects of faction in large part because of their small size, consequently lacking a

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[80] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787."
[81] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787."

diversity of interests. However, a large republic offered a cure through a variety of interests and the division of sovereignty amongst national, state, and local authorities (i.e. federalism). Madison elaborated on this notion:

> If then there must be different interests and parties in Society; and a majority when united by a common interest or passion can not be restrained from oppressing the minority, what remedy can be found in a republican Government, where the majority must ultimately decide, but that of giving such an extent to its sphere, that no common interest or passion will be likely to unite a majority of the whole number in an unjust pursuit. In a large Society, the people are broken into so many interests and parties, that a common sentiment is less likely to be felt, and the requisite concert less likely to be formed, by a majority of the whole.[82]

Knowing that such a variety could serve to create the opposite problem from a lack of unity and cooperation, Madison proved keenly aware of the necessity of an appropriate balance between the whole and its constituent parts. Gibson's analysis is also instructive here: "Equally important, Madison's principal concern — his 'Great Desideratum' — was to ensure the reconciliation of popular sovereignty with the protection of private rights and the impartial or disinterested promotion of public good."[83] The "reconciliation" Gibson alludes to is the "pretty even balance" Madison hoped for. The goal, indeed the "Great Desideratum" Madison sought for his beloved country, was disinterested leadership founded upon this equilibrium.

In December of 1787, he wrote Jefferson of the state conventions held for the purpose of ratification—the aftermath of the Convention which "engrosses almost the whole political attention of America." Madison also revealed the divisions amongst the delegates, writing, "There are about 44 or 45, on the affirmative and about half that

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[82] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787."

[83] Alan Gibson. "Madison's 'Great Desideratum': Impartial Administration and the Extended Republic," 181; Alan Gibson, "Impartial Representation and the Extended Republic: Towards a Comprehensive and Balanced Reading of the Tenth 'Federalist' Paper," *History of Political Thought* 12, no. 2 (Summer, 1991), 282.

number on the opposite side; A considerable number of the Constitutional party as it was called, having joined the other party in espousing the federal Constitution." Here, one gets a glimpse of the complexities of the Convention as well as the divisions within each state. "My information leads me to suppose there must be three parties in Virginia," Madison continued.[84] It was abundantly clear that differing interests and opinions naturally led to a division of the young nation and individual locales into factions.

Madison also identified two-party tendencies in his communication. He revealed an important coalition in the works: "A considerable number of the Constitutional party as it was called, having joined the other party in espousing the federal Constitution," had emerged—origins of the federalists. He went on to note a second party, what would be later referred to as the anti-federalists: "At the head of the 2d. party which urges amendments are the Governor and Mr. Mason. These do not object to the substance of the Government but contend for a few additional guards in favor of the Rights of the States and of the people." Perhaps a two-party system was not an established fact just yet, though:

> I am not able to enumerate the characters which fall in with their ideas, as distinguished from those of a third Class, at the head of which is Mr. Henry. This class concurs at present with the patrons of amendments, but will probably contend for such as strike at the essence of the System, and must lead to an adherence to the principle of the existing Confederation, which most thinking men are convinced is a visionary one, or to a partition of the Union into several Confederacies. Mr. Harrison the late Governor is with Mr. Henry. So are a number of others. [85]

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[84] James Madison, "To Thomas Jefferson from James Madison, 9 December 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 23, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-12-02-0418.

[85] James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 9 December 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 10, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/ 01-12-02-0418.

Madison's "classes" or parties demonstrate a clear diversity of interests that would indeed form the basis of the first-party system, but they were far from solidified in 1787. The divisions did, however, enveloped the nation in significant debate through the ratification stage.

"N. York is much divided"—a little statement with large implications. Madison's December update foreshadowed the deluge of essays he, alongside Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, poured into New York newspapers in one of the earliest and most important propaganda campaigns in US history, namely *The Federalist Papers*. He knew first-hand the divisiveness in the pivotal and potential swing state; he wrote the December letter from New York.[86] Amid the frenzy of essay writing that targeted New Yorkers, one sees perhaps the apex of application when it comes to Madison's theory of disinterestedness expressed in *The Federalist*, No. 10.

Before venturing into the intricacies of *Federalist*, No. 10, though, it is important to see a few contextual factors surrounding all of *The Federalist* as well as acknowledge the counterposing views of those who resisted ratification, namely the anti-federalists. Though their work is lesser-known in popular American history, historians like Wood and others have demonstrated how the Revolution's final phases may very well have been the delayed victories of the Jeffersonian movement of 1800 and the formalization of the Anti-Federalists or Republicans established in their wake. He turns the assumption of the founders' federalist intentions on its head, arguing that the aristocratic remedy in Philadelphia meant to put out the fires of excessive democracy plaguing the nation under the Articles of Confederation—"Democracy was no solution to the problem; democracy

[86] James Madison, "To Thomas Jefferson from James Madison, 9 December 1787."

was the problem"—were primarily the work of elite opportunists and would not stand the more liberal ideals already taking hold in the early republic.[87] Even Madison admitted the possibility of such intrigues, writing to Washington in December of 1786 he indicated that the proposed reforms "instead of calling forth the sanction of the wise & virtuous" might "be a signal to interested men to redouble their efforts to get into the Legislature." He went further in his pessimism too: "The only hope that can be indulged is that of moderating the fury," and "I have strong apprehensions that the work may never be systematically perfected for the reasons which you deduce from our form of Government."[88]

The exchanges of late 1786 and early 1787 between Madison and Washington, as well as the two Virginians with Edmund Randolph and Henry Knox also demonstrate the dire concern for disinterestedness in federal leadership. Madison's fears of intrigue and dutiful moderation through the process help explain two things: first, why the Father of the Constitution played such a pivotal role in the outcomes and compromises of the Convention; and secondly, how one can reconcile his push for the federal constitution, especially his thoughtful contributions to *The Federalist Papers*, with his later break from the Federalists and Hamilton. He was a man caught in the crossfire in many ways because of his dedication to disinterestedness. Wood calls him "a very chastened republican" following the turmoil of the 1780s, but he did not allow his idealism or his experience to keep him from attempting to rudder the ship back on course.[89]

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[87] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 69-75.

[88] James Madison, "From James Madison to George Washington, 24 December 1786," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0115; James Madison, "From James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, 7 January 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0123.

[89] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 75.

Washington, too, is a prime example of the virtue at work in these months preceding the Convention. He was pushed toward both attendance and leadership of a meeting he explicitly doubted in terms its likeliness to succeed and perhaps even its "legality" from all of the aforementioned names. He also felt the pressure of duty to his country in crisis once again. Washington, like his fellow Virginian, Madison, appears to have been genuinely torn between duty and maintaining disinterestedness.[90] Randolph appealed to Washington's patriotism on December 6: "I freely then intreat you to accept the Unanimous appointment of the General Assembly, to the Convention at Philadelphia. For the gloomy prospect still admits one ray of hope, that those, who began, carried on & consummated the revolution, can yet rescue America from the impending ruin."[91] Madison, though knowing Washington's reservations about an appearance that historically did not bode well—former general taking up the helm of a nation in turmoil—also could not hold back his urgings: "it was the opinion of every judicious friend whom I consulted that your name could not be spared from the Deputation to the Meeting in May in Philada."[92]

In February, as the drama of Shays' Rebellion came to a close, an "anxious" Washington wrote to his former brother-in-arms and successor to the head of the United States army, Henry Knox. The letter reveals Washington's own dutiful dilemma. Not unlike Madison, the future first president contemplated the weightiness of his

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[90] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Knox, 3 February, 1787" *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-05-02-0006.

[91] Edmund Randolph, "To George Washington from Edmund Randolph, 6 December 1786," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0383.

[92] James Madison, "To George Washington from James Madison, 7 December 1786," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0386.

involvement and what might be publicly perceived as obvious interestedness. In this correspondence between military confidants, Washington not only relays his interactions with Virginia's leadership regarding his attendance of the "the Convention, proposed to be held at Philada in May next," he also reiterates, "in confidence that at present I retain my first intention—not to go." Ironically, Washington's best intentions of absence, iterated no less than five times in this letter alone, seemed to have been replaced with a higher sense of obligation by late Spring. His hesitancy is telling. Context gives the observer quite the example of disinterestedness, and one can little doubt the sincerity of his transparency to Knox: "My first wish is, to do for the best, and to act with propriety."[93]

Washington's attention to intention is perhaps why he is so revered in popular imagination. "He was continually anxious that he not be thought too ambitious or self-seeking; above all, he did not want to be thought greedy or 'interested,'" wrote Wood of Washington, whom he said was "compulsive about his disinterestedness." The example of an earlier dealing regarding a gift of shares in canal stock offered from the Virginia Assembly in 1785 is instructive.[94] During the affair, which Wood admitted "would be comic if Washington had not been so deadly earnest," the recently retired General said, "I should be hurt, if by declining the acceptance of it, my refusal should be construed into disrespect, or the smallest slight put upon the generous intention of the Country: or, that

[93] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Knox, 3 February, 1787." Another irony of this exchange with Knox was Washington's initial reasoning for refusing to attend the Convention. "They again pressed, and I again refused; assigning among other reasons my having declined meeting the Society of the Cincinnati at that place, about the same time; & that I thought it would be disrespectfull to that body (to whom I ow'd much) to be there on any other occasion." The man who had already attained the admiration generated from the moniker, "Cincinnatus," was abstaining from attending meetings for which his interests and integrity might be called into question.

[94] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 90.

an ostentatious display of disinterestedness or public virtue, was the source of the refusal."[95] To appear "interested" was always of concern, but perhaps it was worse to act with pretentious disinterest—this would become central in the first party system and the reputation of the Federalist Party as will later be examined.

Having more than done his homework in preparation for the upcoming Convention, Madison demonstrated a remarkable ability to balance ideology with experience—his, at times, lofty yet diligent research and education with the practical needs on the ground. In the Spring of 1787, he published "Vices of the Political System of the United States." The previous Spring, not knowing what was soon to precipitate the need for a complete overhaul of the Confederation government, Madison had published "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies." Both of these works, along with the numerous letters, appear to have been the logical rough drafts of much of what Madison would later be most well-known for: the Virginian Plan, a great portion of the Constitution, and the eventual Bill of Rights. The year of intense study is what editors of his papers, Robert A. Rutland and William M. E. Rachal, refer to as "perhaps the most creative and productive year of JM's career as a political thinker."[96] One can easily concur after perusing the amount of political theory Madison applies to the state of the US in his correspondences with fellow founders.

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[95] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 91; George Washington, "From George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, 22 January, 1785," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-02-02-0202.

[96] James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison, vol. 9, 9 April 1786–24 May 1787 and supplement 1781–1784*, ed. Robert A. Rutland and William M. E. Rachal (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 345–358. Editors Ruland and Rachal offer valuable insights on Madison's "Vices of the Political System of the United States." They note, "what distinguished JM from his fellow delegates, apart from his superior intellectual gifts, was not so much his firsthand experience in public life—extensive though it was—as his diligent effort to apply to that experience a scholarly study of the principles of government."

In the first of these two works, "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies," he uses specific historical models to exemplify the difficulties of factions acting independently for their own interests as well as the benefits of overcoming such divisions. In the case of the Achaean Confederacy, Madison lamented that "Every City was now engaged in a separate interest & no longer acted in concert." He hails the Helvetic Confederacy for its "congratulatory review of circumstances & events favorable to their common interest—and exhortations to Union and patriotism."[97] In his study of Madison, Lance Banning emphatically tied this preliminary work of past confederacies to the theories fleshed out in Madison's major portions of *The Federalist*. Agreeing with Rutland and Rachal that Madison was better equipped for Philadelphia than any of his contemporaries, Banning goes on to tie the Virginian's preliminary work on confederacies to both his written communications and the subsequent year's work, "Vices of the Political System of the United States."[98]

"Vices of the Political System of the United States" offers an important apology for overcoming the divisions amongst the states more than anything else, and that, of course, is also the central concern of *Federalist*, No. 10. To understand the principles of the latter, it is worth one's time to add to a view of Madison's correspondence an examination of this important antecedent. Just a perusal of the list of vices gives one this overall impression: "1. Failure of the States to comply with the Constitutional requisitions;" "2. Encroachments by the States on the federal authority;" "4. Trespasses of the States on the rights of each other;" "5. want of concert in matters where common

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[97] Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 115, 219.

[98] James Madison, "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies, April-June 1786," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Madison/01-09-02-0001.

interest requires it;" "6. want of Guaranty to the States of their Constitutions & laws against internal violence;" "9. Multiplicity of laws in the several States."[99] These explicit and numerous examples demonstrate the necessity of a "disinterested umpire," and the seamless connection between Madison's theory exhibited from the Spring of 1786 through the late Fall of 1787—from "Notes on Ancient and Modern Confederacies" to *The Federalist*, No. 10.[100]

The month preceding the Convention's opening also offers a more hopeful exchange between Madison and Washington. It is here that Madison discloses what he envisioned from the new government in terms of dealing with the division of faction through a disinterested medium of patriotic leaders that would become the central argument of *The Federalist*, No. 10. In mid-April, Madison imparted to Washington, "The great desideratum which has not yet been found for Republican Governments, seems to be some disinterested & dispassionate umpire in disputes between different passions & interests in the State."[101] Both did not simply look to classical republican success stories; they knew full well the deficiencies of traditional republics—faction topping the list of harmful, yet natural products of popular governments. Madison's solution involved disinterested leadership:

> The majority who alone have the right of decision, have frequently an interest real or supposed in abusing it. In Monarchies the sovereign is more neutral to the interests and views of different parties; but unfortunately he too often forms interests of his own repugnant to those of the whole. Might not the national prerogative here suggested be found sufficiently disinterested for the decision of

[99] James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison, vol. 9, 9 April 1786–24 May 1787 and supplement 1781–1784*, 345-358; James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States, April 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0187. Again, editors Rutland and Rachal provide important contextual connections between Madison's essays and letters—how he fleshed out his ideas in both public and private realms.

[100] James Madison, "From James Madison to George Washington, 16 April, 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 25, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0208.

[101] James Madison, "From James Madison to George Washington, 16 April, 1787."

local questions of policy, whilst it would itself be sufficiently restrained from the pursuit of interests adverse to those of the whole Society?[102]

Madison harkens back to constitutional monarchies, like those of England—those of Trenchard and Gordon—for a point of reference. Reflecting on the theorizing that Madison and others were so well-known for, Jefferson wrote, "The fact is, that at the formation of our government, many had formed their political opinions on European writings and practices, believing the experience of old countries, and especially of England, abusive as it was, to be a safer guide than mere theory."[103] The role of disinterested leadership, once solely the responsibility of an impartial monarch, was in Madison's eyes, more fully realized in an impartial legislature. Whereas the former model would, no doubt, have been distasteful, indeed unacceptable to the founding generation, the latter offered a logical and beneficial solution to the issue at hand, namely the excesses of majority interests and factions. This is the premise of *The Federalist*, No. 10.

More ink has been spilled on this one essay of 85 total than countless other seminal documents of American history. But that was not always the case. Beard's breakthrough work of the early twentieth century placed a spotlight on Madison's long-forgotten treatise on faction and caused historians to question founding motives in ways that remain potent today.[104] Beard's purposes, as already discussed, were driven by economic factors, but historians following his example and examining this particular essay have unearthed significant political developments and theories that match, if not

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[102] James Madison, "From James Madison to George Washington, 16 April, 1787."

[103] Lance Banning, ed. *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle,* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), 354. This is from the June 12, 1823 correspondence between Jefferson and Justice William Johnson.

[104] Alan Gibson, "Impartial Representation and the Extended Republic," 263.

exceed, the groundbreaking work of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*.

If the Convention proved that post-revolution political unity had faded to a certain degree by way of the emerging federalist and anti-federalist sentiments, then the ratification stage would prove even more challenging in bringing the nation together. In the debates that arose from the Constitutional Convention, factions and political opposition produced cause for concern. One major obstacle had been overcome in Philadelphia, but more challenges were on the horizon. Factions' known capacity to yield immediate and permanent rifts among the people became the focus of Madison's *Federalist*, No. 10 and *Federalist,* No. 51, as well as a topic of concern for Federalist leaders like Fisher Ames in their arguments for ratification of the Constitution.

In *Federalist,* No. 10, Madison asserted the Constitution's unique ability to "break and control the violence of faction," beginning his essay with an admission of the known historical havoc factions tended to exhibit and building off of his latest research and political theorizing of the year-and-a-half preceding the push for ratification.[105] He theorized that factional strife would face the sobering effects of a vast and diverse constituency. The size of the United States and scope of its regional differences, he argued, would naturally control any one faction from becoming too powerful. The Virginian also, and perhaps more importantly, pointed to elected officials' ability to look toward a national interest, saying, "whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice, will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations."[106] Gibson pointed out that in this theorizing,

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[105] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10, November 22, 1787," 121.
[106] Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," 126.

Madison presumed that "representatives would share a common understanding of the public good and a common conception of the rights that should be protected" and also clarifies the key balance of the disinterested representatives with an educated citizenry—one that would recognize their "true" or "permanent" interests aligned to a notion of the public good.[107]

Madison also emphasized the idea of national unity in *Federalist,* No. 51, claiming that, "more powerful factions or parties [will] be gradually induced by a like motive, to wish for a government which will protect all parties, the weaker as well as the more powerful."[108] Finally, Fisher Ames, the Federalist leader from Massachusetts, argued for longer terms of service for offices at the federal level to keep some consistency and order, prohibiting the factious inclinations of the people to propel the republic into a perpetual cycle of power grabs and party changes: "Faction and enthusiasm are the instruments by which popular governments are destroyed."[109]

Perhaps there is no stronger example of the masterful application of Madison's republican theory on breaking and controlling the violence of factions than observing the very principles seen to fruition by the disinterested wishes of the delegates in Philadelphia. Amidst the sweltering heat of 1787 and the equally urgent matters that precipitated such a meeting, what Washington likened to "a house on fire," patriotism outweighed the individual state interests.[110] Much was lost in terms of state sovereignty,

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[107] Alan Gibson, "Impartial Representation and the Extended Republic," 276, 279-81.

[108] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 51, February 6, 1788," in *The Essential Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches and Writings*, ed. Robert J. Allison and Bernard Bailyn (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2018), 215.

[109] Fisher Ames, "On Biennial Elections and the 'Volcano' of Democracy, January 15, 1788" in *The Essential Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Antifederalist Speeches and Writings*, ed. Robert J. Allison and Bernard Bailyn (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2018), 310.

[110] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Knox, 3 February, 1787."

but much was gained in the maintenance of the union for posterity. This first and significant test of Madison's theory would surely not be the last—disinterestedness was perhaps more easily attained when the nation faced a common enemy or crisis.[111] In the Revolution, interest was overcome by a thirst for independence; in the Convention, interest was overcome by the insatiable yearning for a continuance in liberty that the delegates knew was only possible through a synergistic government, perhaps best illustrated in the Latin, "E pluribus unum."[112]

As it turned out, Jefferson did not receive Madison's communications from July, September, and the all-important October letter until December, as he noted in his response dated December 20. When he finally offered his reactions to the proposed overhaul of the federal government, Jefferson had both unequivocal concerns and hopeful optimism for the fledgling nation. Topping the list of disapprovals was the absence of a bill of rights, something the champion of liberty and independence felt "no just government should refuse, or rest on inference." Jefferson also had much to say about what he feared would lead to a permanent, despotic executive; the lack of "the necessity of rotation in office" was something he admitted was a "feature I dislike, and greatly dislike." Though he detailed his criticisms, revealing a system of government far from

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[111] George Washington, "Washington's Farewell Address to the Army, 2 November 1783," *Founders Online,* (Accessed September 29, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-12012. Washington noted the remarkable achievement that a diversity of interests attained in the War for Independence: "Who that was not a witness could imagine, that the most violent local prejudices would cease so soon, and that Men who came from the different parts of the Continent, strongly disposed by the habits of education, to despise and quarrel with each other, would instantly become but one patriotic band of Brothers?" The league or confederation found solidarity in a common enemy, but without that common interest or unique sinew tying the various factions together, the young nation was more inclined to pit one interests against another, one region against another, and one class against another.

