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Adams-Jefferson: An inquiry into human, nature, politics, and the implications for a republic

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ADAMS-JEFFERSON: AN INQUIRY INTO HUMAN NATURE, POLITICS, AND THE
IMPLICATIONS FOR A REPUBLIC

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

In
The Department of Political Science

by
Adetoyese Itunu Adedipe
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2007
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents; Adeleke Oladapo Adedipe, and Gladys Bamitale Adedipe. Despite my numerous shortcomings, they have continued to support and encourage me in all my endeavors. The basic lessons they taught me in my childhood have shaped me for the better. I would consider my life a success if I am able to reciprocate to my children the love I have received from them. May God continue to richly bless and support you, may his grace steadfastly shine on you as well.

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTER ONE: HUMAN NATURE	1
Introduction: What Is Human Nature?	1
Jefferson on Human Nature	5
Adams on Human Nature	13
Human Nature, Slavery, and Order	17
CHAPTER TWO: ON POLITICS	21
The State/Political Community	21
Form of Government	25
On Citizenship	31
On The Law	34
CHAPTER THREE: IMPLICATIONS FOR A REPUBLIC	41
Introduction	41
Presidency of John Adams	42
The Election of 1800	50
Presidency of Thomas Jefferson	55
CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES ON NIGERIA	64
Introduction	64
Road to Independence	65
Republicanism, Politics, and the Military	68
CONCLUSION	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78
VITA	81

ABSTRACT

If one were to inquire from Americans the names of five founding fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson will more often than not be mentioned amongst them. Apart from being among the founders of the republic, these two men presided over the republic as well. It is accurate to say both founding fathers were prolific writers who left behind a wealth of literature their progeny could look to when it came to the intricacies of politics and the nature of man. The aim of this thesis is to unveil the metamorphosis of a political order via the views and opinions of these two American icons.

It is almost two decades since the end of the Cold War, yet many states still grapple with the concept of statecraft and nation-building. From the newly created states in the Balkans to the half-century independent states in Sub-Saharan Africa, statecraft and societal advancement have proven problematic. A core factor in the societal and developmental crises within these states arises from the lack of a proper theoretical understanding of the concept of the state and its limits within the human sphere. While it would be foolhardy for aspiring states to adopt the American mode of politics lock, stock, and barrel, one would have to admit the American political experiment has proven successful. For one, it is the world's oldest republic as well as the most prosperous nation known in the history of mankind. While not all states will achieve world historic wealth and prosperity; life, liberty, and the realization of a prudent political order should be the bare minimum every state should aspire to. In this guise, Adams and Jefferson serve as timeless guides towards the realization of a prudent political order.

CHAPTER ONE: HUMAN NATURE

Introduction: What Is Human Nature?

Human nature as a concept is the study of the inherent characteristics of man as a being. In reading the *American Declaration of Independence*, one can instantly understand the importance of human nature to the founding fathers. As a political concept, human nature is intrinsically tied to the concept of natural right. Natural right as a philosophical outlook seeks to understand the qualities imbued within man from his time of first consciousness. It informs him on the things he is capable or incapable of within the sphere of his existence. When speaking of existence, it's not just existence within him as being, but existence within the larger framework of the society he finds himself in. In assessing natural rights, phrases littered throughout the *Declaration of Independence* such as "Laws of Nature and Nature's God"¹, and "certain unalienable Rights"² demonstrate its importance to the founding fathers.

In the history of philosophical thought, many scholars have intertwined human nature and natural right to the notion of a higher law that guides all human affairs. This higher law, which can be deemed as natural law acknowledges the role of a divine sovereign (or as indicated in the Declaration, Creator/Providence) from which man derives his being, characteristics, and understanding. Fred M. Taylor finds that "in its origin the concept natural law had no significance except in antithesis to humanly enacted right, and so was essentially the assertion

¹ Declaration of Independence. Becker, Carl. *The Declaration of Independence*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1948, pg. 186. The version of the *Declaration of Independence* used in this thesis is the parchment copy.