[112] Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1965), 354. Ratification was conditional according to McDonald. Although it appeared that the biggest hurdle was achieved by 1788, the conditions of ratifications for the anti-Federalists formed the basis for what eventually became the two-party system.

perfection, the Sage of Monticello concluded, "After all, it is my principle that the will of the Majority should always prevail. If they approve the proposed Convention in all its parts, I shall concur in it chearfully, in hopes that they will amend it whenever they shall find it work wrong." His final thoughts hint at one of the key ingredients: "I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries."[113] Virtue was a necessity, and the thoughts of Gordon's Roman inspiration were sure to be tried in the immediate months ahead—whether or not "[t]his sort of constitutional Virtue" would come to fruition in a truly "public spirited Man; even an honest and disinterested heart."[114]

A year later, in December of 1788, electors met for the first time to put forth their selections for the first president of the United States. Though divisions were showing, the young nation had united around the quintessential disinterested leader, the "Great Cincinnatus," George Washington. What better representative of the republican ideal? What better mechanism for ensuring the virtue Jefferson and so many others of the founding generation knew to be the glue that would hold a less-than-perfect union together? Washington not only brought the nation together, but he also wrote several influential pieces on the dangers of party, and he perhaps most importantly left a legacy of disinterestedness in his parting words and the manner of his resignation from the presidency. On the other hand, the theory of disinterestedness was yet to be tested under the new Constitution; formal parties were far from formalized. That was all about to change. Looking at the dynamic at play in the formulation of the Constitution from the 1830s, Tocqueville offers a fitting assessment:

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[113] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 20 December 1787," *Founders Online* (Accessed September 23, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-12-02-0454.

[114] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four*, 197-98.

> It was the wish of one party to convert the Union into a league of independent States, or a sort of congress, at which the representatives of the several peoples would meet to discuss certain points of their common interests. The other party desired to unite the inhabitants of the American colonies into one sole nation, and to establish a Government which should act as the sole representative of the nation, as far as the limited sphere of its authority would permit. The practical consequences of these two theories were exceedingly different.[115]

Those "exceedingly different" "theories" form the basis for the discussion and analysis that follows.

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[115] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1.

CHAPTER III

THE PRACTICE OF DISINTERESTEDNESS

> Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.[1]

Washington's parting prose reveals his attempts to fulfill the notion of a "public spirited Man; even an honest and disinterested heart"—from Thomas Gordon's translation of Tacitus.[2] Having witnessed the first test of the new government's ability to maintain classical republican theories, his self-proclaimed, "disinterested warnings of a parting friend" were, in his mind, essential to the future longevity, success, and security of the young nation, as well as indispensable to the happiness and prosperity of posterity. The first eight years of constitutional government witnessed the trials associated with the transition from theory to practice; Washington felt the weight of passing the torch to men staunchly divided. The seeds of the first party system were taking root.

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[1] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796."
[2] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four*, 197-98.

His parting reference to a welcome "reception" must have conjured up the "sentiments" of his first attempt at retirement—1783, at the official close of the War for Independence and the Paris Peace Treaty of that same year. After reading his brief, 339-word resignation address to Congress in December of that momentous year, one cannot help but concur with Edward J. Larson that, "it was less what he said than what he did."[3] And so it was nearly thirteen years later—his actions spoke volumes more than even the much larger Farewell Address, which clocked in at 6,088 words.[4]

Indeed, his final actions have inspired countless volumes and continue to stand apart, as he so often did even amongst his contemporaries, as admirable actions to be applied to leaders both then and today. It should come as no surprise then, that even the last decade has seen renewed vigor to enshrine the first president—to use his words and actions as both inspiration and warning. In John Avlon's *Washington's Farewell: The Founding Father's Warning to Future Generations*, for example, one sees the explicit relation: "Today, we need only take the Farewell Address down from the shelf," for, "[i]t can still achieve Washington's aim by helping us to reunite our nation and re-center our politics."[5] What was it about that message attracts even a modern audience? The "re-centering" and "reunification" Avlon notes center around the first president's disinterestedness.

Washington's first farewell, his retirement following the Peace of Paris in 1783, had already proven him among the most disinterested patriots to ever hold such power

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[3] Edward J. Larson, *The Return of George Washington, 1783-1789* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 3-4.

[4] John Avlon, *Washington's Farewell,* 8.

[5] John Avlon, *Washington's Farewell,* 10. The context for Avlon's book is telling. Following the tumultuous 2016 election, Avlon's subject matter demonstrates the efforts to breathe new life into what many believe has timeless application, namely Washington's parting words.

and promise. Even his former king is said to have remarked upon hearing the rumor of Washington's retirement, "If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."[6] Many, including a man who ironically also bore his first name, King George III, fully expected the other George to take the reigns of military premier after victory at Yorktown. This was common practice; this was historical precedent. What Washington did, though, not only broke with expectation and tradition, it ultimately demonstrated his disinterested spirit as a leader—a legacy he, no doubt, wanted to leave the infant nation upon his resignation.[7]

The meaning of such a departure of station did not go unnoticed. Writing to Washington in August of 1783, before Washington's official communications regarding his retirement, François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux expressed the already popular designation: "I wish heartily that instead of travelling on by land, I might embark at this place and proceed to Virginy, where I am told, your excellency is retired like an other Cincinnatus." However, Chastellux may not have seen Washington's departure as permanent. He continued, "the moment of your independency should be the sunset of the british glory and splendor, but there is no sunset for great Washington's fame; and your making a pause to fighting and commanding is a [   ] not a sundown. may the american star [   ] all the astronomical rules, and proceed from west to east!"[8] Though the title, "Cincinnatus," was fitting and highly esteemed, the practicality of such a life was soon to be challenged.

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[6] "George Washington's Resignation," *The Maryland Statehouse* (Accessed October 5, 2021), https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdstatehouse/html/gwresignation.html.

[7] Edward J. Larson, *The Return of George Washington*, 6.

[8] François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux, "To George Washington from François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux, 23 August 1783," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 7, 2021) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11733.

In response, Washington wrote the Frenchman of his anticipation of a return to the solitude of Mount Vernon saying, "it being my axious [sic] desire to quit the walks of public life, & under the shadow of my own vine, and my own Fig-tree, to seek those enjoyments, & that relaxation, which a mind that has been constantly upon the stretch for more than eight years, stands so much in need of."[9] Washington embraced the notion of being another Cincinnatus, and after so much of what he and others of the founding generation considered providential, his classical republican parallel likely felt quite natural and fitting. Cincinnatus was a model of disinterested virtue, something Washington had aspired to, and something he could embody in retirement. In February, following the official resignation of both the British by way of the Treaty of Paris and Washington in his message to Congress, the latter wrote once again to Chastellux:

> I am at length become a private citizen of America, on the banks of the Potowmac; where under my own Vine & my own Fig tree—free from the bustle of a camp & the intrigues of a Court, I shall view the busy world, "in the calm lights of mild philosophy"—& with that serenity of mind which the Soldier in his pursuit of glory, & the Statesman of fame, have not time to enjoy. I am not only retired from all public employments; but I am retireing within myself & shall tread the private walks of life with heartfelt satisfaction.[10]

It was a sincere correspondence, one in which the reader can grasp just how attracted to and comfortable with retirement the General had become. It makes the call back to public service all the more surprising, demonstrating that it would take an extreme set of circumstances to bring about a reversal of intentions for Washington. When he wrote in

[9] George Washington, "From George Washington to François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux, 12 October 1783," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 7, 2021) https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/ 99-01-02-11929.

[10] George Washington, "From George Washington to François-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux, 1 February 1784," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Washington/04-01-02-0062.

February of 1787 to General Knox—nearly three years later to the day—" I shall be surprized at nothing; for if three years ago, any person had told me that at this day, I should see such a formidable rebellion against the laws & constitutions of our own making as now appears I should have thought him a bedlamite—a fit subject for a mad house," one sees that he meant just that by way of his own pen.[11]

Thus, the Great Cincinnatus dutifully, yet reluctantly took the helm once again in 1789.[12] Washington's profound sense of obligation and the one interest he placed above all others, namely that of the country he had sacrificed life and limb to help create, called him back into service with the task of preserving the union's future. His hesitancy to leave the solitude of the farm was obvious through the aforementioned tumult of 1786 and 1787, but so was his palpable concern for the wellbeing of the nation.

Washington's return from a short-lived retirement was the unifying factor that eased factional tensions, at least temporarily, following the Convention. His presence in Philadelphia and eventual candidacy for the newly established executive branch under the Constitution brought back the pomp of independence and circumstance of a unified

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[11] George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Knox, 3 February, 1787."

[12] George Washington, *The Diaries of George Washington, Vol. 4, 1784-June 1786,* edited by Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 89; Edward J. Larson, *The Return of George Washington*, 7; Forrest McDonald, *States Rights and the Union*, 27. Washington was already associated with the Roman, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, having been a founding member of the Society of Cincinnati named for the same "general-farmer." The society was composed of former Revolutionary War veterans and ironically came under scrutiny for its exclusivity, hereditary nature, and possible narrow interests. Larson notes that "In America, Washington at once became a second 'Cincinnatus.'" The comparison is noteworthy, as both were called from their farms and estates twice, granted military and executive authority to ensure both Rome and the United States' republican future, and finally relinquishing that supreme power and retiring back to their rather quiet lifestyles. McDonald comments on the reluctance as well: "to no one's surprise, George Washington was unanimously elected president, and though few people understood how reluctantly, he agreed to serve." Washington's reluctance is one level of disinterested; his lack of publicly flaunting that disinterested spirit is perhaps more telling. If more had known his reluctance, his disinterest might be called into question as purely vain attempts at a certain public image. However, this subtle note that McDonald points to shows once again that Washington's actions matched his words—his public persona appears to align quite well with his personal correspondences with his closest confidants.

nation. As Robertson says, "Washington had become for his countrymen the antimonarchical monarch."[13] Washington's inauguration seemed to stem the tide of factional fracturing that surfaced in the late 1780s, as Americans enthusiastically replaced the old King George III with a new, rather kingly George Washington. James Roger Sharp says he had "popularity that transcended sectionalism."[14] However, this factional hiatus soon gave way to permanent political parties, for it was within the first president's administration that factions found an enduring habitation in United States' politics.

The presidency proved vulnerable to the workings of faction. Richard Buel, Jr. says, "Though in practice it was not long before the electoral college succumbed to political pressure as the contest for the presidency became the focus of the first party system, it is clear that the framers had never intended this to happen." This was a distinct transition from the theoretical to the practical. "They had made extraordinary efforts to keep presidential elections free of party influence." Despite explicit efforts, though, parties did take hold. The electoral college, oftentimes maligned for its obscurities was a system designed to discourage party influences—such party persuasion was thought more likely if the choice of the nation's executive were placed in the hands of a federal congress, state legislatures, or the people's direct vote. Ironically, though, this very system surfaced as a staple of both the first and second-party systems.[15]

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[13] Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!' Nationalism, Localism, and Partisan Images of Otherness in the United States, 1787-1820," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (October, 2001), 1269.

[14] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800: Jefferson, Burr, and the Union in the Balance*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 6.

[15] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 3-4. Buel also offers two additional caveats that might partially explain the gradual acceptance of factions, noting the usage of "various rationales for party current in Britain at this time" by Americans as well as the idea that national parties offered a distinctly different character than factions within the various states.

The Electoral College developed when disinterestedness still held sway in the early republic. Today, this system is unimaginable without them, as it has been adapted to accommodate them. That the founding generation did not see how the Electoral College lent itself naturally to two parties based on the constituencies of two popular candidates is hard to fathom. The numerical breakdown of majority victory assumes as much. However, the seemingly obscure system does illustrate a convenient case study of the transition at work from classical republicanism to modern republicanism. The movement from the previously discussed disinterested monarch to what the founders envisioned for the presidency demonstrates the differences in theory and practice under the Constitution. In theory, the president, by way of election from a group of electors or what Holton calls "leading Americans," would "make it harder for a popular majority to elect a president" unfit, interested, or "irresponsible"—the exact type of majority tyranny Madison feared in *The Federalist*, No. 10.[16] An executive with a certain autonomy independent from Congress would also, in theory, be less attached to any party machinations within the legislative bodies.

In practice, though, not only could these two separate branches work in tandem, they actually fueled party allegiances. What the founders failed to grasp was just how quickly the president would become the leader of a party rather than the disinterested, disconnected executive they envisioned or perhaps naïvely assumed would logically result from a nostalgic view of classical republicanism. Washington, perhaps the exception to the rule in more ways than one, was the only president to overtly avoid direct party affiliation and probably the loudest voice in speaking out against their

[16] Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 188.

destructive nature. This, in context though, should come as no surprise, as the Washington administration was a test for the new Constitution in many ways, and the first president served as arbiter over the transition to a formal republic under the newly adopted government. Once Washington's term ended, though, the first party system was in the works, albeit far from the full-fledged party machines that developed in the early nineteenth century. Still, they show some early intentions to utilize collective interests in order to secure the White House.

The first president's administration served as a microcosm of the larger political fracturing taking shape in the United States in the waning years of the eighteenth century. It started in the cabinet, rippled outward toward Congress, and finally took hold throughout the entire constituency by 1800. Following independence, a once congenial and collaborative relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, a friendship that Jefferson considered "constant" and Adams described as "an affection that can never die," started to deteriorate.[17] These men, of course, would serve in the Washington

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[17] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30; Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution,* 1; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 97; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 10, 2021), https://founders.archives. gov/documents/ Jefferson/98-01-02-3843. Richard Buel, Jr. argues that "[i]t is now generally accepted that the first party system did not arise from the controversy over ratifying the Constitution. It grew out of divisions in the ranks of those men who had led the struggle to secure adoption by the state conventions and had been chosen by the people to implement the new government in 1789." This thesis, while recognizing perhaps the necessity of differentiating between informal interest groups and formal or legitimate opposition, does not concur with Buel or what he considered the consensus analysis on this point. Having looked to the colonial years already, it is clear that what emerged in Washington's administration may have been unique to the young nation, as was the case with many political developments in the republican experiment, but it is equally clear that the distinguishing marks of each of the first two parties hearkened back to classical, Anglican, and colonial divisions. Thus, it is the argument of this study that although there is a clear evolution to the first-party system, the groundwork was already well-established prior to Washington's term. This aligns with a view of party politics that Wood fleshes out in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution.* Just as Adam Smith believed, "monarchists, who loved peace and order, and republicans, who loved liberty and independence," so also did Jefferson note in his latter years that a group "now call themselves republicans. but the name alone is changed, the principles are the same. for in truth the parties of Whig and Tory are those of nature."

administration—Adams as vice-president and Jefferson as the first secretary of state. The war with England, having almost been lost by way of an impotent central authority, led Adams down a path that sought stronger central authority, while Jefferson maintained his firm beliefs in limiting federal power at all costs.[18] Their ideological differences, forged in the revolution, now cooled into different political beliefs in the 1780s. These two men eventually led the country from the executive branch as the leaders of two antithetical parties, the Federalists under Adams from 1797-1801—the Republicans under Jefferson from 1801-1809.

Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Party leader, also found himself amid the Adams-Jefferson saga during Washington's presidency. Hamilton, as secretary of the treasury, was constantly and naturally pitted against Jefferson when it came to both domestic and foreign issues that arose during Washington's terms in office. In late 1793, Jefferson resigned his post as secretary of state, feeling slighted and "[w]orn down," as he felt that Washington's policies tended to gravitate toward the Hamiltonian camp.[19]

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the early leaders did not see their guidance of the respective parties as interested. Their divergent nationalisms—their opposing visions of republicanism—led leaders like Hamilton, Jefferson, Adams, and their early successors to view themselves as disinterested patriots with fundamentally different ideas of how best to govern a republic. It appears rather incongruous to a modern audience, but it was almost as if the parties found them, not the other way around. Perhaps also, today's perspectives on parties vary to such a degree that explains

[18] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson,* 32-3.

[19] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 9 June 1793," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 10, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/ 01-26-02-0219; John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson,* 70.

why this might be the case.

Two situations illustrate the point well. First, fiscal policy, the foremost domestic issue to confront the nation, prompted the emergence of party interests and animosities. However, Buel contends, stabilizing and securing the republic more than "money matters" were the primary issues that pitted Hamilton firmly against Jefferson and Madison. Still, "money matters" became the cornerstone of the first Secretary of the Treasury's scheme to achieve his vision for the new nation. In this light, fiscal policy merely served as one arena whereby party allegiances might arise.[20] Either way, though, it is clear that the stage was set for whether or not leaders might be able to maintain disinterested character in the midst of a variety of contentious issues the young nation was to confront in the first administration.

Hamilton and Madison, having worked closely through the ratification stage, soon emerged as leaders of two opposing interests in the new constitutional government. Hamilton took the helm of federalists, quite consistent with his leanings toward stronger central authority, while Madison took up the lead of a yet unnamed opposition party as the nation's first speaker of the house of representatives. Hofstadter saw this as a key miscalculation by Madison and other political theorists of the early republic; while the new government was intended to be "a constitution against parties," it quickly took up national issues that practically required "the business of conciliation and compromise among…a hodgepodge of various and conflicting interests." Madison's pluralism, articulated in his correspondences and his essays, failed to foresee how a "natural diversity of human opinions" in his extended republican model might coalesce into two

[20] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 8.

considerable coalitions, competing with one another for control of the majority or by way of the majority.[21]

Hamilton's "Report on Public Credit" was the spark that "caused a rupture in the national leadership and set a pattern for the opposing alignments that were to dominate national politics for the next twenty-five years."[22] Fiscal factions arose first after Philadelphia, and their respective sides formed the beginning stages of what eventually formalized the first-party system. The theory of disinterestedness faced its greatest test to date.

There was a clear geographical component to these early divisions. What most referred to at the time as "sectional" in nature constituted a conflict of competing economic interests based on what was termed "eastern" or "southern" for the moment. Hamilton's plan for the nation's economy encamped the Secretary of the Treasury with eastern interests when it came to proposals on assumption of the nation's Revolutionary War debt and the creation of a national bank. To southern stakeholders, these proposals would unduly burden states who had already taken large strides to eliminate their own debts with states who had not. That Hamilton was a New Yorker, east of the Potomac, undoubtedly made his plan highly suspect to charges of selfish interest.[23]

What Madison had articulated in *The Federalist*, No. 10 was now directly challenged: "that our governments are too unstable; that the public good is disregarded in

[21] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 72; James Madison, "From James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787; Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 7." The puzzling parting of ways between Hamilton and Madison, leaders "who had collaborated so effectively in securing ratification of the Constitution," is a dynamic in the early republic that scholars like Buel have grappled with extensively. Their divergence, though, should be seen as a microcosm of both national and sectional interests as well as proof positive of Jefferson's aforementioned hindsight, namely that "the parties of Whig and Tory are those of nature."

[22] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 1.

[23] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 2-3.

the conflicts of rival parties; and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice, and the rights of the minor party; but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority."[24] Hamilton's ability to maintain disinterested character was now called into question, but Madison's (and Jefferson's) response also revealed a decided break with the classical notion of disinterested virtue. This was not a break in the sense that these opposition leaders abandoned the virtue but rather that their respective views regarding public good would require them to form alliances, choose sides, and ultimately involve themselves in the interests of what they considered to be essential to securing the promises of the Revolution and ensuring the longevity of the republic. Looking back on the division, Jefferson wrote, "To recover, therefore, in practice, the powers which the nation had refused, and to warp to their own wishes those actually given, was the steady object of the federal party. Ours, on the contrary, was to maintain the will of the majority of the convention and of the people themselves."[25] Both sides saw themselves as patriotic saviors rather than interested pundits entangled in the private pursuits of factional disputes; each would-be party was respectively preventing "either monarchy or anarchy," but they avoided the stigma of calling themselves a "party" or intentionally organizing as such.[26] Disinterestedness was not dead; it was perhaps more necessary in this context.

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[24] Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," 121.

[25] Lance Banning, ed. *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle,* 354. This is from the June 12, 1823 correspondence between Jefferson and Justice William Johnson.

[26] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 4-5, 12. Buel cautions students of the period against dismissing disinterestedness and anti-party sentiments in the first-party system: "the national political coalitions that appeared in the 1790s could hardly be said to bear the mark of personal ambition. The men around whom these party alignments first formed all willingly retired to private life during the decade." Washington, among these "men," led the way in striving to perpetuate such disinterestedness. Additionally, Buel notes both Madison and Jefferson's ties to both Adam Smith's economic theory and the situation in Revolutionary France—issues that contextually pitted their emergent opposition thought against Hamiltonian theories on public indebtedness as a positive good.

Outside of the domestic arena, foreign policy also sharpened party lines. In the wake of the French Revolution, which began the year Washington took office, Jefferson encouraged the President to side with former revolutionary allies—both in their pursuit of overthrowing monarchy and in combatting their common enemy, namely the British who declared war on France in 1793. Hamilton not only discouraged such an alliance, but he was also instrumental in the signing of the Jay Treaty (a pro-British treaty) that many historians have said, "may have done more to create permanent political parties, the Federalists and Republicans, than any other event."[27] Hamilton's involvement at the highest levels of politics through the early 1800s proved pivotal in the political animosities that developed among Federalists and Republicans.