² Ibid, pg. 186

that there exists an order of right of non-human origin, an order prior to, independent of, and dominant over the right of human origin.”³

This idea of a Creator or higher order imbuing man with natural right is embodied in the Bible. In Genesis 1:27, it says “So God made man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”⁴ In this passage, one sees a direct link between God (the creator and executor of higher law) and his subject (man), who possesses the qualities of his maker. This link between the maker and the made (God and man respectively) is referred to as *imago dei*. Ellis Sandoz finds *imago dei* to be “a trinity: *it is, it sees, it loves*: God created it (being); it sees, since God illuminated it (knowledge); and it chooses or inclines always to love the Good at least in appearance, if (because of human imperfection) not always in reality.”⁵

Sandoz’s Trinitarian approach to the concept of *imago dei* closely mirrors the Trinitarian concept found in Christianity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). Both concepts account for a tripartite composition of man consisting of mind, body, and soul. In order to actualize his natural right as well as optimize the inherent qualities within his nature, man must seek harmony between the mind, body and soul. Christianity, especially protestant Christianity, played an influential role in the founders’ understanding of human nature and natural right. This importance is emphasized by Michael P. Zuckert as he harps back to the

³ Taylor, Fred M. "The Law of Nature ." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, April 1891. pg. 560-561

⁴ Genesis 1: 27. *King James Reference Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000, pg. 2

⁵ Sandoz, Ellis. *Republicanism, Religion, And the Soul of America*. Columbia : University of Missouri Press, 2006. pg. 8

Mayflower Compact, the declaration document of the pilgrims at Plymouth. In his assessment, Zuckert finds:

“The Mayflower Compact uses the form of appeal traditional in Christian churches and indeed that form used in the making of churches, themselves congregations of the faithful. The divinity invoked in the Mayflower Compact is beyond doubt the Christian God, The God of the Bible, the God of faith and of the faithful.”⁶

As a declaratory document, the Mayflower Compact was a forerunner to the American Declaration of Independence. In the compact, the settlers indicated their intent to realize a political community under the guidance of the Christian God whom they saw as essential to their endeavors. Likewise, the Declaration of Independence acknowledged the guidance of a divine Creator as a means to motivate and actualize the goals of the founders. In looking at the natural right inclinations of the Mayflower Compact and the Declaration of Independence, Zuckert finds that “The appeal to the divine in the Declaration is altogether different, however: here it is “Nature’s God” and his “Laws,” a God who speaks to humanity through reason and acts in and through nature.”⁷

Despite the seeming difference between the Declaration and the Compact (the difference here being the lack of an explicit Christian confession in the Declaration), Zuckert finds “The Christian God is also the God of nature, of course, but *qua* Christian God, *qua* the God of the covenant, he is the God of super-nature.”⁸ In referencing the founders’ take on divine Providence/Nature’s God, one would be permitted in substituting the Christian God with the divine Providence being spoken of in the Declaration. While the Christian notion of natural rights posits man is *imago dei*, there arises within Christian doctrine a paradox in assessing

⁶ Engeman, Thomas S, and Michael P Zuckert. *Protestantism and the American Founding*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004. pg. 26

⁷ Ibid, pg. 26

⁸ Ibid, pg. 26

human nature. In Psalm 51:5, King David laments, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”⁹ The sinful nature of man goes back to the Adamic fall as narrated in Genesis. In the Genesis story, man, wholly and perfectly made in the image of God, was tempted by the serpent. By succumbing to temptation, man broke the covenant established between God and himself. However, with the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, man’s status as *imago dei*, was fully restored.

Natural right can also be found within the context of history and tradition. Indeed, higher law plays a pivotal role even within the history-tradition framework. Algernon Sidney, in his *Discourses Concerning Government*, finds:

“The Israelites, Spartans, Romans and others, who thus framed their governments according to their own will, did it not by any peculiar privilege, but by a universal right conferred upon them by God and nature: They were made of no better clay than others: They had no right, that does not as well belong to other nations; that is to say, the constitution of every government is referred to those who are concerned in it, and no other has anything to do with it.”¹⁰

Hence, while disparate groups get their rights through their understanding of God and nature, a proper understanding and actualization of their rights come through history. It is through history that men become habituated as to the exercising of their natural right. It provides a framework with which man can fully grasp his capabilities from generation to generation. In further assessing the concept of natural right and history, Leo Strauss, in his piece, *Natural Right and the Historical Approach*, finds:

“There cannot be natural right if all that man could know about right were the problem of right, or if the question of the principles of justice would admit a variety of mutually exclusive answers, none of which could be proved to be superior to others. There cannot

⁹ *King James Reference Bible*, pg. 829

¹⁰ Sidney, Algernon, and Thomas G. West. *Discourses Concerning Government*. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1990. pg. 48-49

be natural right if human thought, in spite of its essential incompleteness, is not capable of solving the problem of the principles of justice in a genuine and hence universally valid manner. More generally expressed, there cannot be natural right if human thought is not capable of acquiring genuine, universally valid, final knowledge within a limited sphere or genuine knowledge of specific objects.”¹¹

For Strauss, history is the ultimate measuring stick with which natural rights can be understood. It provides a frame of reference wherein the qualities of man’s habits are revealed so as to understand what he is capable of. Furthermore, as with Sidney, Strauss believes history nurtures habit (habituation) to ensure improved quality in the exercise of one’s natural rights over time. In his piece, *Edmund Burke and Natural Rights*, Russell Kirk likewise equates Burke’s understanding of natural law and human nature to a state of affairs where “Natural law can exist in our cognizance only so far as it is embodied in social prescription or charter. We know God’s law only through our own laws that attempt to copy His; for he has given us no facile covenant, no utopian constitution.”¹²

While human nature and natural rights tend toward the universalistic in general, history, vis-à-vis culture, tends toward the particular. It provides an avenue where the actualization of rights within different cultures can be realized, creating a society where man can pursue his highest potential.

Jefferson on Human Nature

Thomas Jefferson in his letter to Francis W. Gilmer finds that “Our Legislators are not sufficiently appraised to the rightful limits of their power; that their true office is to declare and

¹¹ Strauss, Leo. "Natural Right and the Historical Approach." *The Review of Politics*, October 1950. pg. 434

¹² Kirk, Russell. "Burke and Natural Rights." *The Review of Politics*, October 1951. pg. 443

enforce only our natural rights and duties and take none of them from us.”¹³ From the statement, one sees Jefferson believed natural rights were not man-made and therefore could not be bestowed by man. Hence, Jefferson implicitly acknowledged the presence of a higher order in the affairs of men. Given this origin, it is proper to assume that man is free by nature.

For Jefferson, man is capable of actualizing his rights, but can also he infringe on the rights of other individuals. This leads him to conclude that “No man has a natural right to commit aggression on the equal rights of another: and this is all from which the laws ought to restrain him; and, no man having a natural right to be the judge between himself and another, it is his natural duty to submit to the umpirage of an impartial third.”¹⁴ In the same letter, Jefferson asserts that “Man was created for social intercourse; but social intercourse cannot be maintained without a sense of justice, then a man must have been created with a sense of justice.”¹⁵ This view of man having a propensity to social intercourse closely reflects the Aristotelian (and classical) understanding of human nature.

In *Politics*, Aristotle finds that “man is by nature a political animal.”¹⁶ This idea of man as a political animal, *zoon politikon*, informs the social intercourse notion Jefferson espoused. Seeing that man is a socio-political being, there must be a mode of conduct that permits socialization to occur among individuals in society.

¹³Letter to Francis W. Gilmer, June 7, 1816. Jefferson, Thomas, ed. Appleby, Joyce and Ball, Terrence. *Jefferson: Political Writings*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. pg. 143.

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 143

¹⁵ Ibid, pg. 143

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 1, Chp. 2, 1253a2*. Aristotle, ed. McKeon, Richard. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House, 1941. pg. 1129

For Aristotle, “Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech.”¹⁷ Speech, for Aristotle, was provided by nature to enable man to actualize his potential as a political being. Similarly, Jefferson finds that “Because nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses... the Creator would indeed have been a bungling artist, had he intended man for a social animal, without planting him with social dispositions.”¹⁸

While Jefferson did not explicitly refer to speech in reference to social dispositions, it is permitted to discern that speech is an important part of human nature. Thus, Jefferson found that “Some men are born without the organs of sight, or of hearing, or without hands. Yet it would be wrong to say that man is born without these faculties, and sight, hearing, and hands may with truth enter into the general definition of man.”¹⁹ Thus, sight, hearing, and the gestures made available by “body language” contribute to the phenomenon of speech.