Jeffersonian and Madisonian opposition to British conciliation came as no surprise. "The leaders of the young republic believed foreign influence was a much greater threat to popular government than to monarchies." The domestic issues surrounding fiscal policy may have demonstrated clear divisions, but their impact on the solidification of the first parties paled in comparison to those of foreign affairs. Madison's early strivings in the First Congress demonstrated his intentions to favor France and diminish dependence on English trade. His argument—"the belief that Britain's need for American trade was greater than America's need for British trade"—hearkened back to Paine's arguments in *Common Sense.*[28] As Paine put it, "The commerce, by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe." The Americans had a clear

[27] Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!,'" 1271. Robertson draws upon the statements of Elkins, McKitrick, Sharp, and Charles in his assessment of the Jay Treaty.

[28] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 6, 29-30.

advantage in this relationship—with time and growth, the fledgling nation would soon reap the benefits of both its resources and the manufacture and dispersion of those resources abroad.[29]

The divisions arising from either Anglophilia or Francophilia also had a geographic attachment. Northern merchants tended to be more dependent upon British manufacturers, whereas southern planters found markets anywhere "eating" was "the custom," as Paine had written. Additionally, northerners were not granted the same favorably lengthy credit terms from the French that they enjoyed with the British. There was a logical concern, too, that the French Revolution threatened the long-term nature of an alliance with a monarchy in turmoil. Thus, Hamiltonian allegiances gravitated toward British interests. Southern sentiments fell more in line with policies of the Confederation—"Commercial needs did not permit total isolation, but commercial treaties need no lead to political association," as Buel put it.[30]

Some Americans feared that the unrestrained violence initiated in revolutionary France might spread to the United States if the fraternal relationship continued. The execution of King Louis XVI and the subsequent reign of terror only gave credence to the notion that too much democracy would result in a lack of law and order, mob rule, or anarchy—what Federalists feared most dangerous to the future of the young republic. These critics, President Washington among them, saw the "excesses as a betrayal of republicanism rather than its logical outcome." Unsurprisingly, those who condemned the French Revolution's extremist tendencies were among an elite class of Americans,

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[29] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, 21.

[30] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, 21; Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 30-3.

seeing the attack on "men of property" in France as one of the most dangerous threats to their own station in the States. Jefferson and Madison, on the contrary, saw the end of monarchy in France and the movements toward republicanism as a more kindred partnership between the two republican powers. The real impact of these circumstances upon the administration and eventual parties, though, came when France entered into open conflict with Great Britain—now sides had to be chosen, and they were.[31]

"Hostilities having commenced between France & England," Washington wrote to Hamilton in early April of 1793, "it is incumbent on the Government of the United States to prevent, as far as in it lies, all interferences of our Citizens in them; and immediate precautionary measures ought, I conceive, to be taken for that purpose." The president's worry was not unwarranted: "I have reason to believe (from some things I have heard) that many vessels in different parts of the Union are designated for Privateers & are preparing accordingly." Support for the French came in the form of festivals, protests, port access, and privateering. It was reciprocity many felt the logical result of French support during the American War for Independence. However, Washington, Hamilton, and others worried what these overt actions might do to place the United States in the realm of belligerency or aggression. The president planned to navigate between the potential storms abroad and at home: "The means to prevent it, and for the United States to maintain a strict neutrality between the Powers at war, I wish to have seriously thought of, that I may as soon as I arrive at the Seat of the Government, take such steps,

[31] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 37-9. "As time went on, Americans began to divide their opinions on events in France. The cabinet shows the general trend in microcosm." Buel details the worries Hamilton had regarding the French Revolution—anxieties that Washington began to share to a certain degree, especially after some tense interactions with the French ambassador, Genêt. Jefferson, on the other hand, having spent a good portion of the post-Revolutionary years as the US ambassador to France, tended to see the French movements as consistent with those of the American colonists during the American Revolution.

tending to these ends, as shall be deemed proper & effectual." Washington's "steps" involved a formal "Neutrality Proclamation" issued ten days later.[32]

To add to the drama, the newly appointed French ambassador under the recently created French Republic, Edmond Charles Genêt, had arrived in the US and was rallying support from sympathetic Americans as well as seeking recompense for debts owed to France from the American War for Independence. During this divisive match between England and France, Washington did (or at least attempted) what one might expect from someone so interested in maintaining disinterestedness. "My anxious desire to keep this Country in Peace—and the delicacy of my situation renders a circumspect conduct indispensably necessary on my part."[33] Neutrality was a policy born out of Washington's desire to keep the young nation out of another embroilment with European powers that might threaten not only the political condition but also the economic independence that choosing a side would ultimately threaten. Neutrality, though, was compromised from the outset. The Franco-American Treaties of 1778, which promised the support and defense of the US when it came to French West Indian possessions as well as the availability of American ports to French naval prizes, placed the US in a pickle from the beginning. Additionally, the sentiment that the renewed hostilities between the French and British was merely "an extension of the struggle" for American independence as well as a staunch Anglophobia left over from the American Revolution, far from alleviated by the early 1790s, led many Americans to place their allegiances firmly behind the French.

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[32] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 40; George Washington, "From George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, 12 April 1793," Founders Online (Accessed October 13, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Washington/05-12-02-0352.

[33] George Washington, "To Alexander Hamilton from George Washington, 5 May 1793," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 13, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Hamilton/01-14-02-0276.

Of course, the perception for many Americans was that Great Britain had not just waged war on its historical rival across the English Channel but on republicanism itself; it was as if the British supported monarchy at home and abroad—a clear threat to American security.[34]

Amid this Francophilia, then, Hamilton, Jay, and Washington himself strove to steer a course that would not unnecessarily provoke the British to acts of aggression against American neutrality—neutrality teetering on the edge of being blatantly pro-French in nature. Washington made neutrality official policy in the Spring of 1793, saying, "the duty and interest of the United States require" a neutral position and "that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent powers." Worried about the public outcry for French support, he sought "to exhort and warn the citizens of the United States carefully to avoid all acts and proceedings whatsoever, which may in any manner tend to contravene such disposition." This neutrality was seen by many, including then-Secretary of State, Jefferson, as a betrayal of the treaty with France. For one, it disavowed American allegiance to a treaty now compromised by way of a complete restructuring of the French government as well as a new state of war between two US interests. Secondly, the president's proclamation explicitly annulled parts of the former Treaty of Alliance with France (1778).[35]

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[34] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 39-43; John Catanzariti ed., "Editorial Note: The Recall of Edmond Charles Genet," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 13, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Jefferson/01-26-02-0629-0001..

[35] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 40-3; George Washington, "Neutrality Proclamation, 22 April 1793," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 13, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-12-02-0371; Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Pacificus-Helvidius Debates of 1793-1794: Toward the Completion of the American Founding*, edited by Morton J. Frisch (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007). Striving for impartiality, the president undertook to avoid inciting aggression from either France or Britain but ironically drew the

To assuage the animosities generated from Jefferson, Madison, and their growing base of opposition, Hamilton went to work behind the scenes with his "Pacificus" letters. Latin for "peacemaker," his intent was clear: to back the president's policies and mollify public opinion. However, Hamilton's measures had an unintended effect too: the appearance of an independent executive in matters of foreign policy—dangerous to the longevity of liberty in a republic. In Pacificus's first polemic, he asserted, "The inquiry then is—what department of the Government of the UStates is the prop[er] one to make a declaration of Neutrality in the cases in which the engagements [of] the Nation permit and its interests require such a declaration." This question of the constitutional separation of powers was most definitely on the minds of opponents of the proclamation. Hamilton felt strongly that the power was the president's: "A correct and well informed mind will discern at once that it can belong neit[her] to the Legislative nor Judicial Department and of course must belong to the Executive." The opposition felt otherwise.[36]

Hamilton's former essayist ally, James Madison, took up the pen to combat the hazardous Hamilton. Under the pseudonym "Helvidius," a Roman patriot opposed to Emperor Nero's "imperial aggrandizement without resorting to treason or conspiracy," the Speaker of the House was urged to do what he knew best, namely take up his pen to articulate a sound and convincing argument. Dreading that Hamilton would be lent not only the president's ear but also the public's, Jefferson wrote to his friend and confidant: "Nobody answers him, and his doctrine will therefore be taken for confessed. For god's sake, my dear Sir, take up your pen, select the most striking heresies, and cut him to

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criticism and censure of the public and even his own administration in a manner he had yet to experience to that point.

[36] Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 2 (Summer, 2003), 169.

peices in the face of the public. There is nobody else who can and will enter the lists with him."[37] The rivalry was just beginning.

From *Cato's Letters* to Silence Dogood to Publius's essays (*The Federalist*) to the Pacificus-Helvidius debates, pseudonymous writing permeated not only eighteenth-century political discourse but also sheds light on a tradition of disinterestedness. True to the Whig tradition of classical *nom de plumes*, the founding generation oftentimes drew upon the popular republican heroes of old to gain public trust and attention. Most

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[37] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 43-9; Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Pacificus-Helvidius Debates of 1793-1794*; Jefferson, Thomas. "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 7 July 1793." *Founders Online*. Accessed October 12, 2021. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/ 01-26-02-0391; Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers, 169; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 19 June 1796*," Founders Online* (Accessed October 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/ documents/Jefferson/01-29-02-0091; Alexander Hamilton, "From Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, 26 May 1792," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Hamilton/01-11-02-0349. Shalev points out, "The use of this pseudonym points to the Jeffersonian Republican common objection against Hamiltonian Federalists: namely, that the consolidation of power in government would end in tyranny." Jefferson, while clearly involved in some clandestine prodding had a clear conflict of interest being part of the very administration that, from all appearances, looked to be capitalizing on his worst fears—consolidation of executive, tyrannical power. He tried to maintain a level of disinterest in the press and even amongst his contemporaries, which is slightly comical at times since he was known to be so active behind the scenes in orchestrating public discourse in the newspapers of the day. In a letter to Washington from June of 1796, after some apparently confidential information was published in regards to Jefferson's sentiments on Washington's earlier neutrality policies, the former Secretary of State wrote, "I have formerly mentioned to you that, from a very early period of my life, I had laid it down as a rule of conduct never to write a word for the public papers. From this I have never departed in a single instance." Cognizant of the tensions created from his early disagreements and eventual departure from the first cabinet, he wrote further, "I learn that this last has thought it worth his while to try to sow tares between you and me, by representing me as still engaged in the bustle of politics, and in turbulence and intrigue against the government." Again, Jefferson tried to maintain a certain aloofness to the "bustle of politics," but his creative and effective involvement, from his resignation to his bid for the presidency in 1796 and 1800, is well documented. Hamilton was not duped. Writing to a Revolutionary War veteran and friend, Edward Carrington, Hamilton noted Jefferson's intrigues: "I find a strong confirmation in the following circumstances. *Freneau* the present Printer of the National Gazette, who was a journeyman with Childs & Swain at New York, was a known anti-federalist. It is reduced to a certainty that he was brought to Philadelphia by Mr. Jefferson to be the conductor of a News Paper." And further, "Hence a clear inference that his paper has been set on foot and is conducted under the patronage & not against the views of Mr. Jefferson." Hamilton wrote at length of his souring relationship with Madison in this letter as well, but he clearly linked the scheming to Jefferson more than anyone else, and the level of disgust is palpable: "What then is the complexion of this paper? Let any impartial man peruse all the numbers down to the present day; and I never was more mistaken, if he does not pronounce that it is a paper devoted to the subversion of me & the measures in which I have had an Agency; and I am little less mistaken if he do not pronounce that it is a paper of a tendency *generally unfriendly* to the Government of the U States."

historians of the period touch on the origins of the pseudonyms but rarely focus on the motives behind such names. Eran Shalev's analysis of classical pseudonyms in the Revolution and early republic acknowledges what most historians pass over: "Antiquity provided the rhetorical high ground in an argument; it imbued writings with a classical air of disinterestedness that rose above particular interests."[38] The very notion of a pen name shows at least an attachment to classical disinterestedness, otherwise the use of an alias makes little sense. Over time, especially paralleling the rising legitimacy of party politics, use of the pseudonym remained in place more as a formality or method of paying homage to the heroes of both the classical and founding generations.[39]

Newspapers afforded the best way to disseminate political thought and garner public support in the eighteenth century. As Jeffrey L. Pasley says, "journalists once were politicians." Their pens and pen names served to propagate political aims in a manner that hearkened back to their classical heroes as well as their classical ideologies. Interestingly, though, it was the symbiotic relationship of the press and the parties which would eventually make the notion of disinterestedness as well as pseudonyms less

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[38] Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers, 152, 159. Shalev is one of the few historians that pays any attention to motives behind the "masks," as he calls them: "Scholars concerned with classical influences on the founding generation often mention the classical pen names usually when referring to the pamphlets selected for analysis. Much less attention has been given to the reasons and consequences of writing as the ancients."

[39] Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers, 170; Edwin A. Miles, "The Young American Nation and the Classical World," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35, no. 2 (April-June 1974), 174. Shalev also notes the decline of the pseudonym, which is logically tied to the decline in the popularity of classical disinterestedness as a foremost virtue to be expressed: "The role of the *nom de plume* as mediator between constituents and the political debate was outdated by the accurate, frequently verbatim, political report." He notes the historiographical discourse related to why classical interest and affinity declined but admits the reason(s) are far from simple. Miles attaches the decline to "[t]he forces of democracy, materialism, anti-intellectualism, the popularity of science, and the idea of progress," saying that, "As Americans came to conceive of the United States as a Providence-blessed nation whose beneficial republican institutions were designed to light the way for all mankind, they felt less dependent upon the inferior models of Greece and Rome." This study tends to gravitate toward a complicated scenario as well, but the primary cause explored here is the shifting goals of politicians in posturing for power—easier accomplished through party machinery than classical virtue.

prominent. The 1790s press, however, remained a platform by which political pundits might approach the public in a manner that at least gave the appearance of disinterest even if it was anything but driven by political interests in deed. Tocqueville noted, "In America there is scarcely a hamlet which has not its own newspaper… All the political journals of the United States are indeed arrayed on the side of the administration or against it; but they attack and defend in a thousand different ways." Tocqueville's oft-cited excursion took place in the early 1830s, but Pasley's work demonstrates that the Frenchmen's assessment was merely an extension and expansion of a newspaper and print culture that predominated in the American colonies just as much as in the early republic.[40]

In the midst of the wedge working its way through Washington's administration, newspapers served as conduits for both the Federalist-leaning government and its emergent opposition. At first, the structure of newspaper circulation was highly decentralized and thrived not off of the abhorrent "government-controlled 'court press,'" but through "newspaper networks…allowing almost any single editor, writer, or event anywhere to command a national audience." Much like the unforeseen nature of political parties, Pasley points out that the first government did not anticipate how significant and partisan the press would become. John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* was the first attempt at a pro-Federalist, pro-Administration, and pro-Constitution paper with the purpose of backing and defending the legitimacy of the new government. On the surface,

[40] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers:" Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic,* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 1-4; Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1. Pasley does note the rise and peak of newspaper culture taking place in the nineteenth century, saying, "the newspaper press was the political system's central institution, not simply a forum or atmosphere in which politics took place," but he also notes that the 1790s, for example, marked a period when papers emerged as key linkages between parties and voters.

the paper Fenno envisioned appeared disinterested and disconnected from commercial concerns or community ties because he avoided advertising solicitation—a primary method for raising revenue in the newspaper industry: "Just as legitimate public debate could only take place in a pseudonymous arena that was empty of specific persons, so a *national* public sphere had to be cleansed of specificity with regard to the place where it was published." However, as Pasley points out, Fenno's disinterested appearances were more a lack of business savvy than impartial printing; he was hoping that this newspaper venture would lead to retirement by way of close connections and contracts with the gentlemen in control of the government and the Federalist party.[41]

Philip Freneau's editorship of a rival paper to Fenno's pro-Federalist publication inaugurated a new era in partisanship and demonstrated that disinterestedness was perhaps waning. The gradually polarized press emerged from two developing forms of nationalism inherent in the names of these papers and an increasingly obvious need to shape public opinion by both infant parties. Pasley insightfully noted the transition: "as the antipathy between Hamilton and Jefferson blossomed into the development of political parties, both leaders became convinced that newspapers were critical to their respective causes." Interestingly, though, the two adversaries had to do so in a manner of

[41] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers*, 50-6. Pasley says, "Despite his declaration that the paper would follow 'NATIONAL, INDEPENDENT, and IMPARTIAL PRINCIPLES,' his catalog of the tasks ahead of the new government reflected the commercial, centralizing, and finance-oriented outlook of such men as Alexander Hamilton, Robert Morris, and Fenno's Boston sponsors." Fenno is an interesting case study in disinterestedness because he did not see his clear business interests as a barrier to his own political leanings, where he maintained that the *Gazette* was a nonpartisan paper: "'the printer [who] can be made the tool of a party…merits universal contempt.'" As Pasley brilliantly points out, Fenno and many of his contemporaries did not see their leanings as partisan but as patriotism—tied not to a party's interests but rather to the collective "national interest whose legitimacy was far above that of any party or controversy." It was clear that many in the 1790s felt that private interests were separate from the public good, and this disposition fueled what to many in the modern era might view as duplicitous or hypocritical. They did not see it that way, and that disposition will be further explored in the next chapter.

disguised disinterestedness. Controlling the press from a position in government was unthinkable amongst the Revolutionary generation, so they approached the nascent political machinery indirectly through "[p]rinting contracts, subscriptions, the availability of financing, access to information sources, and even advertising."[42]

The impetus for such a competition originated in the financial and foreign policies of Washington's administration. The paper provided the arena for two cabinet members, gradually representing different polarities on the nature and meaning of the Revolution, to battle over the best policies in securing longevity for the young republic. "Though they shared the political culture's profound disdain for parties, they understood that the creation of a party was what they were contemplating." Yet they could not do so overtly. Solicitation and organization were not an option in the 1790s, so political leaders worked behind the scenes to shape public opinion.[43]

True to the disinterestedness of his day, Madison published an anonymous article in the *National Gazette* in March of 1792. In his list of six criticisms of Hamiltonian Federalists (though those words are never stated), the Speaker of the House anonymously targeted the financial policies of the Washington administration. His closing reproach reveals the perceived severity of the problem when he rhetorically asked who the real friends of the union are: "Not those, in a word, who would force on the people the melancholy duty of chusing between the loss of the Union, and the loss of what the union was meant to secure." Instead, "*The real Friends of the Union are those*…who are friends to that republican policy throughout, which is the only *cement* for the Union of a republican people; in opposition to a spirit of usurpation and monarchy, which is the

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[42] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers*, 60-1.
[43] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers*, 64-5.

menstruum most capable of dissolving it." The dichotomy Madison establishes between the "real friends" and its adversaries hinted at the groundwork for what was explicitly labeled in April of 1792.[44]

In another anonymous article, the *National Gazette* outlined the "two parties." For the first time, the Federalists were defined in opposition to the Republicans, though the respective designations had yet to be established: "Time and events have decided the controversy between these two sets of politicians; and the public voice seems to be pronouncing the decision." The article provided the grounds for the division on several positions, but paramount to the partition was interpretation as well as ideology:

> Again, one party have advocated the widest constructions of the constitution, so as to carry the powers of the government far beyond the obvious intent and meaning thereof, and therefore, beyond the grant of the people. The other have been of a different temper, and contended for a regular observance of the constitution, equally where it limits as where it grants powers, and for carrying it into execution in a republican spirit and manner.[45]

The well-known issue of constructionism between the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian interpretations of the Constitution were mere extensions of the ideological differences growing more apparent as the first administration faced both domestic and foreign challenges. "It appears, that the schemes for throwing magnificent wealth into the undeserving hands of a favorite few, and for undermining the great republican barriers erected by the constitution, have opened the eyes of the people." From the republican perspective the age-old arguments against aristocracy and monarchism came to the fore, and whilst their opponents claimed that "'Two things are clear—that the people adopted,

[44] James Madison, "For the National Gazette, 31 March 1792," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 17, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-14-02-0245.

[45] *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, PA, Apr. 30 1792, Library of Congress (Accessed October 17, 2021), https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83025887/1792-04-30/ed-1/.

and that they support the present government,'" "the friends of equal rights of constitutional authority and republican measures" found that the additional acquisitions of power on the part of the central government threatened the long-term goals of the Revolution.[46]

Washington's cabinet, albeit stacked with political brains and revolutionary brawn, was also a partisan maelstrom in the making; that partisan bent was perhaps the chief oversight or perhaps greatest underestimation the founders "failed to anticipate."[47] By the 1790s, two dynamic and symmetrical nationalisms emerged, fulfilling the political opposition revolutionaries seemed to thrive upon as well as what Andrew W. Robertson calls a certain "binary" balance between the Federalists and Republicans that lasted through the War of 1812.[48] The chief component of their partisan preferences and factional discord stemmed from incongruent foreign policies.

Expectedly, Washington's eventual departure from office, arguably his most disinterested decision, was driven at least partially by the disdain of many regarding the Jay Treaty and the first president's apparent Anglophilia in dealing with foreign policy concerns. Though the accusations were capitalized upon by the opposition Madisonians and Jeffersonians, they demonstrate the difficulties of disinterestedness and the growing divisiveness that fully blossomed in the election of 1796. Washington's farewell from the presidency conjured up similar sentiments to his resignation from the Continental Army in 1783, but it also was laden with disinterested words backed up by the ultimate

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[46] *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, PA, Apr. 30 1792.

[47] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800,* ix.

[48] Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!,'" 1264, 1272, 1277; Forrest McDonald, *States Rights and the Union*, 4. McDonald argues that the same issue that forced independence from England, namely an inability for each side to see divided sovereignty as legitimate, was also to blame for the emergence of the first political parties in Philadelphia and beyond. Both sides saw the path forward through two different lenses of what Robertson referred to as "binary" nationalisms.

disinterested action, namely giving up the seat of power. Unsurprisingly, the very issues that played decisive roles in dividing the first administration into factional rivalries, namely fiscal and foreign policies, figured largely into Washington's parting message to the nation. Perhaps Washington's departure signaled a departure from disinterestedness as a practical political stance—his successors certainly did not heed much of his warnings in regards to party attachments, and maybe only in terms of their two-term presidencies did they embody at all the disinterest that Washington seemed to aspire to.

An additional cross-examining of Washington's words of warning regarding faction side-by-side with Thomas Gordon's translation of Sallust reveals the reach of classical republican thought by the end of the eighteenth century and the close of the first American presidency. The consistency between these two documents borders on what Wood referred to as plagiarism upon close examination. Expounding on Sallust's comment, "Whatever Party conquered, still used their Victory with Violence and Inhumanity," Gordon's opening discourse proceeds to lambast party in ways that must have been employed by Washington in the Farewell Address. First, one has to recognize the common language of the "Spirit of Party." Gordon used the exact phrase four times; Washington employed it four times as well, once referring to it as "party spirit." Washington refers to that same "party spirit" as simply "spirit" an additional three times, and one can see an exceedingly larger number of more generic references in Gordon. These parallels, though, are not nearly as conclusive as the more idiosyncratic similarities between the two pieces.[49]

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[49] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796;" Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, viii, 1, 12, 14.

Gordon refers to the spirit as “this baneful and pestilent Spirit of Party;” Washington speaks of “the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.” The notion of what to eighteenth-century writers might be phrased as party “prejudice”—to modern readers, the idea of partisanship—was evil.[50] Even conceding party as a necessary evil may have made someone like Thomas Gordon uncomfortable.

Perhaps the most specific parallel and illustrative warning issued by both Gordon and Washington is in regards to the ushering in of a tyrant by way of party allegiances. Gordon says:

> A great Man amongst them, perhaps, happened to be cried up for his fine Actions, or fine Qualities, both often overrated; and became presently their Idol, and they trusted him without Reserve: For their Love, like their Hate, is generally immoderate; nor from a Man who has done them, or can do them, much Good, have they any Apprehension of Evil; till some Rival for their Affection appear superior to their first Favourite in Art or Fortune; one who persuades them, that the other has abused them, and seeks their Ruin.[51]

His statement bears an uncanny resemblance to Washington’s own words:

> But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.[52]

Gordon’s “great Man” was Washington’s tyrant—one whose ascension and status were established through trust “without reserve,” and of promises that speak to a populous’ desires for peace and prosperity. This party leader then uses their “absolute power” at the expense of “public liberty.”[53] The two statements are clearly more than coincidental

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[50] Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 1, 22.
[51] Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 2.
[52] George Washington, “Farewell Address, 1796.”
[53] Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 2; George Washington, “Farewell Address, 1796.”

semblance. More than that, though, they both deliver demonstrative statements against the dangers of faction and by doing so simultaneously convey a defense of disinterestedness.

Gordon says of party, "Both pretend the public Good, both obstruct it, and rend the Public between them. Nay, one Party will risque all, sacrifice the State, and themselves with it, rather than miss Revenge upon the other." Amid his warnings against foreign influences, Washington noted a similar pretension:

> a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils…And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation), facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding, with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.[54]

The fraternal Franco-American friendship deteriorated under the Washington and Adams administrations into a near-clash of the once Atlantic allies. During the former's administration, the United States' neutrality constantly faced the pressures of foreign influence as the French Revolution escalated. Washington frankly forewarned of such outside influences in his farewell, saying, "It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus, the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another."[55] What do the parallels, indeed plagiarism, tell us? They signal at least a fading attachment to disinterestedness.

Washington's final and perhaps greatest act—an act of clear, classical disinterest—was relinquishing the reigns of an office he could have easily retained

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[54] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796."

[55] Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 10; George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796."

despite any tumult during his eight years in office. However, by the end of his presidency, two things were clear: one, the theory of classical disinterestedness remained prevalent in the republic, and two, the practice of disinterestedness would be increasingly difficult to adhere to in the emerging party conflicts on the horizon. Federalist leader Fisher Ames predicted that Washington's speech "will serve as a signal, like dropping a hat, for the party racers to start, and I expect a great deal of noise, whipping, and spurring; money, it is very probable will be spent, some virtue and more tranquility lost; but I hope public order will be saved."[56] As it turned out, his predictions were spot-on and his apprehensions were not misplaced.

Madison was even less impressed by Washington's parting words and warnings. Having had his own hand in crafting parts of the Farewell Address, Madison must have been frustrated with what he knew to be edited by Hamilton's hand: "It shews that he [is] compleatly in the snares of the British faction; and in pursuance of their views is laboring totis viribus, [to] rear every obstruction as well as to remove every facility to an improvement of our commercial relations with France." To combat such obvious intentions, the Republicans would have to put all of their might behind an equally deliberate operation to secure the presidency lest their fears of a complete Federalist takeover come to fruition.[57]

At issue was whether or not resistance was "legitimate opposition" as Hofstadter's analysis investigated or simply partisanship at play. Was the opposing party

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[56] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest*, 223.

[57] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy,* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 218-19; James Madison, "From James Madison to James Monroe, 29 September 1796," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 17, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/ documents/Madison/01-16-02-0262.

development based upon "responsible constitutional" concerns, or was it self-serving, interested politics at play?[58] In a reflective correspondence from 1823, the elder statesman, Jefferson, wrote to Justice William Johnson about the latter's pro-Republican history of parties, saying of the Federalists: "They do not themselves believe what they endeavor to inculcate: that we were an opposition party, not on principle, but merely seeking for office."[59] Jefferson was keenly aware of the idea of legitimate opposition, and he, true to the interest in legacy of his generation, exhibited a concern for the manner in which the first opposition party might be framed for posterity.

Secondarily, can these two motives intersect in a republic and still maintain a level of disinterestedness and classical republican virtue? Or put another way, need private and public interests be mutually exclusive? If the two might be complementary at times in a republic, then who was best to ensure their mutuality, the pundits or the people? Holton, in discussing the misconceptions many historians hold today in regards to the Constitution and its framing, notes Madison's shift—from viewing the nation's disinterested leadership as the arbiters of public good to eschewing its constituents as more likely to ensure its "safety and happiness."[60] Jefferson concurred: "I never thought of questioning the free exercise of the right of my fellow citizens to marshall those whom they call into their service according to their fitnesses; nor ever presumed that they were

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[58] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System,*1.

[59] Lance Banning, ed. *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle,* 354. This comes from a letter dated June 12, 1823 from Jefferson to Justice William Johnson. He goes on to assert that the truth of their legitimacy will be seen in full when their actions and words became public knowledge: "What a treasure will be found in General Washington's cabinet when it shall pass into the hands of as candid a friend to truth as he was himself?" One also gets an idea of the true admiration Jefferson still had for Washington's disinterested character, despite the fact that they had their disagreements.

[60] Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*, 275-76; [60] Thomas Jefferson, et al, "Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed October 20, 2021), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_ century/declare.asp.

not the best judges of these."[61] There was, no doubt, a tension between early leaders' disinterested longings and service to their country even if it meant representing an opposition party.

It was in this context and amid this tension that one sees the development of parties—not as the positive end the founders were seeking but as a necessary evil to achieve their visions for the longevity and security of the republic. As Hofstadter succinctly stated, "both sides spoke ill of parties," and yet they came. In the opposing viewpoints, there existed divergent understandings of the nature of the union centered around the question, "We the *states* or we the *people*?" Was the republic one in which, as Hamilton espoused and sought to create, a stable "blend [of] the advantages of a monarchy and republic" where Congress is "vested with full power to preserve the republic from harm," or one Jefferson envisioned, namely "an energetic republic, turning in all its points on the pivot of free and frequent elect[ions]"? This core concern divided the founding generation as they sought to create a "more perfect union" in order to "secure the blessings of liberty" to "posterity."[62] Party banners ultimately flew in regards to where each side fell on this issue.

Hamilton suggested early on that Jefferson and his allies were divisive, calling into question the legitimacy of the opposition forces at work in the first administration.

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[61] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, 9 February 1797," *Founders Online*. (Accessed October 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-29-02-0231.

[62] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, 9 February 1797;" Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System,* 2; Christopher Childers, *The Webster-Hayne Debate: Defining Nationhood in the Early American Republic*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018), 3; James Madison, et al, "Constitution of the United States: Preamble," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed October 20, 2021), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/preamble.asp#:~:text=We%2C%20the%20people%20of%20the,for%20 the%20United%20States%20of; Alexander Hamilton, "From Alexander Hamilton to James Duane, 3 September 1780," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Hamilton/01-02-02-0838.

Writing in pseudonymous fashion once again, Hamilton purported, “Aristides complains that the American has charged Mr. Jefferson with being the patron and promoter of national disunion, national insignificance, public disorder and discredit. The American however, has only affirmed, that ‘the real or pretended political tenets of that gentleman tend’ to those points.” Most any criticism was met with disdain:

> If Mr. Jefferson’s opposition to the funding system, to the bank, and to the other measures which are connected with the administration of the national finances had ceased, when those measures had received the sanction of law; nothing more could have been said, than, that he had transgressed the rules of official decorum, in entering the lists against the head of another department (between whom and himself, there was a reciprocal duty to cultivate harmony) that he had been culpable in pursuing a line of conduct, which was calculated to sow the seeds of discord in the executive branch of the government, in the infancy of its existence.
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> But when his opposition extended beyond that point; when it was apparent, that he wished to render odious, and of course to subvert (for in a popular government these are convertible terms) all those deliberate and solemn acts of the legislature, which had become the pillars of the public credit, his conduct deserved to be regarded with a still severer eye.[63]

Hamilton viewed Jefferson’s opposition at illegitimate. In the former’s eyes, if an opposed measure made it through the constitutional processes, duly sanctioned by both the executive and legislative powers, then it deserved the support of the various stakeholders—constituents and pundits alike. In Hamilton’s view, it was Jefferson’s duty—especially as a leader in government—to support such a measure, even if he disagreed with the policy. Once overruled by the prevailing opinion, there was no higher principle or duty than to submit to and support the administration. Continuing in what

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[63] Alexander Hamilton, “Catullus No. III, 29 September 1792,” *Founders Online* (Accessed October 21, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-12-02-0347; Alexander Hamilton, “From Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, 26 May 1792.” Hamilton had already established that Jefferson and Madison were leading a seditious faction. In an earlier letter from 1792, he wrote that “It was not ’till the last session that I became unequivocally convinced of the following truth—'That Mr. Madison cooperating with Mr. Jefferson is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration, and actuated by views in my judgment subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the union, peace and happiness of the Country.’”

the Secretary of the Treasury saw as obstinance rather than opposition was not only distasteful but also subversive.

Jefferson saw his opposition not only as legitimate but wholly natural to a republican form of government. Writing to fellow republican James Sullivan of the allegiances of each respective party, the newly elected Vice President explained:

> Where a constitution, like ours, wears a mixed aspect of monarchy and republicanism, it's citizens will naturally divide into two classes of sentiment, according as their tone of body or mind, their habits, connections, and callings induce them to wish to strengthen either the monarchical or the republican features of the constitution. Some will consider it as an elective monarchy which had better be made hereditary, and therefore endeavor to lead towards that all the forms and principles of it's administration. Others will [view it] as an energetic republic, turning in all it's points on the pivot of free and frequent elect[ions]. The great body of our native citizens are unquestionably of the republican sentiment.[64]

One gets a sense of Jefferson's view of the union—a mixture of the English model and the classical republic—from this letter, but there is also a clear effort to distinguish between the two developing parties and acknowledge where he stood on such issues. To Jefferson, legitimate opposition was "an energetic republic" at work, not factional discord for the express purpose of disunity as Hamilton saw it.

The contest of 1796 showcased a remarkably different condition than both previous presidential contests. The battle for the presidency was the arena in which the infant parties vied for public opinion and attempted to uphold their respective versions of the public good, but the move to do so came rather late in 1796, as it was not until mid-September that the President made news of his retirement official and delivered his Farewell Address to the press. It seems fitting that such a momentous resignation took place in the very arena Washington tended to abhor and his successors would utilize with

[64] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, 9 February 1797."

greatest efforts to manipulate for their respective agendas.[65] During the Adams administration, foreign policy once again entrenched both sides in a battle over the nature of the Revolution and the future of the republic. "In popular politics, the winning argument for the Constitution had been the promise that greater stability would bring prosperity."[66]

This was, no doubt, the fear of Federalist Party leaders in both the contests of 1796 and 1800. Whether a perceived fear or a mere tool of partisan politicking, the view that French influence could undermine the early republic was cause for concern by the first contest. During the Adams administration, Jeffersonians or Republicans became the equivalent of "Jacobins," the French revolutionaries responsible for the bloody events of the Reign of Terror. Federalists feared that the Jacobin Reign of Terror in France would similarly result in what Fisher Ames said would be a Jeffersonian "reign of rigor and agitation" in the United States.[67] They worried that Jefferson was the fulfillment of

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[65] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest*, 182-84, 218-223. Pasley notes that while much had changed in the political arena by the end of Washington's second term, the notion of a public campaign was far from imagined in the 1790s. Speculations and rumors as to his retirement circulated but with little legitimacy until he published his official and momentous Farewell Address in September of 1796. In referencing Washington's first farewell in 1783, Pasley calls into question the General's sincerity in departure and focuses instead on the brilliant political maneuvering the first farewell achieved by extinguishing the tensions between Congress and the Continental Army, however, Pasley admits his sincerity in longing for retirement after entering the political realm as president. Again, though, Pasley focuses on the Farewell Address as a key piece of Hamiltonian politicking more than a disinterested plea to the young nation to stay the course. But he admits, "on the whole, Washington was much more concerned with vindicating his own reputation and policies than scoring points against the opposition." Pasley's mention of the president's precision in even the font style and size selections casts doubt upon his statements that make Washington out to be a mere Hamiltonian puppet. It is the persuasion of this thesis that although Hamilton's posturing in the Washington administration reared its head countless times, the Great Cincinnatus was more a manager of his own policies and public proclamations than Pasley lets on. Again, Pasley even admits to the disinterested nature of the Farewell Address clear down to the newspaper of choice. Rather than the known "mouthpiece" of Hamiltonian policy, the *Gazette of the United States,* Washington chose the less partisan and duly respected paper, the *American Daily Advertiser*, as it would be trusted by Republicans and Federalists alike.

[66] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The First Presidential Contest*, 63.

[67] Fisher Ames quoted in Charles O. Lerche, Jr., "Jefferson and the Election of 1800: A Case Study in the Political Smear," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (October, 1948), 482.

Washington's warning, claiming, "When a man is the favorer, and the favorite of a nation, which has heaped injuries on the head of his country, he is the last man to whom his fellow-citizens should entrust the government."[68] The Federalist Party increasingly viewed France as a foe, and by 1800, anyone seen as a close friend of France was consequently deemed an enemy and traitor to the United States. This line of thinking and policy, however, would ironically create more enemies within the United States than without. Even famed Federalist founder, Alexander Hamilton recognized a policy taken too far, saying in 1800, "It is in regard to our foreign relations, that the public measures of Mr. Adams first attract criticism."[69]

It was apparent by 1796 that factions could be logical vehicles for asserting one's political goals. Charles O. Lerche, Jr. points out that public office paved the way to assert a party's power: "power to advance one's own interests and to destroy those of one's adversary."[70] Republicans or "Jacobins," dependent upon the context, assumed the role of growing popular opposition to their Federalist rivals. Federalists became the party of order, Republicans the party of freedom. As Jefferson put it, "The cherishment of the people, then, was our principle, the fear and distrust of them that of the other party."[71] Federalists played upon the fear of "Jacobin" anarchy, while Republicans pointed to the "Tory" tendencies of near-monarchy under Federalist control.[72] Thus, the groundwork for a two-party system resulted from the tensions within the Washington administration,

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[68] "Address to the Citizens of South Carolina" quoted in Lerche, 485.

[69] Alexander Hamilton, "Letter from Alexander Hamilton, concerning the public conduct and character of John Adams, Esq. president of the United States, 1800," *Hathi Trust Digital Library* (Accessed February 21, 2019), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010413581.

[70] Charles O. Lerche, Jr., "Jefferson and the Election of 1800," 467.

[71] Lance Banning, ed. *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle,* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), 354. This is from the June 12, 1823 correspondence between Jefferson and Justice William Johnson.

[72] Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!,'" 1271.

and that administration's conflicts would swiftly find their way into the electoral debacle that resulted from the election of 1796.

The pairing together of political opponents, Adams and Jefferson, in 1796 was but a prequel to the crisis of 1800. In this contest, Adams saw himself as the natural heir to Washington and a clear candidate for maintaining order and stability in the midst of what he perceived to be democratization. On the other hand, a reluctant Jefferson felt called out of his retirement to come to the rescue of the nation once again in a manner not unlike that of the Revolution two decades prior.[73] Jefferson, as always, was shrewdly calculated in his bid for the presidency in 1800, though. Like Washington and many of the founding generation, he was concerned with his image and legacy. He had even gone so far as to identify the two competing interests and parties, saying of them, "one which fears the people most, the other the government." Jefferson's own fears of an "Anglican and monarchical…party" roused him from retirement to challenge Federalist control of all three branches of the federal government and what he foresaw as the creation of a true New England, a mirror image of Mother England. According to John Ferling, however, Jefferson's real worries stemmed not from Adams's inclinations as much as from those extreme Federalists within the party, namely the Hamiltonians whom Jefferson grew ever anxious of in mid-1796.[74]

In what would strike modern voters as bizarre, the campaign for the presidency that followed Washington's September 1796 Farewell Address was anything but a campaign. Three of the four frontrunners, Adams, Jefferson, and Charles Pinckney of

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[73] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson,* 69, 76-7, 81.

[74] Jefferson, Thomas. "I. Thomas Jefferson to Philip Mazzei, 24 April 1796." *Founders Online*. Accessed October 10, 2021. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-29-02-0054-0002; John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 76-7.

South Carolina, as Ferling points out, thought “voters should come to them” (Aaron Burr did openly campaign). While political factions gave way to political parties by 1800, in 1796 these parties were hardly organized and solidified enough to coordinate a full-fledged campaign for the presidency. Nevertheless, though primitive in organization, the two divergent party ideologies were quite potent. For some, it was about electing a like-minded statesman, but for most, it was about protecting the presidency from the potential peril that might come with the election of one’s political opponent. Ultimately, Adams narrowly defeated Jefferson in the Electoral College vote, but more importantly, these two rivals found themselves antagonists within the same administration for the next four years. The lack of a coordinated campaign was partially to blame, and the consequences of such a faux pas would ultimately cement the crises of 1800, as well as underline the sectional tendencies or “geographical discriminations” of each party as Washington had so aptly predicted.[75]

Under Adams, Federalists added fuel to the factional fires. By keeping Washington’s cabinet intact, Adams invited the Hamiltonians and the more extreme Federalist wing to help direct policies from the executive branch once again. Rather than assuage the fears of their Republican counterparts, they built upon the pro-monarchical tendencies their political rivals exploited in the press. Jefferson conceived the idea for a second revolution during his tenure as vice president as it became gradually clearer how much of a Hamiltonian revolution had taken place since independence.[76] The XYZ Affair and the Alien and Sedition Acts provided plenty of political fodder for the Jeffersonian camp, namely the fight over the constitutional principle of federalism. Did

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[75] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson,* 85-87.
[76] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 96-7, 104.

states retain more power than the federal government or vice versa? That question led Republicans to assert states' rights in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions as well as pave the way for talk of nullification and potentially secession when the federal government appeared to be overstepping its constitutional authority by way of the Tenth Amendment.[77]

When the French snubbed the U.S. delegation in what later was known as the XYZ Affair, Adams's political popularity soared in tandem with a new nationalistic wave. Riding this wave, Federalists took aim at Jefferson and his prized partisan press all in the name of national security in the Alien and Sedition Acts. Unfortunately for Adams but fortunately for Jefferson, the Federalists rode this wave too far, taking measures even beyond what Hamilton thought acceptable and seizing what the extreme faction of the Federalist Party saw as "a glorious opportunity to destroy [the Republican] faction."[78] This attempt to silence Republican voices eventually backfired on the Federalists, whose fear-mongering ironically started to resemble their once-feared rivals, the "Jacobin" radicals. This signaled the implosion of the Federalist Party, as Hamilton himself turned on the President, producing one of the most damning caricatures of Adams on the eve of the election of 1800.[79]

It is one thing to be criticized by the opposing party; it is quite another to become the target of what Sharp fittingly described as "vitriolic and venomous" ridicule from your own party's leader. When it became clear that leaders in the Federalist Party would

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[77] Terri Diane Halperin, *The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798: Testing the Constitution*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), 103-06; Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!,'" 1271.

[78] Massachusetts Senator, Theodore Sedgwick quoted in Ferling, John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson,* 111.

[79] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 112, 140.

not endorse Adams, Alexander Hamilton became the President's chief adversary. Adams levied blame against Hamilton for transpiring against the President, and Adams's late-term cabinet overhaul was largely a result of what he found to be sabotage by Hamilton's henchmen.[80]

In late October of 1800, the Federalist leader responded.[81] A *Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams* claimed that "Occurrences which have either happened or come to light since the election of Mr. Adams to the Presidency, confirming my unfavorable forebodings of his character, have given new and decisive energy, in my mind, to the sentiment of his unfitness for the station." This was just one overarching statement of many claims Hamilton's letter revealed. Elsewhere, Hamilton spoke of the President's propensity toward "jealousy," his "ungovernable temper" and "paroxysms of anger that deprive him of self command"—a man whose "gusts of passion" have left many leaders of government "humiliated by the effect."[82] To Hamilton, Adams was the leader of the Federalist faction bound to destroy the progress made under Washington. In response to the pointed assaults, Adams attacked Hamilton for leading a pro-British faction.[83] Ironically, despite the sharp criticism, Hamilton did not fall victim to the Sedition Act for his disparaging remarks, though some called for just that.[84] However, the remarks most definitely emboldened Republican leaders and foreshadowed the role that the factional strife

[80] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, 112.

[81] Terri Diane Halperin, *The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798*, 121-22.

[82] Alexander Hamilton, "Letter from Alexander Hamilton, concerning the public conduct and character of John Adams, Esq. president of the United States, 1800," *Hathi Trust Digital Library* (Accessed February 21, 2019), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010413581.

[83] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, 113-14.

[84] Terri Diane Halperin, *The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798*, 122.

working within the Federalist Party might play in the presidential crisis looming on the horizon.[85]

The election of 1800 was perhaps the truest test of whether or not the young United States republic could survive "the baneful effects of the spirit of party" better than its republican ancestors had—whether or not the virtue of disinterestedness would falter in the face of factional conflict and practical party allegiances.[86] Though the transition to Adams had come with its own difficulties, the election of 1800 stands out as a clear political crisis for the young nation. This is the occasion upon which partisanship would cement itself in the early republic, but its origins stemmed from the revolutionary government of 1776.

The election of 1800 was a three-fold crisis. Its origins stemmed from one of the founding generation's greatest fears, namely factions, which by this point had matured into powerful political parties and were poised to wreak havoc in the young republic as they had in so many republics of the past. Sharp asserts that the election of 1800 was one of the most critical elections in American history, second only to that of 1860, which resulted in the Civil War.[87] The election of 1800 also signaled that parties were becoming permanent fixtures of the political landscape of the early republic—what surfaced in 1796 following Washington's departure looked all the more secure in 1800, namely party politics. Disinterestedness appeared on the decline—a virtue less practicable for the emerging politics of the period. From the electoral debacle in the tie for the presidency to the potential for conflict after the sweeping Jeffersonian Revolution

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[85] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, 113.

[86] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed February 21, 2019), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing. asp.

[87] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, xii.

and the resulting Supreme Court decision in *Marbury v. Madison*, no branch of government escaped the effects of the election. What began as sectional and factional strife in the late 1780s developed into a full-fledged "partisan inferno" by 1800.[88]

Unlike the almost absent campaign for the presidency in 1796, the push for the presidency in 1800 started early, developed into vile scandalmongering, and laid the foundation for future election cycles.[89] The partisan press went to work, elevating their political views and party leaders, while also implementing a no holds barred approach in targeting their political adversaries. Tocqueville again noted the potency of the press: "The two chief weapons which parties use in order to ensure success are the public press and the formation of associations."[90] While both Federalists and Republicans had plenty of newspapers and pamphleteers at their disposal in order to reach their various constituents, the Republicans had a clear advantage, having recently and successfully utilized the press to leverage their voice during the Adams administration's Alien and Sedition Acts.[91]

Voter turnout was an obvious sign of the political polarization and galvanization that had transpired between Washington and Jefferson. Whereas 35 percent was typical through the 1790s, as many as 70 percent of constituents of several states exercised their civic duties in 1800.[92] When constituents cast their votes, they voted according to party. So fine-tuned was the partisanship, that by 1800 an exact tie emerged between the two Republican candidates, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr.[93] One elector's vote could

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[88] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 99.
[89] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 135.
[90] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.
[91] Terri Diane Halperin, *The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798*, 12-3, 99, 121.
[92] Andrew W. Robertson, "'Look on This Picture... And on This!,'" 1271-272.
[93] Joyce Appleby, "Presidents, Congress, and Courts: Partisan Passions in Motion," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 2 (September, 2001), 410.

have changed the entire election in favor of either Jefferson or Burr, but instead, this unforeseen "straight ticket" vote would have to be decided in the House of Representatives, per Article II of the Constitution. The issue there was, of course, a Federalist-controlled Congress—now presented with a tempting opportunity for political sabotage among their Republican rivals. It took thirty-five rounds of voting in the House to gain a majority of states and determine Jefferson's victory. This later led to the Twelfth Amendment, preventing such a political conundrum from recurrence; however, this presidential debacle was just one of many potentially precarious situations that arose from the election of 1800.[94]

The election of 1800 highlighted "opposing visions of the proper role of the people in a republic."[95] The right of legitimate, popular opposition, while a commonplace component of modern politics, was unknown and untested in 1800.[96] Because the election of 1796 did not see a major shift in terms of party power, and the fact that Jefferson graciously accepted his narrow defeat, the election of 1800 was in many ways the proving ground for popular opposition.[97] This was thought to be as a second revolution in 1796—the bloodless Jeffersonian Revolution to historians—one in which Jefferson could not remain on the sidelines. Not only did the Republicans eventually gain the executive branch after a secondary crisis in the Federalist-controlled House of Representatives, they also gained majorities in both houses of Congress, something they had failed to do despite Jefferson's predictions in 1796.[98] Yet, to

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[94] Joyce Appleby, "Presidents, Congress, and Courts," 411, John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 212.

[95] Terri Diane Halperin, *The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798*, 96.

[96] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, xi.

[97] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 94.

[98] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 85, 93.

discount the idea of bloodshed in the context of the heated contest would be a misunderstanding, to say the least.

On the domestic front, where citizens had taken to the streets in protests resembling those of the 1770s, the situation appeared volatile. A tie in the Electoral College as well as the sweeping changes already taking place in the legislature only exacerbated the situation. On the international front, continued European conflicts only prompted rumors of what might occur with the four potential candidates still in the running for the newly completed White House. [99] Events in revolutionary France had a sobering effect on the young American republic, with a toppled French monarchy only to be replaced by a dictatorship with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte in the fall of 1799.[100] The French dream of a sister republic fell victim to the violence of faction just as the many historical examples Americans of the revolutionary generation were all too familiar with—the potential for bloodshed was no imagined fear.

Finally, in Federalists' final attempt to assert federal authority in the wake of losing both the executive and legislative branches, John Adams signed into law the Judiciary Act of 1801, otherwise known as the "Midnight Judges Act" for its lateness into the Adams' term. This attempt to stack the federal courts with Federalist-leaning judges was another sign of partisan politicking and just how pivotal the election of 1800 was in terms of the future direction of the early republic. The act led to a battle involving all three branches of government and a crisis over federal authority as well as the principle of checks and balances. *Marbury v. Madison* simultaneously and ironically halted the executive branch's last-ditch effort to stack the courts, overturned part of the legislative

[99] Joyce Appleby, "Presidents, Congress, and Courts," 411.
[100] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, 132.

branch's Judiciary Act of 1789, and arguably created the judicial branch's greatest power. This landmark case and showdown of federal authority fundamentally changed the United States' system of government.

The resolution reached in the House of Representatives that elevated Jefferson to the executive office was not a solution to the animosity and tensions felt by a society that had grown "dangerously polarized."[101] It did, however, signal a successful and peaceful transfer of power from one political party to another. A certain party paradox existed in that while people hoped for the long endurance of the republic, they also had grown increasingly hostile toward those of dissenting beliefs.[102]

Much had changed from the inauguration of Washington to that of Jefferson. The inaugural festivities alone reveal an obvious divergence from a once united republic to one on the verge of yet another revolution. People across the United States lined the streets to celebrate Washington's elevation to the executive; protests and partisan press accompanied Jefferson's rise twelve years later. To conciliate his rivals in his inaugural address, Jefferson said, "We are all Federalists; we are all Republicans"—an obvious statement of disinterest.[103] However, as John Ferling writes, "Jefferson's protests of disinterest always had a hollow ring."[104] The actions of both parties and the outcomes of the election reflected anything but disinterested leaders above the fray of factional politics; instead, this would be the new norm in terms of elections following the election of 1800.

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[101] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, 2.

[102] James Roger Sharp, *The Deadlocked Election of 1800*, xi, 4.

[103] Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801," *Avalon Project*, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed February 21, 2019), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ 19th_century/ jefinau1.asp.

[104] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 76.

Although the election was resolved in the House of Representatives, Jefferson's fears of losing to his intended "running mate" abated, and the republic seemingly on stable ground. By 1804, though, there was still unfinished business between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton—business stemming directly from the animosities created in the struggle for the executive branch in 1800. Perhaps the bloodless revolution of 1800 would have at least one victim.[105]

Charles Lerche suitably labeled Hamilton's endorsement of Jefferson over Burr, in the tie broken by a Federalist House majority, the "final irony" among the complicated and chaotic events of 1800.[106] Amid the electoral tie, Hamilton wrote to fellow Federalists in the House of Representatives in an attempt to sway them toward an elevation of Jefferson in December of 1800. With such phrases as, "By no means, my Dear Sir, let the Federalists be responsible for his Elevation – In a choice of Evils let them take the least – Jefferson is in every view less dangerous than Burr," Hamilton not only asserted his still-prevalent influence in the highest levels of government but also solidified a permanent grudge with Mr. Burr, one that would end in the dueling death of Alexander Hamilton in 1804.[107] Four years after the election's outcome, partisanship still played a patent role. The presidential battle between Adams and Jefferson went well beyond each president, demonstrating far-reaching factional effects.

In many ways, the relationship between Adams and Jefferson was a microcosm of American society in the late eighteenth century. The American Revolution brought

[105] John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson*, 211.

[106] Charles O. Lerche, Jr., "Jefferson and the Election of 1800," 488.

[107] Alexander Hamilton "Alexander Hamilton to Harrison Gray Otis, December 23, 1800," The Gilder Lehrman Collection (Accessed April 16, 2019), https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/t-00496-028.pdf.

together those from very different geographic, economic, and political spheres. It brought thirteen separate colonies together to fight a common enemy. It brought together a Massachusetts-born John Adams, who came from rather humble beginnings, with a wealthy Virginia native, Thomas Jefferson, to write a declaration and help lead the colonies in their push for independence. The aftermath of the Revolution, though, saw sectional differences begin to cement themselves once more. As political infighting began to chip away at revolutionary unity, Adams and Jefferson too, found themselves drifting apart. Looking back on the origin of their disagreements, Adams wrote, "The first time that you and I differed in opinion on any material question was after your arrival from Europe; and that point was the French Revolution."[108] Then, forced into an administration for four tense years by way of an early Electoral College gaffe, the Adams administration seemed a pointed example of the growing party polarization all over the United States. This was the context of the election of 1800; this was the foundation for the United States' second revolution.

The election of 1800 signaled the solidification of the first-party system, a two-party contest that lasted until the end of the Era of Good Feelings when the more potent and permanent second-party system usurped the perceived peaceful unity that appeared to many staunchly Jeffersonian and Republican. By the close of the War of 1812, Washington's admonishments, "the disinterested warnings of a parting friend," seemed to

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[108] Lance Banning, ed. *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle*, 352-53. Banning closes his compilation of party struggles with "The Adams-Jefferson Correspondence" which details the redemption of the two pivotal leaders' relationship from 1813 to 1816. This came from a letter Adams wrote to Jefferson on July 13, 1813. In June of the same year, Adams had asked rather pointedly, "You never felt the terrorism of Shays's Rebellion in Massachusetts. I believe you never felt the terrorism of Gallatin's Insurrection in Pennsylvania…You certainly never felt the terrorism excited by Genet in 1793…What think you of terrorism, Mr. Jefferson?" Ever one to justify his opinions and actions, even decades afterwards when the friendship was rekindled, Adams provides insight into the major differences each leader felt; it is an indication of the major party divisions and respective views of republicanism.

have fallen on deaf ears.[109] Martin Van Buren wrote, "The return of peace naturally revived rival aspirations for political distinction which had been in some degree suspended, on the Republican side, by engrossing cares and responsibilities of the War."[110] Like the aftermath of the Revolution, cooling tensions from the War of 1812 shifted focus from the common enemy of Great Britain to renewed domestic rivalries. The notion of Gordon's "public spirited Man," was changing, indeed it had already undergone significant transformation. The ability to maintain "an honest and disinterested heart" had become increasingly difficult and perhaps impractical.[111]

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[109] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796."

[110] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 66.

[111] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four*, 197-98.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVOLUTION OF DISINTERESTEDNESS

> In this predicament, to retreat is impossible; for a people cannot restore the vivacity of its earlier times, any more than a man can return to the innocence and the bloom of childhood; such things may be regretted, but they cannot be renewed. The only thing, then, which remains to be done is to proceed, and to accelerate the union of private with public interests, since the period of disinterested patriotism is gone by forever.[1]

Alexi de Tocqueville's perception of party provides a practical yet yielding disposition toward the diminished influence of disinterested politics; something had perceptibly changed. Though a laudable attribute, he seemingly admits its defeat in the wake of an increasingly overwhelming partisan political culture. The context of the mid-nineteenth century, a time when the second party system had firmly taken root, provided the logical impetus for such a characterization of the political status of the United States. It is of little surprise, then, that in the era known to many historians as the "Age of Jackson," party allegiance and discipline emerged as indispensable to both Democrats and Whigs—each party began to see the notion of disinterestedness as disconnected from the political realities of the day. What Tocqueville observed was an evolution more than an abolition, though. Both Gordon's "public-spirited man" as well as Washington's "disinterested warnings of a parting friend" still held sway among even the most partisan pundits of the

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[1] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

second party system. Just as the republic had grown more democratic with maturity, so too did classical virtues such as disinterestedness evolve alongside these major political forces. For a fleeting moment following the War of 1812 and prior to the inauguration of the second party system, though, it looked as though classical disinterestedness was mounting a significant comeback in the political culture of the day.

The famed headline, "ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS," now enshrined in American memory as a unique historical period, was at first a commentary on the momentary pause in party division. Benjamin Russell's July 12, 1817, *Columbia Centinel's* brief but influential article opened with these words: "During the late Presidential Jubilee many persons have met at festive boards, in pleasant-converse, whom party politics had long severed."[2] The proclamation came from a known Federalist paper, proving the authenticity of the remarks, in the wake of yet another anti-Federalist president.

By 1817, Jeffersonian Republicans had controlled the federal government for nearly two decades—their reign seemed impenetrable and the union appeared secure. But to assume that there were no signs of dissension dismisses either the limited nature of post-war unity or the dynamic and diverse currents of factional interests alive and at work—if temporarily taciturn. The Era of Good Feelings, ushered in at the close of the War of 1812 and the inauguration of the United States' fifth president brought the first party system to a close, but by President James Monroe's second term, a new, spirited second party system took its place. Jefferson reflected on such misplaced feelings or perhaps the misnomer itself in his correspondence: "for you are not to believe that these

[2] Erick Trickey, "The Brief Period, 200 Years Ago, When American Politics Was Full of 'Good Feelings,'" *Smithsonian Magazine*, Smithsonian Institution, 2020 (Accessed April 22, 2020), https://www.smithsonianmag.com /history/there-was-time-briefly-and-200-years-ago-when-american-politics-was-full-good-feelings-180964074/, July 17, 2017.

two parties are amalgamated, that the lion & the lamb are lying down together, the Hartford Convention, the victory of Orleans, the peace of Ghent prostrated the name of Federalism."[3] Factional discord may have recoiled, but it would return with resilience following the decline of the Federalist Party, the onset of the Panic of 1819, and the discordant Missouri crisis of 1820.

As President Monroe took office in March of 1817, just a few months before the headline that hallowed his presidency in immortal glee and title a chapter in American history, the sentiments of good feeling emerged. "[M]y fellow-citizens have given me…their confidence in calling me to the high office," Monroe began, and "my attention is naturally drawn to the great causes which have contributed in a principal degree to produce the present happy condition of the United States."[4] In fact, Monroe makes mention of the nation's happiness, prosperity, and felicity over a dozen times in the course of his first message to Congress and the American people, charting a clear trajectory for his upcoming sixteen-week summer tour of the country when the famed phrase was coined after a stop in New England. His purpose was clear: national unity.[5]

The New England stops were particularly important in attaining this mission. In an early nineteenth-century reach across the aisle, Monroe intentionally sought to mend the Republican relationship with their Federalist foes. Feelings were mutual among

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[3] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 23, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/ documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3843.

[4] James Monroe, "March 4, 1817: First Inaugural Address," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed April 22, 2020), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-4-1817-first-inaugural-address.

[5] C. Edward Skeen, *1816: America Rising*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 233; Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party: The First American Presidency, 1789-1829,* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 125. Ketcham makes the shrewd observation that Monroe's tour very much embodied those of former "patriot kings" of a perceived bygone era.

Federalist leaders. Former Governor of Massachusetts and United States Senator, Christopher Gore, who related to fellow Senator Rufus King, "It is said to be necessary to show all party spirit done away, & to attain the favour of the Gov't," displayed a candid willingness to embrace the new president despite the impediment of past party allegiances. King was Monroe's opposition to the presidency in the bid for 1816.[6] It appeared as if Jefferson's words from two decades earlier were coming to pass; "We are all Republicans; we are all Federalists."[7]

The trip, however, also drew criticism. Monroe noted such unwelcome feelings to Madison, "It has been charg'd on me, to hav⟨e⟩ reard them up, & my trip to the Eastward, more particularly, has been alledged as the cause. But in what mode? Both parties, met me embodied together, & I receivd them with civility & kindness." The detractors felt that Monroe was engaged in a sort of appeasement that would eventually ruin the Republican stronghold by integrating Federalists into their ranks. Monroe's defense against what he considered to be baseless criticism was one of disinterestedness. Rather than promoting dangerous amalgamation and lack of party discipline, Monroe felt he had done just what was necessary at the time, as he reflected, "No allurment has been offerd to the federalists, to calm them down, into a state of tranquility. None of them have been appointed to high offices, & very few to the lowest. Their misconduct in the late war, & the success of that war broke them as a party." Rather than mollify the Federalists, he had all but eliminated the opposition party, laying the groundwork for

[6] Christopher Gore quoted in Skeen, *1816: America Rising*, 234.

[7] Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801," Avalon Project, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed February 21, 2019). http://avalon.law.yale.edu/ 19th_century/jefinau1.asp.

something he dreamt of, namely a republic free of party strife—something the world had never known, but which he believed the US capable of modeling for the future.[8]

Political parties, known to the founding generation as "baneful" and "dangerous vice," slowly developed into political reality.[9] They may have begun "unintentionally," as Michael Wallace claimed, but political utility led to "party competition as a fixture of political life," one eventually deemed "eminently desirable."[10] By the end of the 1820s—with the emergence of the second party system—factions, in many ways, had moved from necessary evil to positive good. However, Monroe's near-unanimous electoral victory in 1820 seemed to be a reversal of the reality and perhaps a glimpse into what the founders envisioned, namely a political leadership above interests and party allegiances. Louis Hartz fittingly remarked of the relapse in rivalry, "American politics was a romance in which the quarrel preceded the kiss." Monroe comes in a close second to Washington's perceived unanimity and ability to overcome various divisions within the Union. Perhaps historians such as Ralph Ketcham are correct in asserting the lapse in factional strife—at least to the point of acknowledging what Hartz insightfully perceived as Americans lack of "a cause" with which to attach much political and philosophical development. Relative to movements of the sort in England, Hartz proposed that it was perhaps industrialization that brought many of the political thoughts and reforms in Europe.[11] In America, though, there was something remarkably stale about the period.

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[8] James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 28, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-02-02-0445.

[9] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796," Avalon Project, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed April 26, 2019), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp; James Madison, "The Federalist Papers: No. 10," Avalon Project, Yale University Law School, 2008 (Accessed April 26, 2019), https://avalon. law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp.

[10] Michael Wallace, "Changing Concepts of Party in the United States: New York, 1815-1828," The American Historical Review 74, no. 2 (December, 1968): 453.

[11] Louis Hartz. *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 140, 141; Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above*

Even though the period's title might be viewed as a misnomer in many ways, the label "Era of Good Feelings" is not completely without merit.

It would have been a fitting accomplishment for Monroe, himself a relic from the Revolution and the last of the Virginia dynasty, what Ketcham called "the last of the cocked hats." As he neared the conclusion of his first message to Congress, Monroe saw the possibilities associated with the apparent camaraderie. "Equally gratifying is it to witness the increased harmony of opinion which pervades our Union. Discord does not belong to our system."[12] This too would pass. For the time, though, Monroe and other Republican leaders looked to the clear advantages laid before them. In ironic fashion, General Jackson wrote to the presumed President-elect Monroe in November of 1816,

> By selecting characters conspicuous for their probity, virtue, capacity and firmness, without any regard to party, you will go far to, if not entirely, eradicate those feelings which, on former occasions, threw so many obstacles in the way of government; and, perhaps, have the *pleasure* and *honor* of uniting a people heretofore politically divided. The chief magistrate of a great and powerful nation should never indulge in party feelings. His conduct should be liberal and disinterested, *always* bearing in mind that he acts for the *whole*, and not a *part* of the community.[13]

One is likely to be struck first by the sardonic—if only Jackson, king of the "Kitchen Cabinet," had followed his own disinterested advice. However, to assume his words were insincere would be an egregious error. How could someone eventually tagged with

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Party, 124. Ketcham does admit that a valid argument has been made in favor of the period being a misnomer by a number of historians as well, citing the fact that Monroe's own personal correspondence showed he understood fully that party animosities had not completely subsided.

[12] Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 125; Monroe, "March 4, 1817: First Inaugural Address." Ketcham points out that Monroe had not always been so unapologetically nonpartisan—citing his work as a Jeffersonian in the 1790s as well as his rivalry for the presidency against Madison in the wake of Jefferson's resignation of the high office. By the time he was inaugurated, however, much had shifted in terms of the Republican stronghold on the executive branch, thus sobering some of the competitiveness of a younger Monroe.

[13] Andrew Jackson, "From Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, Nov. 12, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, (Baltimore: Franklin Press, 1824), 165.

partisan leadership maintain such disinterested thinking, referring to himself as "an undissembled patriot?" Hofstadter offers some insight: "as it turned out, Jackson appointed more former Federalists to office than all his Republican predecessors combined." Thus, he lived up to the very request he made of Monroe. That said, Jackson also oversaw the inauguration of the so-called "spoils system," a scheme that some leaders believed "would put a premium on the skills of unscrupulous party politicians rather than wise statesmen, and make government an affair of party organization and jobs rather than policies or principles."[14] It demonstrates a complicated record and the transmission associated with disinterestedness.

Monroe concurred with Jackson's thoughts to a degree, though as Hofstadter also points out, he would have a different method for ridding the nation of factional strife once and for all. Rather than conciliation by way of cabinet positions, the President-elect wished "to give them a series of ceremonial occasions to confirm their loyalty"—much the same way he conducted his aforementioned New England tour thereafter.[15] "I agree with you, decidedly, in the principle that the chief magistrate of the country ought not to be the head of a party, but of the nation itself." He went on to describe his method for integrating Federalists who had offered "proofs of patriotism and attachment to free government;" the president did not want to perpetuate the "contest between the two parties [that] never ceased," rather he wished to avoid awarding appointments to anyone

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[14] Andrew Jackson, "From Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, Nov. 12, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University*. Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 165; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 238, 255.

[15] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 195-98; James Monroe, "From James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, Dec. 14, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University*. Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 166.. Monroe even identified the differences between his moderation and Jackson's: "the only difference between us seems to be, how far shall that spirit be indulged in the onset."

formerly or presently connected to the Federalists. That might give the impression "of compromise with them." Monroe's method was to advocate "a spirit of moderation" in order "to bring the whole into the republican fold, as quietly as possible." His letter reveals two points of import. First, he was less confident as to the end of party animosities in personal correspondence as he had been in public declarations of unity and jubilee; second, he was unwilling to placate his partisan adversaries to the extent that his successor John Quincy Adams would.[16]

"Many men, very distinguished for their talents, are of the opinion that the existence of the federal party is necessary to keep union and order in republican ranks: that is, that free government cannot exist without parties. This is not my opinion." Monroe went on to relay to Jackson what Hofstadter labels "utopian" and unabashed "American exceptionalism."[17] This is a fitting assessment in many ways. Monroe continued with an appeal to classical republicanism:

> That the ancient republics were always divided into parties; that the English government is maintained by an opposition, that is, by the existence of a party in opposition to the ministry—I well know. But, I think that the cause of these divisions is to be found in certain defects of those governments, rather than in human nature; and that we have happily avoided those defects in our system.[18]

From here, the president-elect laid out his methodology. First, he sought to keep his fellow Republicans in his good graces by awarding them the appointments Jackson had suggested be given to Federalists in part. Second, he wanted "to prevent the

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[16] James Monroe, "From James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, Dec. 14, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University*. Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 165.

[17] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 196-97.

[18] James Monroe, "From James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, Dec. 14, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University*. Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 166.

reorganization and revival of the federal party" by way of integrating these wayward Republicans back into the fold because as Monroe saw it, "the great body of the federal party are republican." This two-pronged strategy was later referred to critically as a "Fusion Policy" or "amalgamation" by Van Buren and others.[19] Monroe, acutely aware of such criticism responded to Madison, "the charge of amalgamation, is not correctly levelled at me," for the former felt that he had done everything in his control to empower Republicans while simultaneously extending an olive branch to Federalists—the latter not gaining an adequate foothold for any resurgence but rather confined to positions of minimal influence.[20] In the Little Magician's eyes, Monroe merely opened the door for Federalist infiltration by way of a lack of party discipline rather than usher in a partyless polity.

Jackson's reply showed respectful support as well as comity in nearly all facets. He detailed the measure of a man's patriotism over partisanship based upon the experiences of war, where he made a clear distinction between the "monarchists and traitors" at the Hartford Convention who claimed to be "federalists." Recounting a time when Old Hickory himself was branded a "federalist," favoring Monroe over Madison's nomination as Jefferson's heir, Jackson ended his correspondence with classical republican language: "my whole letter was intended to put you on your guard against

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[19] James Monroe, "From James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, Dec. 14, 1816," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University.* Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 166; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 230, 238.

[20] James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822."

American Sempronius's."[21] It was a fitting closing; Jackson offered a tribute to Addison's *Cato*.

Though jubilation was sincere for some, nationalism was on the assent, and party animosities may have significantly subsided in 1817—if ever temporary—the era was not simply "good feelings." C. Edward Skeen foreshadows the rift, closing his *1816: America Rising* with this statement: "Like a change in the weather, the nation was on the cusp of political, economic, and social change, looking toward the emergence of a modern political system."[22] The winds of change Skeen predicted ultimately dashed any hopes of a prolonged period of political harmony. Wilentz has gone so far as to label Monroe's second term an "Era of Bad Feelings."[23] Monroe's proposed policies for pursuing national unity and continued prosperity laid out in the second half of his inaugural message quickly diminished through political and economic hemorrhages. Chief amongst those ruptures was the slow-metastasizing issue of slavery. Working in the background of "Madison's neo-Federalism," its perceived dormancy since 1787 showed up in both subtle and powerful ways three decades later, laying the groundwork for an eventual national crisis three decades following Monroe's tenure.[24]

The decline of the Federalists precipitated a factional vacuum amongst the Democratic-Republicans that eventually divided this hybrid party into both the Democratic and Republican parties and largely along sectional lines, hardened by the

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[21] Andrew Jackson, "From Andrew Jackson to James Monroe, Jan. 6, 1817," quoted in *Niles' Weekly Register*, *Princeton University.* Accessed October 24, 2021. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Niles_ Weekly_Register/k_Ea AAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0, 167.

[22] C. Edward Skeen, *1816: America Rising*, 236.

[23] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 182.

[24] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 182.

issue of slavery.[25] One wing of the seemingly united party, as Skeen notes, gravitated toward nationalist policies previously held by Federalists, while the other faction forged a path toward states' rights.[26] The rift evident in 1787 was perhaps bridged, but the void was not filled. Federalism fundamentally remained a primary cause of factional infighting.

"Peace is the best time for improvement and preparation of every kind," Monroe observed in his first inaugural, "it is in peace that our commerce flourishes most, that taxes are most easily paid, and that the revenue is most productive."[27] Economically, the United States was poised to turn inward following the War of 1812. However, the postwar rise of "King Cotton" created an over-speculative land boom as the United States expanded west, and that westward expansion triggered a congressional crisis and economic showdown over the ever-present issue of slavery.[28] After a year in office, Monroe knew the potential volatility of the situation, remarking, "The public lands are a public stock, which ought to be disposed of to the best advantage for the nation…Great capitalists will derive the benefit incident to their superior wealth under any mode of sale which may be adopted…the profit will accrue to them and not to the public."[29] Westward expansion opened two frontiers: one of potential prosperity, the other of political conflict. The addition of four western states in Monroe's first term created numerous opportunities for economic expansion, but growth came with division. Monroe recognized the potential for class conflicts, but he may not have foreseen the

[25] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 240.
[26] C. Edward Skeen, *1816: America Rising*, 235.
[27] James Monroe, "March 4, 1817: First Inaugural Address."
[28] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 221-22, 229-30.
[29] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 202, 206; James Monroe, "December 2, 1817: First Annual Message," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed April 22, 2020), https://millercenter.org/ thepresidency/presidential-speeches/december-2-1817-first-annual-message.

interconnectedness of expansion and the explosiveness of slavery. Wilentz put it succinctly: "The major difference among the western state constitutions concerned slavery."[30] Before slavery could take center stage, though, western lands proved problematic in another way.

The postwar economic catastrophe, known as the Panic of 1819, dealt a considerable blow to the idea of "Good Feelings," as Americans entered into one of their deepest depressions to date. The Panic resulted from numerous convergent causes, from international to internal and from economic to environmental issues; however, key to the collapse was an over-speculative land boom. Monroe, in Wilentz's words, was "an unlikely promoter of vigorous postwar economic expansion and improvement," having drifted from his Jeffersonian roots during and after the War of 1812, but in his second inaugural address, months before the economic bubble burst, Monroe appeared optimistic in regards to the expansion unfolding: "The sale of the public lands during the year has also greatly exceeded, both in quantity and price, that of any former year, and there is just reason to expect a progressive improvement in that source of revenue."[31] In 1820, on the other hand, with the advantage of hindsight, Monroe admitted the connection of the ensuing panic with the over-speculation in public lands: "It is known that the purchases were made when the price of every article had risen to its greatest height, and the installments are becoming due at a period of great depression."[32] The president's

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[30] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 198.

[31] James Monroe, "November 18, 1818: Second Annual Message," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed April 27, 2020), https://millercenter.org/thepresidency/ presidential-speeches/november-16-1818-second-annual-message.

[32] James Monroe, "November 14, 1820: Fourth Annual Message," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed May 6, 2020), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/november-14-1820-fourth-annual-message.

optimism was either misplaced, or he chose to deny the economic downturn that was already underway.

By December of 1819, Monroe's optimistic tone had at least shifted to a recognition of the economic realities the nation faced: "I regret to have to state that several of our principal cities have suffered by sickness." As he opened his third annual message to Congress, the President appeared aware of the panic's implications, admitting, "that an unusual drought has prevailed in the Middle and Western States, and that a derangement has been felt in some of our moneyed institutions which has proportionably affected their credit." He quickly reverted, though, "I am happy, however, to have it in my power to assure you that the health of our cities is now completely restored."[33] Clearly, the next few months would prove just how much Monroe overstated the recovery and underestimated the economic fallout.

Perhaps more than anything, though, the Panic resulted in a resumption of the Jeffersonian and anti-Federalist arguments against a national bank, reopening the fissures of faction over fiscal policy. The Second Bank of the United States, ironically resurrected under Madison, had Monroe's backing. While banking operations ran smoothly up until 1817, its actions amid the Panic proved disastrous and appeared interested and self-serving—the same accusations Jefferson had made a generation before.[34] What became the "monster" in the Jacksonian years mutated during Monroe's presidency—from national necessity and economic expedient to an institution in the hands of corrupt elites. That sort of interestedness was a primary fear of those theorists

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[33] James Monroe, "December 7, 1819: Third Annual Message," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed May 5, 2020), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-7-1819-third-annual-message.

[34] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 205-6.

who had helped construct the republic with disinterested leadership in mind. In expectation of Monroe's 1817 victory and Washington-style prose, Jackson referred to *parties* as the monster: "Now is the time to exterminate that monster called party spirit."[35] The second national bank provided the impetus for a second party system and the resumption of party politics. The two were inextricably linked in the minds of Jeffersonians and Jacksonians. Now the monster of party spirit Jackson referenced had a face. While reigning in the "lavish lending," the national bank righted its own situation at the expense of smaller banks, businesses, and average citizens.[36] This economic problem had deep political implications.

Old Republicans now had a target, indeed a faction, on which to affix the blame for the economy, namely the National Republicans. Monroe, though on the surface above reproach based on the outcome of the 1820 election, was at the helm of these nationalistic policies. The lone electoral vote cast against the incumbent President was not out of reverence for Washington as popular myths have perpetuated but because of the perceived overreach of the national government. As Lynn W. Turner maintains, "One of the erroneous assumptions about the 'Era of Good Feelings' is that the near unanimity of the 1820 election indicated an equally wide-spread popular approval of Monroe's administration."[37] The lone elector was not alone in his sentiments. Old Republicans, like John Randolph, had growing concerns about what they considered an indifferent political climate rather than one of acquiescence. Tocqueville painted a vivid picture of

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[35] Andrew Jackson and James Monroe, *Correspondence Between General Jackson and Mr. Monroe, as Published in the National Intelligencer*, (Washington, D.C.: *National Intelligencer*, 1824), 13.

[36] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 206.

[37] Lynn W. Turner, "The Electoral Vote against Monroe in 1820-An American Legend," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 42, no. 2 (September, 1955): 253.

the events:

> It sometimes happens in a people amongst which various opinions prevail that the balance of the several parties is lost, and one of them obtains an irresistible preponderance, overpowers all obstacles, harasses its opponents, and appropriates all the resources of society to its own purposes. The vanquished citizens despair of success and they conceal their dissatisfaction in silence and in general apathy. The nation seems to be governed by a single principle, and the prevailing party assumes the credit of having restored peace and unanimity to the country. But this apparent unanimity is merely a cloak to alarming dissensions and perpetual opposition.[38]

One gets a glimpse into not only the superficial indifference but also the latent opposition of the period from the Frenchman's astute observations. It was just a matter of time or perhaps opportunity before opposition latency became party potency, for "[n]ext to hating their enemies, men are most inclined to flatter them."[39]

The perceived party apathy rapidly subsided in 1820 when those same Old Republicans found themselves in the "anti" camp once again. Reminiscent of Jefferson's anti-Federalists and strict constructionists, Republican anti-Restrictionists rose to the occasion at the close of Monroe's first term to combat nationalist policies that threatened the peculiar institution of slavery. Historians Richard H. Brown and Michael Wallace both point out that the Old Republicans were not isolated—a new bisectional coalition was in the works in Monroe's second term that brought together Van Buren's northern Albany Regency with southern Old Republicans, laying the foundations for the Democratic Party. "[T]he party of the whole nation," Brown asserts, could not remain responsive to the unique and delicate issues of local and regional constituencies, especially those of the South. Further, as Wallace contends, party competition was essential to the emerging second party system, one that thrived off of mutual political

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[38] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.
[39] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

antagonism. Party rivalry prompted party discipline, unity, and energy—quelling the apathy Randolph disdained.[40] As the Missouri crisis ensued, it became clear that the issue of slavery was more than enough to overcome political apathy and call into question the notions of unity so frequently flaunted around the purported Era of Good Feelings.

Thus, once again, "legitimate opposition" showed a new generation the benefits of party politics. For many, disinterestedness was seen as an excuse for inaction rather than seeking the public good by avoiding party affiliations. Some had always believed, like Machiavelli, in the theory that parties might provide a positive good. A Renaissance theorist many of the founding and subsequent generation read, the Florentine noted, "that in every republic there are two parties, that of the nobles and that of the people; and all the laws that are favorable to liberty result from the opposition of these parties to each other."[41] According to this line of thinking, opposition, competition, rivalry could yield positive results, not just divisive factionalism that ended in the violence feared in writings like *The Federalist*, No. 10 or what Hamilton feared in a short piece he wrote in 1793 entitled "On the Rise of a War Party." The Federalist founder wrote, "Every new political occurrence renders it more and more apparent, that there is a description of men in this country, continually on the Watch to defame and if possible to convulse the Government of the UStates."[42] The testing of these theories through a variety of convulsions—from the fiscal and foreign policy battles of the 1790s to the crises of transferring power from one party to another in 1800 to the tumult of the War of 1812.

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[40] Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Politics of Jacksonianism," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 65 (Winter, 1966): 56-9; Wallace, 476.

[41] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Historical, Political, and Diplomatic Writings of Niccolo Machiavelli*, Vol. II, Translated by Christian E. Detmold, (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882), 105; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 51-2.

[42] Alexander Hamilton, "On the Rise of a War Party, 1793," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 23, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-15-02-0433.

To some, the emergence of political rivalry became a safeguard more than a corruption—a vehicle for sustaining republican virtue more than a vice to be vehemently guarded against.

In his uniquely dense prose, Van Buren offered a sort of party apology: "But knowing, as all men of sense know, that political parties are inseparable from free governments, and that in many and material respects they are highly useful to the country, I could never bring myself for party purposes to deprecate their existence." Admitting that "divisions" are "sometimes carryed to excess & made to produce a virulence & malignity which all good men must deplore, they are notwithstanding productive of much national good."[43] It was the Little Magician's belief that parties were natural checks upon the mankind's "disposition to abuse power"—that they ought to be recognized, nay legitimized for their usefulness and serve as conduits of the peoples' interests and principles. His thinking viewed parties not so much as separate interests among the people as interests that might differ from those of power and authority in governance.[44]

In other ways, an attachment to founding notions of disinterestedness remained. Van Buren was against what he might have considered baseless partisanship, calling out Federalists he accused of "preferring the Interests of party to those of those of their country."[45] He was wholly against the type of interested party politics that one finds in the Bank of the United States. "The fact that the Bank obtained its charter thro' the most daring and unscrupulous bribery practiced upon various persons, occupying different

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[43] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 55.
[44] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 125.
[45] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 55.

positions in the public service, is undeniable."[46] This was the worst type of corruption—to Van Buren, pure interestedness.

He was someone torn between the view that parties were vice and a time that demonstrated their potential virtue. The so-called Era of Good Feelings, a time that many historians find to be lacking in partisanship, had opened up, in Van Buren's eyes, a "[r]elaxation of the rigors of party discipline and acts of amnesty in favor of vanquished federalists"—a path for Federalist infiltration because of a lack of party discipline. It was the party, specifically the Jeffersonian Republican Party, that held the key to checking the power of the "splendid schemes" Federalists had long been associated with according to Van Buren and his Albany Regency. Hofstadter intuitively commented that "[t]he phenomenon of party amalgamation in the Era of Good Feelings raised the question in many minds on both sides whether the new unanimity was being achieved on Republican or Federalist terms." That apparent apathy was of major concern to Van Buren because it opened the door for a reversal of anti-federalist, Jeffersonian accomplishments.[47]

Though historically recognized as the preeminent party "archetype" and apologist, Van Buren employed the virtue of disinterestedness with some frequency himself, illustrating that the virtue was not wholly lost but rather adapted to the realm of partisan politics. He was keenly aware that politicians might be viewed rather negatively when "making a game of politicks, and playing it to serve…personal purposes."[48] In unabashed self-reflection, Little Van remarked, "I well remember the satisfaction…that I

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[46] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 110.

[47] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 84, 85, 95, 97, 116; Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 183.

[48] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 213; Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 74. Hofstadter treats Van Buren as the leader of the "archetypes of the new advocates of party" found in the Republican faction known as the Albany Regency.

had not fallen into the error so prevalent in both parties—that of looking upon the measure with eyes chiefly directed to its political bearings." When speaking of his support of political rival DeWitt Clinton's Erie Canal project, Van Buren adamantly proposed that he "supported with fidelity and zeal every measure calculated to advance its Canal policy, and opposed as zealously, every attempt to prostitute that great interest to party purposes." He lauded the "disinterestedness of…motives," a virtue of clear admiration in describing Vice President Daniel D. Tompkins as a "most disinterested and self-denying" man. In 1820, when dealing with the Missouri Question in New York, the Red Fox of Kinderhook withheld his consent to oppose Governor Clinton's resolution on the matter stating, "because they bore on their face the stamp of political and partisan designs."[49]

Van Buren also employed the use of a pseudonym from time to time, demonstrating his awareness that disinterestedness was also not lost among his constituents and that the founding generation's practices of anonymous civil discourse had not fallen completely out of favor. Writing under the pseudonym, "Amicus Juris consultus," he took up concerns related to the payment of the militia and encouraging of privateering during the War of 1812.[50] Such disinterested designations and efforts sometimes proved frivolous. In another instance, the Red Fox wrote under the alias, "A Member of the Legislature." Van Buren admits that "A Member of the Legislature" was "generally understood, and not denied to come from me," and this could have costly effects on one's political record. In this instance, Van Buren laments, "[t]he part I took in the affair was a stereotyped charge against me for the remainder of my political career,

[49] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 99-100.
[50] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 58.

brought forward by different parties and factions in turn as the shifting phases of party politics made it their cue to lay hold of the subject."[51] Pretentious disinterestedness continued to vex the virtue's resilience in the ever-changing republican experiment.

Thus, two competing versions of republicanism—or divergent nationalisms previously discussed—remained intact as the nation navigated the "Era of Good Feelings" and the 1820s. Turner accurately assessed the period: "With the country gripped in the throes of a panic and Congress locked in deadly debate over slavery in Missouri, good feelings were often not discernible."[52] The Panic of 1819 and subsequent Missouri crisis, though separate and significant events both in terms of their blows to the Era of Good Feelings and the resultant factional discord over how to resolve them, held obvious and intricate ties, yoked together by westward expansion and territorial trials. The notable Mason-Dixon line foreshadowed much more than the extension of the United States into the Louisiana Territory; it augured and established a permanent fracture in American politics. The Thomas Proviso, which generated the infamous 36°30′ division, signified a fault line more than a latitudinal line.[53]

Despite the obvious fracture, Monroe could not help but feel the effects of an electoral landslide in 1821, seeing himself "rather as the instrument than the cause of the union which has prevailed in the late election." He went on to claim, "In surmounting…the difficulties which so often produce division in like occurrences, it is obvious that other powerful causes, indicating the great strength and stability of our Union, have essentially contributed to draw you together." While admitting the

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[51] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 101.
[52] Lynn W. Turner, "The Electoral Vote against Monroe," 254.
[53] Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis," 59.

divisiveness of the Missouri crisis, Monroe saw his election as closure to a temporary setback in the harmony associated with his administration and the good feelings to boot. The President's references to classical republicanism, though, hint at the plague of party politics well known and frequently alluded to amongst the founding generation: "In our whole system, national and State, we have shunned all the defects which unceasingly preyed on the vitals and destroyed the ancient Republics."[54] Having witnessed the factional discord surrounding the admission of Missouri into the union, Monroe's comments attempted to allay what had become increasingly apparent during his first term, namely renewed partisanship.

Fear seemed to be the compelling factor of all factions in the Missouri crisis of 1820. Southerners faced the dual fears of the strict constructionism of restrictionists and what that might mean for the peculiar institution as well as the fear of slave revolts with the gradual democratization of the population, capitalized on in the aftermath of the Vesey conspiracy. Restrictionists feared detachment from what they considered a constitutional and moral blight, one that rejected the Revolutionary creed. Finally, the moderates feared that sectional discord would halt the American nationalism they sought to use as a unifying force toward future expansion and prosperity. The moderates may have brokered compromise, but they were soon outnumbered by sectional hard-liners.[55]

Those sections would harden for the next three decades with ever-increasing intensity as the United States realized its "manifest destiny" and extended its influence across the continent. The nullification crisis of 1828 opened with a resolution calling for

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[54] James Monroe, "March 5, 1821: Second Inaugural Address," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed May 6, 2020), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-5-1821-second-inaugural-address.

[55] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 224-226, 230, 239-40, 235-37.

the limit of the sale of public lands. The Mexican-American War was bookended with the potentially volatile political prospects of what would become the American southwest. Finally, the coming of the Civil War was hastened by each of these territorial extensions, which precipitated violent contests over the issue of slavery and the nature of the union. This final episode demonstrates the "violence of faction" Madison alluded to in *The Federalist,* 10—the type of violence responsible for destroying former republics.[56]

As President Monroe gave his final message to Congress in 1824, his words rang with the sounds of unity and fraternity as he addressed "a population devoted to our happy system of government and cherishing the bond of union with internal affection." He boasted the sectional symbiosis and electoral equilibrium the nation had achieved: "What one portion wants the other may supply; and this will be most sensibly felt by the parts most distant from each other, forming thereby a domestic market and an active intercourse between the extremes and throughout every portion of our Union," and "causes which might otherwise lead to dismemberment operate powerfully to draw us closer together.[57] One cannot help but note the ironies of such statements, not just through historical hindsight, but also in light of the powerful political partisanship at work in the mid-1820s that created the second party system. Perhaps Monroe was acquiescing to the notion that parties might hold the republic in a delicate balance.

The Era of Good Feelings opened with a headline, but like most eye-catching, memorable headlines, the context reveals a more complicated story. Good feelings eventually faded, and while unity temporarily reigned, factional discord remained.

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[56] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10, November 22, 1787," 121.

[57] James Monroe, "December 7, 1824: Eighth Annual Message," Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2019 (Accessed May 6, 2020), https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-7-1824-eighth-annual-message.

Shattered by the founders' fundamental political divisions, economic downturn, and the double-edged sword of expansion, Monroe's tenure tells a much more dynamic story than just "Good Feelings." As he concluded his final message to Congress, the President appealed to national unity once more, illustrating the impact that powerful party forces had exerted during his administration: "let a generous spirit and national views and feelings be indulged, and let every part recollect that by cherishing that spirit…the general interest will not only be promoted, but the local advantage be reciprocated by all."[58] The national spirit and "general interest" he spoke of was intended to combat the ever-present spirit of party by way of disinterested patriots seeking the public good more than the aims factions. The federal government's power in regulating the economy through internal improvements or infernal institutions recommenced political divisions dormant but not dead.

Writing to his presidential predecessor, fellow Virginian, and long-time friend, James Madison in the Spring of 1822, Monroe remarked, "We have undoubtedly reachd a new epoch in our political career, which has been formd by the destruction of the federal party, so far at least not to be felt in the movment of the general govt., & especially in Congress; by the general peace, & the entire absence, of all cause, as to public measures, for great political excit'ment; & in truth, by the real prosperity of the union." In his second term, the fifth president boasted the luxury of a seemingly unbreakable Republican reign, having now lasted over two decades. Monroe admitted, "In such a state of things, it might have been presumd, that the mov'ment would have been tranquil, marked by a common effort to promote the public good," but he had witnessed something

[58] James Monroe, "December 7, 1824: Eighth Annual Message."

other than peace and progress in a seemingly partisan-free presidency. In fact, he described the so-called "Era of Good Feelings" as a "restless & disturbed state of the commonwealth, like the rolling of the waves after a storm, tho' worse than the storm itself." Still, he expected that the post-war "storms" would "subside, & leave the ship in perfect security," and he asserted that "Public opinion will react on this body, & keep it right. Surely our govt. may get on, & prosper, without the existence of parties. I have always considerd their existence as the curse of the country." It was Monroe's persistent belief that disinterestedness was still preferable and even attainable in the republic. "Parties have now calmd down, or rather have disappeard from this great theatre, and we are about to make the experiment, whether there is sufficient virtue in the people to support our free republican system of govt. My confidence is still as strong as ever in the result, but still that must be aided by all who can contribute to its support." Monore seemed to believe that the US was exceptionally poised for partyless unity, not having the "distinct orders…that exist in other countries" and breed such political division.[59]

In the same letter, though, the President expressed marked anxieties: "I have never known such a state of things, as has existed here, during the late Session, nor have I personally ever experiencd so much embarrassment, & mortification." What was the cause of "embarrassment, & mortification?" The upcoming election of 1824—the transition of power from Monroe to a successor yet unknown—was what troubled the President. Though squabbles had existed in the transitions from Jefferson to Madison, and to a lesser degree from Madison to Monroe, in terms of presidential succession amongst the Republican party, the leading pundits had yet to experience anything like the

[59] James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822."

drama that was to unfold in the election of 1824. "The approaching election, tho' distant, is a circumstance, that excites greatest interest in both houses, & whose effect, already sensibly felt, is still much to be dreaded. There being three avowed candidates in the admn., is a circumstance, which increases the embarrassment." Cabinet conflict reminiscent of Washington's administration was brewing anew. In the running for the presidency: Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford, and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. Yet to enter the race was another Monroe ally, General Andrew Jackson. "The friends of each, endeavour to annoy the others, as you have doubtless seen by the public prints. In many cases, the attacks are personal, directed against the individual."[60] One catches a glimpse of a new page in party politics, though not altogether unfamiliar when considering the personal attacks leading to the election of 1800. Still, no one would argue against the fact that 1824 ushered in a new era of less "Good Feelings" and of more party conflict. It laid the groundwork for the second party system.

The issue was internal division. The party was splintering, nay splitting into two distinct factions. "Where there is an open contest with a foreign enemy, or with an internal party, in which you are supported, by just principles, the course is plain & you have something to chear & animate you to action." Rather than the external competition of legitimate opposition known throughout the 1790s and the first party system—Tocqueville's "great parties"—this new rivalry was from within. "But we are now blessed with peace, & the success of the late war, has overwhelmed, the federal party, so that there is no division of that kind, to rally any persons, together, in support of the

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[60] James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822."

admn."[61] The blessing had become a curse. With no common political rival, the party turned to inward conflict.

Madison's response is also enlightening. "The only effect of a political rivalship among the members of the Cabinet which I anticipated, and which I believe I mentioned once in conversation with you, was an increased disposition in each to cultivate the good will of the President." Another irony surfaced. Not only was the Republican party on the brink of factional division because of decades of little to no rivalry for the presidency—the victims of victory—but the very party that developed at least partially over a fear of executive succession was now facing the prospect of what they condemned of former Federalists. Though the elder Virginian hoped "The late effects of such a rivalship" were but "a peculiarity and combination of circumstances not likely often to recur in our annals," Madison was less "sanguine" of Monroe's "inferences from the absence here of causes which have most engendered and embittered the spirit of party in former times & in other Countries." Always a mind of reason, Madison, acknowledged the problem he had always felt natural to free societies. His words, "There seems to be a propensity in free Govts. which will always find or make subjects, on which human opinions & passions may be thrown into conflict," should strike students of Madison as reminiscent of his assessment of factions in *The Federalist*, No. 10: "The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests… The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society." Though less "sanguine," he hoped that "party

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[61] James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822."

contests" would "be either so slight or so transient, as not to threaten any permanent or dangerous consequences to the character and prosperity of the Republic."[62] In Madison's view, a partyless republic was unrealistic, thus disinterested leadership was still very much a mitigating agent for the destructiveness and divisiveness of faction.

Jefferson weighed in on the subject in the Fall of 1822, writing to Albert Gallatin, then Minister to France. Feeling "the weight of 80" and the pain of arthritis, the aged Jefferson chose "write as little as possible," and yet he still made time to weigh in on a subject that he had dedicated a lifetime to achieve, namely the health and happiness of the Union. He put it simply, "I will confine my self to our own affairs." The upcoming election of 1824 was on his mind, though he felt it was unnecessarily early to be concerned with the transition: "you have seen in our papers how prematurely they are agitating the question of the next President." From his thoughts on the subject, he did not have much confidence in the proposed nominees, saying, "the misfortune is that the persons most looked to as successors in the government, are of the President's Cabinet; & their partisans in Congress are making a handle of these things to help or hurt those for or against whom they are." The interests of each of the candidates inspired Jefferson to provide his own take on the plague of partisanship now threatening to destroy the Republican party he had worked so long and hard to establish.[63]

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[62] James Madison, "From James Madison to James Monroe, 18 May 1822," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 28, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/04-02-02-0447; Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 129; James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10, November 22, 1787," 121. Ketcham also notes the irony, saying "the very demise of open party opposition had surrounded him with factionalism within his 'amalgamated' party perhaps more intense and pathological than Jefferson or Madison ever faced from openly hostile Federalists."

[63] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 29 October 1822," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 28, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3123.

If Madison was less "sanguine" than Monroe, then Jefferson was even less so: "you are told indeed that there are no longer parties among us. that they are all now amalgamated, the lion & the lamb lie down together in peace. do not believe a word of it. the same parties exist now as ever did." Jefferson saw the Federalists as having emerged under a new name, only giving up overt desires for "monarchism" but still advocating for "consolidated government." His anxieties revolved around "many, calling themselves republicans, and preaching the rankest doctrines of the old federalists," and what had to have eaten at him was the mention that "one of the prominent candidates is presumed to be of this party." A Federalist in Republican clothing was enough to cause the ailing and aching Jefferson to take up his pen once again. Like Washington before him, Jefferson acknowledged the tendency of the Union to be divided along geographical lines, saying that the three candidates would be "reduced to two, a Northern & Southern one," and further, "if the Missouri principle mixes itself in the question, it will go one way." The Missouri Compromise foreshadowed the kind of strict sectionalism that might eventually plague any notion of disinterestedness.[64]

Despite the clear symptoms of partisanship working through Monroe's administration, many have contended that he was the pinnacle of the disinterested patriot president from the founding generation, second only to Washington. Monroe's successors, though, would be anything but. The election of 1824 came with yet another constitutional crisis reminiscent of 1800. Another presidential election resulted in the failure of the Electoral College to confirm the nation's executive office, and yet again a

[64] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 29 October 1822."

divided House of Representatives would determine the outcome—but not before a new chapter of partisan drama unfolded.[65]

Jefferson, once again put aside pain to pick up his pen in late 1823: "Two dislocated wrists and crippled fingers have rendered writing so slow and laborious as to oblige me to withdraw from nearly all correspondence. not however from yours." His recipient, the French Patriot, the Marquis de Lafayette; his reason for writing, the continued concern over the election of 1824. "[W]ho is to be the next President is the topic here of every conversation. my opinion on that subject is what I expressed to you in my last letter." In the previous letter, Jefferson proposed, "many candidates are named: but they will be reduced to two, Adams & Crawford." Like he had written to Gallatin in 1822, Jefferson told Lafayette, "for you are not to believe that these two parties are amalgamated, that the lion & the lamb are lying down together," and he further iterated that the Federalists still existed, though cloaked in Republican garb: "it's votaries abandoned it thro' shame and mortification; and now call themselves republicans. but the name alone is changed, the principles are the same." Jefferson's concern: "like the fox pursued by the dogs, they take shelter in the midst of the sheep." Nothing threatened republicanism more than this sort of infiltration.[66]

Jefferson alluded to the geographical tensions threatening the Union to Gallatin the previous year, and now he went one step further in blaming former Federalists for manipulating this division in order to return to power once again:

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[65] Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 126.

[66] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 28 October 1822," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 30, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3120.

> On the eclipse of federalism, with us, altho' not it's extinction, it's leaders got up the Missouri question, under the false front of lessening the measure of slavery, but with the real view of producing a geographical division of parties, which might ensure them the next president, the people of the North went blindfold into the snare, followed their leaders for a while, with a zeal truly moral and laudable, until they became sensible that they were injuring instead of aiding the real interests of the slaves, that they had been used merely as tools for electioneering purposes; and that trick of hypocrisy then fell as quickly as it had been got up.[67]

In Jefferson's estimation, the Missouri Compromise offered Federalists an entry point. In true party interest rather than patriotic motives, Federalists or what he called "new republicans" had manipulated through a sort of "metamorphosis" Northerners in order to gain the power of the presidency—using, of all things, slavery to garner support from those wishing to contain the peculiar institution. However, Jefferson saw the geographical divisions as paling in comparison to the now apparent rift over what he termed "states' rights" and "consolidated government."[68]

The cabinet "chicanery," as Ketcham calls it, was openly hostile to the notion of disinterested politics. Looking ahead to the presidency, the candidates placed their personal ambitions for the executive office ahead of the more pressing issues of the day. The premature agitations Jefferson noted in newspapers was nothing less than the development of the modern campaign—foreign to many in the founding generation, at least in overt forms, because such maneuvers were amongst the most frowned upon. Like many things in the political arena, though, the election of 1824 was reshaping partisan politics, from necessary evil to positive good. Monroe was convinced even more by these cabinet antics of the negative effects of partisanship, and yet these workings tended

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[67] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823."

[68] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823; Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 28 October 1822."

to place the president's ideology in a sphere inconsistent and perhaps incompatible with the emerging political norms of the 1820s.[69]

Thus, an anti-party president like John Quincy Adams would prove even more incompatible as the tide changed toward a view that placed presidents at the helm of parties rather than opposed to factions altogether. Being what William J. Cooper considered *The Lost Founding Father*, Adams was a man between two worlds—that of the founding generation, and that of the new political atmosphere of the 1820s. Such tensions typically do not bode well for policy and progress, and Adams found himself stymied in his presidential aspirations for the nation in many ways.[70] Rivalry became reality. One needed to either embrace parties or be politically emasculated by them. Much like the elder Adams, John Quincy Adams presided over a divided administration—only the younger Adams had the cloud of the so-called "Corrupt Bargain" with Secretary of State Henry Clay hanging over the entirety of his presidency as well as a new, more vigorous party system working against him.

The election of 1824 inaugurated the second party system, and as Wilentz says, Adams "perfectly exemplifies the transition from the Federalists' elitist, deferential republic to the mass-based, democratic republic of the Democrats and Whigs." Adams, literally a life-long political leader, is in many ways an enigma on the surface unless one matches his apparent contradictions with the changing context of the American political system. He began his career prior to the development of the first party system, and he adapted perhaps reluctantly at times to what eventually emerged as the second party

[69] Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party*, 129-30.

[70] William J. Cooper, *The Lost Founding Father: John Quincy Adams and the Transformation of American Politics,* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 223.

system. "In electoral politics, issues concerning economic justice and inequality exploded with a force that matched that of the 1790s." Wilentz defines the second party system in the following manner:

> The "one-party" system controlled by Jeffersonian Republicans shattered in the mid-1820s, and two competing parties emerged: one, which coalesced under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, took the name Democrats; the other, a shifting alliance of Jackson's opponents, was known initially as the National Republicans and then as the Whigs. The parties fought bitterly over issues of economics and national development. Strikingly, however, they both honored the egalitarian tradition, albeit in sharply opposed versions.[71]

The Jeffersonians and Jacksonians share some remarkable parallels in terms of their opposition origins, their relation to each of the two-party systems, and even many of the same fiscal and foreign policy stances.[72] Like a weed once cut that comes back with resilience, the second party system would prove much more potent and robust.

Jefferson had a take on the emerging second party system as well. In his letter to Lafayette, he wrote the following evaluation:

> To that is now succeeding a distinction, which, like that of republican and federal, or whig and tory, being equally intermixed through every state, threatens none of those geographical schisms which go immediately to a separation. the line of division now is the preservation of state rights as reserved in the constitution, or by strained constructions of that instrument, to merge all into a consolidated government. the tories are for strengthening the Executive and General government; the whigs cherish the representative branch, and the rights reserved by the states as the bulwark against consolidation, which must immediately generate Monarchy. and altho' this division excites, as yet, no warmth; yet it

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[71] Sean Wilentz, *The Politicians & The Egalitarians*, 126-27, 42.

[72] Christopher Childers, *The Webster-Hayne Debate*, 139-39; James Monroe, "To James Madison from James Monroe, 12 May 1822." Childers also notes Jackson's ascendency as the point at which the second party system really came to fruition, and he further details those fiscal policies, like the "tariff, internal improvements, [and] western land policy" contributed largely to the different platforms each party chose. Monroe had assessed the situation this way in 1822: "Under the pretext of Oeconomy, attempts have been made, and in some instances with success, to cut up that system, in many important parts, & in fact to reduce it to a nullity." His cabinet divisions were largely to blame for such divisions, much like Washington's had achieved in the 1790s. Many recognized that, as Childers puts it, "Americans had always been divided into two great parties." Yet the results of the mid-1820s revealed more than just a renewed vigor or a mere resumption of past fractures—the second party system would prove more potent and more permanent, leading many to come to the conclusion that parties were a positive good rather than a necessary evil.

> exists, is well understood, & will be a principle of voting, at the ensuing election, with the reflecting men of both parties.[73]

The much older statesman, nearly three years before his seemingly providential passing, related an observation not unlike the positions he held for most of his lengthy political career. Jefferson still saw the two party distinctions as centered on the two versions of republicanism present from the 1790s forward, namely the respective views on consolidated federal power as compared to the states and the people.

Tocqueville's work dedicated an entire chapter to parties. "Parties are a necessary evil in free governments; but they have not at all times the same character and the same propensities." As the Frenchman applied conventional wisdom regarding party politics to the situation in the United States he distinguished between "great parties" and "minor parties"—the former of nobler cause, generally tied to some sort of revolutionary upheaval; the latter of divisive agitation, usually indicative of the lethargy in times of peace where infighting usurps struggles over principles and demagogues replace ideology. According to Tocqueville, America had passed from the time of great parties to a period of minor parties, and his valuation builds from this premise. Of the earlier parties, he said,

> When the War of Independence was terminated, and the foundations of the new Government were to be laid down, the nation was divided between two opinions—two opinions which are as old as the world, and which are perpetually to be met with under all the forms and all the names which have ever obtained in free communities— the one tending to limit, the other to extend indefinitely, the power of the people.[74]

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[73] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823."

[74] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

A common enemy, as previously discussed, brought the varied interests of the thirteen colonies together for the noble cause of independence founded upon the classical republican principles and Enlightenment philosophies that culminated in the Constitution. Their unity around "essential points…moral principles of a higher order, such as the love of equality and of independence" kept the first two parties from agitating toward violence. Tocqueville noted the close of this first party system: "America has already lost the great parties which once divided the nation; and if her happiness is considerably increased, her morality has suffered by their extinction."[75]

He then proceeds in an examination of the second party system. "The parties by which the Union is menaced do not rest upon abstract principles, but upon temporal interests. These interests, disseminated in the provinces of so vast an empire, may be said to constitute rival nations rather than parties." Strikingly, the division into two parties resembling two nations, North and South, was already quite apparent to an outside observer in the mid-1830s. Critical of the second party system more than the first, Tocqueville claimed, "In the absence of great parties, the United States abound with lesser controversies; and public opinion is divided into a thousand minute shades of difference upon questions of very little moment." Furthermore, the danger of demagogy emerged in this system: "ambitious men are interested in the creation of parties, since it is difficult to eject a person from authority upon the mere ground that his place is coveted by others."[76] This note on the rise of career politicians is a significant observation.

Whereas retirement offered the genteel man freedom from interests and wisdom enough to govern justly in the theorizing of the founding generation, paid career

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[75] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.
[76] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

politicians emerged by the end of the early republic, and perhaps this truly signals the end of the idea of disinterestedness as a virtue in public service.[77] Van Buren biographer Robert V. Remini opened his work with the various sentiments Van Buren garnered. Quoting from Davie Crockett, one gets a bit of insight into the disdain contemporaries still held for career politicians: "Office and money have been the gods of his idolatry." The 1820s ushered in a new breed of politician—no longer would the disinterested heroics of statesmen wealthy enough to retire into public service mark the positions of government. Van Buren offers a case study of such a politician. Though quite different than the founding generation, Remini maintains that Van Buren undoubtedly fulfills the title of statesman.[78]

Perhaps more than anything else, human nature might explain why and how parties became preferable and practicable more than vile and avoidable. "Observers" of Van Buren, Remini noted, "commented on is great knowledge and understanding of human nature." Tocqueville, also one to note the role of human nature, since his interest in the American republican experiment certainly derived from an application to European societies, observed that the United States was not uniquely equipped with exceptional people or circumstances, "But upon examining the state of society more attentively," he instead noted, "I speedily discovered that the Americans had made great and successful efforts to counteract these imperfections of human nature, and to correct the natural

[77] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 89; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, xii.

[78] Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1959), 1-2.

defects of democracy." It was not the individuals but the institutions that had created such laudable liberty and relative success in such a short time.[79]

Still, individuals were seen to be intriguing against such institutions. The second party system was marked by a new breed of politician:

> The skill of the actors in the political world lies therefore in the art of creating parties. A political aspirant in the United States begins by discriminating his own interest, and by calculating upon those interests which may be collected around and amalgamated with it; he then contrives to discover some doctrine or some principle which may suit the purposes of this new association, and which he adopts in order to bring forward his party and to secure his popularity.[80]

Tocqueville once again offered his observations as to the developments of the second party system. The amalgamation noted here is exactly how Van Buren helped manufacture the Democratic Party in the 1820s. Despite the distinctiveness of the minor parties present in the second party system, Tocqueville also noted the consistency of concerns which have always animated parties: "that the greater part of them are more or less connected with one or the other of those two divisions which have always existed in free communities."[81] And finally, "I affirm that aristocratic or democratic passions may easily be detected at the bottom of all parties, and that, although they escape a superficial observation, they are the main point and the very soul of every faction in the United States." The more things changed, the more they seemed to stay the same.

Jefferson had offered strikingly similar comments in 1823. For the elder statesman, the two-party system had always existed under various designations and was

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[79] Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party*, 2; Alan Ryan, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought, From Herodotus to the Present*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2012), 734, 741; Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1. Ryan contextualizes Tocqueville, noting his and other Frenchmen's interest in the American experiment because of the obvious failures of the French to achieve a preferable end to their own revolution in 1789, but Ryan says definitively that "Tocqueville was not a republican."

[80] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

[81] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

wholly consistent with those of the second-party system. He wrote to Lafayette, "they exist in all countries, whether called by these names, or by those of Aristocrats and democrats, coté droite or coté gauche, Ultras or Radicals, Serviles or Liberals. the sickly weakly, timid man fears the people, and is a tory by nature. the healthy strong and bold cherishes them, and is formed a whig by nature." True to his Whiggish tendencies, Jefferson continued to see the Tory-ridden enemies of his own generation as consistent with the enemies of the people.[82]

The rematch of Jackson and Adams was an election that solidified the second party system. In 1828, Jackson emerged victorious and vindicated. Adams's failed bid at reelection, though, was not simply a reaction to the "Corrupt Bargain;" he had presided over a fundamental transition in American politics. His courtship with republican virtue would not suffice when the new democratic dame entered the equation. The disinterested patriot was no longer as compelling as the professional politician. As Cooper notes, Van Buren's political management and shrewd strategies were just as much responsible for Adams's one-term presidency as any other faux pas that might have inhibited his success. The Red Fox of Kinderhook worked tirelessly to revive republicanism that bridged sectional animosities and undid any sort of dangerous amalgamation leftover from Monroe's attempts to rid the country of parties.[83]

The contest of 1828 left a permanent mark on American politics; it was decidedly partisan. In late 1827, Monroe told Madison, "I concluded…to preserve a state of perfect neutrality between the Candidates." The former president did not wish to align himself

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[82] Thomas Jefferson, "From Thomas Jefferson to Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, 4 November 1823."

[83] William J. Cooper, *The Lost Founding Father*, 247.

with either of the emergent parties. Madison replied with equal impartiality: "I meant to keep aloof from the political agitations of the period, and as a further safeguard… with my determination not to be enlisted in a party service." True to their classical republican roots, neither founder sought direct affiliation with any party. Madison continued, "I have a letter from Genl Fayette of Ocr. 21. in which he mourns over the spirit & style of our partizan Gazettes, as wounding our Republican character, and causing exultation to the foes of liberty."[84] The election had garnered lament from abroad as well; its decided partisanship appeared symptomatic of the disease that so often plagued republics of the past.

Writing to Madison in early 1828, Monroe's retired but politically persuasive voice related his belief that former presidents maintain disinterestedness: "I state explicitly, that I can take no position, which may, by inference, arrange me, on the side of either of the candidates, against the other." He went even further:

> if they became partisans in elections, to the chief office, they could have weight only with the party, with which they arrangd themselves: that they could have none with the other[.] I shall of course state, that I hope, no such event will ever occur, but that it is better, that persons who have so long servd, shod. remain tranquil spectators of the mov'ment, than embark in it.[85]

The exchange between former presidents was in regards to their participation as electors for the state of Virginia. Madison also intimated that he wished to have his name withdrawn from the ticket—what he classified as "a plea of neutrality" knowing the "delicacy" of the attempt to "control the feelings of party."[86] For the elder generation,

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[84] James Madison, "James Madison to James Monroe, 18 December 1827," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 24, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-1236.

[85] James Monroe, "James Monroe to James Madison, 29 January 1828," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 24, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-1284.

[86] James Monroe, "James Monroe to James Madison, 18 January 1828," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 24, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-1269; James Monroe, "James Monroe to James Madison, 29 January 1828;" James Madison, "James Madison to James

those who participated in the Revolution directly, party was still but a necessary evil—disinterestedness still very much a virtue. They were a dying breed, though.

Just as Hamilton's death signaled the beginning of the end of the first party system, so too did the timely deaths of both Jefferson and Adams signal the solidification of a second party system. Their passing on July 4, 1776, proved to be both the closing of an era and the opening of another—the end of the founding generation's obsession with classical republicanism and the beginning of subsequent generations' belief in a better, more modern take on republicanism. In this context, disinterestedness remained but underwent significant adaptations. Conversely, party became more laudable than loathed.

Buel correctly concluded that "Americans felt obliged to rationalize what could not be prevented. If they had believed there was any choice, no one would have urged that parties be formed as a positive advantage."[87] This line of thinking does at least help make sense of the about-face one sees in the views related to disinterestedness. Expediency and practicality, in the end, made disinterestedness a vestige more than a virtue. Perhaps it was the result of the "frailty of human nature," as Van Buren wrote—a subject many of the early republic tended to focus on.[88]

> Americans still live betwixt a classical landscape, formed by numerous towns, cities, and natural features bearing classical names, and an abundance of public buildings ornated with massive marble colonnades and Latin epigrams. The reappearance of the revered ancients in the wake of republican uncertainties to guide the Founders during the creation of the Republic seems to us, still, so natural.[89]

Monroe, 23 January 1828," *Founders Online* (Accessed October 24, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/99-02-02-1278.

[87] Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution*, 4-5.

[88] Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, 62.

[89] Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers, 170-71.

Landscape is much like language in this light—the classical republican semantics and sentiments of the founders remain traceable but not nearly as compelling as they once were.

Is it possible to "restore the vivacity of its earlier times," that Tocqueville argued to the contrary? Is there only the option "to proceed, and to accelerate the union of private with public interests?" Is "the period of disinterested patriotism is gone by forever."[90] Tocqueville's analysis was correct at least to the degree that partisanship is valued above disinterestedness by the people and pundits alike. Disinterestedness may not be dead, but it is at minimum, unfamiliar and unpopular. Decline, though, does not dictate a death, but rather a departure. If that much is true, then the hope still exists that a generation might revive classical republican thought—just as Trenchard and Gordon did for England and numerous members of the founding generation did for the early republic.

There is certain merit to the fact that the republic has lasted two-and-a-half centuries thus far, despite the development of a resilient two-party system. Was this in spite of partisanship or because of it? Writing in the introduction to Tocqueville's *Democracy in America,* Senator John J. Ingalls related, "The violence of party spirit has been mitigated, and the judgment of the wise is not subordinated to the prejudices of the ignorant."[91] Answering whether or not partisanship was central to the longevity of liberty in the republic tends to be where the historiography focuses today. Certainly, many prominent historians from Hofstadter to Wilentz fall firmly in the camp of party's vitality and even ironically, virtue, in maintaining a free society and checking the opposition party from attaining too much power, but perhaps there are signs of deterioration on the

[90] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.
[91] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

horizon. Perhaps the vices of ambition, avarice, and corruption have plagued the nation to the brink of another crisis and made classical republicanism worthy of reexamination and esteem once again—just maybe the lessons of today are leading many to consider whether or not disinterestedness might still be a virtue worth pursuing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

> It is an unpleasing part of history, when "corruption begins to prevail, when degeneracy marks the manners of the people, and weakens the sinews of the state." If this should ever become the deplorable situation of the United States, let some unborn historian, in a far distant day, detail the lapse, and hold up the contrast between a simple, virtuous, and free people, and a degenerate, servile race of beings, corrupted by wealth, effeminated by luxury, impoverished by licentiousness, and become the *automatons* of intoxicated ambition.[1]

In each subsequent generation of Americans, one hopes that Mercy Otis Warren's words remain irrelevant, that the fragility of republics is both recognized and adequate measures taken to reinforce those attributes that sustain their success, that the lessons of history continue to warn and inspire future generations of the dangers of partisanship and the blessings of disinterestedness. "While a few 'old republicans' sought political or constitutional remedies for the disease ailing the body politic, Warren turned to the word, for historical narrative had the power to redeem."[2] Paine knew, just as Warren that, "When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember, that virtue is not hereditary."[3] While it may be true that, as Gibson says, "the primary lesson that we may

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[1] Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* Vol. *2*, 646.

[2] Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution,* Vol. 1, xxii. Lester H. Cohen's forward provided a superb overview of Warren and her times, and he offered a few comments of significance regarding how she viewed herself as one whose pen might influence her peers as well as future generations of Americans. She had witnessed first-hand the power and influence of political writers before her, and her words resonated with the purpose of this study.

[3] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, 44.

draw from historical knowledge is the distinctiveness of the past" and "the future is novel…past patterns may not apply," what drives—what animates this historical work is the very notion Warren, Paine, and innumerable other students of history have discovered, namely that the past is not merely static and nostalgic but alive and instructive to those who prudently seek its lessons.[4]

Disinterestedness today means something entirely different than it meant to the founding generation. Its primary meaning no longer connotes virtue but rather an apathetic approach to the political realm. There is a certain and fitting irony in this transmission over time—one which weighed heavily on the founding generation: a republic would be difficult to keep. Franklin and many others looked to the past for precedence; the classical republics of Greece and Rome, as well as the English experience, taught them, nay warned them that all republics tended to eventually default back to a state of tyranny and despotic rule. This transformation or transmission of language to be quite telling. The linguistic transmission has led to a disenchanted or uninterested population, and an uninterested electorate allows for a fully interested leadership, whereas an attentive (interested) constituency calls for a disinterested government. Wood discusses the complete erasure of this term's meaning—another issue of the separation of several generations—but the transmission of the word is a significant cultural transformation that parallels the evolution of this thesis.[5]

What was the cause of this transmission? This study has only examined the colonial period through the early republic—maybe the first third of American history. What of the current status of disinterestedness? Richard Beeman captures part of the

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[4] Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the Founding,* 123.
[5] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 84.

issue: "Tens of millions of Americans have been turned-off by the corrupting effects of money on the political system. Bombarded with negative advertising about their candidates, they express their feelings of alienation by staying home on election day."[6] The "turning off" that Beeman references is not unique to contemporary Americans; that same notion was at the heart of Thomas Gordon's thoughts in the eighteenth-century. When Gordon commented that "[t]he love of money and of power are violent passions," his words applied to his generation, the ancients he commented on, the founding generation in the United States, and the modern reader as well.[7]

Beeman went on to say, "If there is a lesson in all of this it is that our Constitution is neither a self-actuating nor a self-correcting document. It requires the constant attention and devotion of all citizens."[8] Finally, "There is a story, often told," Beeman writes:

> that upon exiting the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin was approached by a group of citizens asking what sort of government the delegates had created. His answer was: "A republic, if you can keep it." The brevity of that response should not cause us to under-value its essential meaning: democratic republics are not merely founded upon the consent of the people, they are also absolutely dependent upon the active and informed involvement of the people for their continued good health.[9]

The fragility of the republic was and is a well-known fact among those who know their history. As Wilentz put it, "Democratic successes are never irreversible."[10] Popular forms of government naturally rely upon popular participation and a strong sense of what eighteenth-century political thinkers called the "publick good." Too much interestedness

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[6] Richard R. Beeman, "Perspectives on the Constitution: A Republic, If You Can Keep It," *National Constitution Center* (Accessed July 29, 2021), https://constitutioncenter.org/ learn/educational-resources/historical-documents/perspectives-on-the-constitution-a-republic-if-you-can-keep-it.

[7] Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus in Four Volumes*, 197-98.

[8] Richard R. Beeman, "Perspectives on the Constitution: A Republic, If You Can Keep It."

[9] Richard R. Beeman, "Perspectives on the Constitution: A Republic, If You Can Keep It."

[10] Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy,* xix.

or the onset of uninterestedness equally plague popular governments, rendering them unpopular and oppressive.

This study affords the same application to a modern audience that *Cato's Letters* provided for the founding generation. Drawing upon the lessons of their English counterparts, whom themselves had drawn upon their Roman antecedents, the founding generation now sits in a similar position to twenty-first-century citizens of the US: an occasion to view the brilliance of philosophers, orators, and ordinary citizens of the distant past as a message to the present reader. Part of the curiosity of this study has also been about grappling with the continued contradictions of American history. The transformation from celebrated disinterestedness to unabashed interestedness is difficult to reconcile, but its exploration is an attempt to more fully understand the distant past and simultaneously inform the present concerns that might have some relevance or overlap with that venerated generation. W. J. Rorabaugh concluded his intriguing study of the early republic with this applicable statement: "Today we Americans see too clearly and too painfully the contradictions between what we are and what we believe we ought to be."[11] An attachment to classical republicanism and a determination that historical models can always be improved upon might inspire the thinking Rorabaugh alludes to.

Is it possible that the very political principles that made the United States a model republic could be the same ideologies that lead to its decline? "In like manner does the republican government exist in America, without contention or opposition; without proofs and arguments, by a tacit agreement, a sort of consensus universalis. It is, however, my opinion that by changing their administrative forms as often as they do, the

[11] W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 222.

inhabitants of the United States compromise the future stability of their government." Tocqueville's comments bear resemblance to Washington's parting warning about the "alternate domination of one faction over another." Washington noted that this frequency of changes in the administration of government, "sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism."[12] The first president and the renowned French observer both noted the danger of reversion. In his concluding comments on party in the United States, the latter related, "this apparent unanimity is merely a cloak to alarming dissensions and perpetual opposition…If the maladministration of the democracy ever brings about a revolutionary crisis, and if monarchical institutions ever become practicable in the United States, the truth of what I advance will become obvious."[13] The "obvious…truth" the Frenchman cautioned against was a relapse into the throes of despotism—a loss of liberty—a failure of the republican experiment.

The closing to Volume 1 of *Democracy in America* offers a prudent piece to readers of Tocqueville: "Montesquieu remarked, that nothing is more absolute than the authority of a prince who immediately succeeds a republic, since the powers which had fearlessly been intrusted to an elected magistrate are then transferred to a hereditary sovereign. This is true in general, but it is more peculiarly applicable to a democratic republic." Montesquieu's assessment of Rome's rapid retreat from republic to tyrannical rule is poignant: "What a strange system of tyranny! A tyranny carried on by men who had obtained the political and military power merely from their knowledge in civil

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[12] George Washington, "Farewell Address, 1796."
[13] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.

affairs…Cæsar's bloody garment flung Rome again into slavery."[14] Tocqueville proceeds to apply the principle to the American experiment:

> In the United States, the magistrates are not elected by a particular class of citizens, but by the majority of the nation; they are the immediate representatives of the passions of the multitude; and as they are wholly dependent upon its pleasure, they excite neither hatred nor fear: hence, as I have already shown, very little care has been taken to limit their influence, and they are left in possession of a vast deal of arbitrary power.[15]

The irony of the situation that Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Washington, and countless other students of the classics cautioned against was the fact that the despot comes to power by way of popular mechanisms, namely the majority vote.

Perhaps Wood was right—the idea of disinterest has lost its meaning in the later American republic, and the term has fallen out of popular use—replaced by uninterest.[16] How long does it take for the people of a republic to trade virtue for vice? The historical shelf life of republics offers mixed results. In his work, *The End of Kings: A History of Republics and Republicans*, William R. Everdell says that "Rome lasted almost five centuries. The United States, now a democracy as well, continues to show vigor after two. But the French Republic lasted only seven years." Everdell goes on to conclude his narrative with the moral precepts of republicans—they serve the republic and put it ahead of their own interests. "So much is required of a republic's citizens that all of the republics of the past have explicitly demanded citizen awareness and participation." Alan Ryan says, "The animating spirit of a republic is virtue, of a monarchy honor, and

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[14] Baron de Montesquieu Charles de Secondat. *The Spirit of the Laws,* Vol. 1, 233.
[15] Alexi de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America,* Vol. 1.
[16] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," 83-84.

of a despotism fear."[17] These qualities are contingencies on the longevity of popular governments.

To be sure, as the saying goes, Rome was not built in a day, but neither did it decline in such short order. Gibbon detailed the decline alone in six volumes! When the republican virtue of disinterestedness is replaced with uninterested and disengaged citizens, decline is perhaps in full swing. But a people disenchanted with dysfunction amidst a quagmire of corruption in its highest ranks must remember that its representatives are mere reflections of their respective constituencies. "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."[18] Maybe the saddest note of a disengaged citizenry is not the lack of disinterested virtue but rather the dispassionate disposition left in its wake—a people whose self-interest leads to wholesale and willful disenfranchisement—not by the genius and ambition of a demagogue but by an apathetic and disconnected body politic.

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[17] William R. Everdell, *The End of Kings: A Hisory of Republics and Republicans,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 190, 305, xviii; Alan Ryan, *On Politics*, 522.

[18] John Adams, "John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October 1798," *Founders Online*, National Archives (Accessed August 7, 2021), https://founders.archives.gov/documents/ Adams/99-02-02-3102.

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