While Jefferson and Aristotle share similarities in assessing human nature, some stark differences exist between them as well. In *The Politics*, Aristotle finds that:

“the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that.”²⁰

It seems that there could be a few approaches to this statement by Aristotle especially when examining the word “prior”. If by “prior”, Aristotle meant “before”, it would imply that

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 1129

¹⁸ Letter to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814. Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 287.

¹⁹ Ibid, pg. 287

²⁰ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk.1, Chp. 2, 1253a 19-23*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1129.

the state existed before man. This notion of the state existing before man would seem to contradict Jefferson's belief that:

“We consider society as one of natural wants with which man has been created; that he has been endowed with faculties and qualities to effect its satisfaction by concurrence of others having the same want; that when, by the exercise of those faculties, he has procured a state of society, it is one of his acquisitions which he has a right to regulate and control, jointly indeed with all those who have concurred in procurement, whom he cannot exclude from its use or direction more than they him”²¹

Seeing that man, according to Jefferson, basically purchases society (state) with like-minded fellows, he disagrees with the Aristotelian notion of the state preceding man.

Furthermore, in the human experience, one rarely finds a situation where the object being birthed, controls and regulates that which gave birth to it.

If, on the other hand we assess the Aristotelian use of prior (in a logical sense) in terms of superiority, one only sees further divergence with the Jeffersonian assessment of human nature.

In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson states:

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such a form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”²²

While Jefferson may have agreed with Aristotle when investigating the inherent characteristics of man, they diverge on the role of man and state as participants in nature. The Jeffersonian view of human nature is a notion greatly shared among many scholars of the

²¹ Letter to P.S. Dupont de Nemours, April 24, 1816. Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 291.

²² Declaration of Independence. Becker, *The Declaration of Independence*, pg. 186

libertarian persuasion.²³ In splitting with Aristotle, Jefferson takes a turn towards a Lockean understanding of human nature.

In *The Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke finds “That Adam had not, either by natural right of fatherhood or by positive donation from God, any such authority or dominion over the world as it pretended.”²⁴ Locke’s notion of individual rights mirrors Jefferson’s notion where individuals exercise their rights without undue interference. In further assessing human nature, Locke sees a universalistic trait within human nature. He finds that:

“The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.”²⁵

For Locke, reason serves as the kinetic power that enables man to actualize his true nature. For him, reason is deemed as “that faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them.”²⁶ How does reason, serve as a kinetic phenomenon within human nature? Locke finds that reason serves “both for the enlargement of our knowledge, and regulating our assent.”²⁷ The possession of knowledge and

²³ Murray Rothbard shared Jeffersonian view of human nature. In his book, *The Ethics of Liberty*, Rothbard criticizes Aristotle for having a view of natural law that “is to have been profoundly statist rather than individualist” (Rothbard, Murray N. *The Ethics of Liberty*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982, pg. 21) Despite conceding to the Aristotelian notion of man as *zoon politikon*, Rothbard decries the equating of society to state. For him, John Locke’s individual approach to natural rights and human nature corrects the errors of classical philosophers when assessing human nature.

²⁴ Locke, John, ed. Cook, Thomas I. *Two Treatises of Government*. New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1947, pg. 121

²⁵ Ibid, pg. 123. The phrase “life, health, liberty, or possessions” was adjusted by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence as “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

²⁶ Locke, John, ed. Fraser, Alexander Campbell. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Complete and Unabridged. 2 vols. Vol 2*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1959, pg. 386

²⁷ Ibid, pg. 387

assent highlight the superiority man possesses over other animals. In viewing reason in light of human nature, Jefferson states that:

“He was endowed with a sense of right & wrong merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his nature as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality, & not the το καλον, truth, &c. as fanciful writers have imagined. The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted indeed in some degree to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense.”²⁸

Like Locke, Jefferson believes reason serves as a guide by which man will pursue the right course of action as a participant in society. Furthermore, reason as a tool of self-actualization can only be improved via habituation.

According to Jean Yarbrough, “Jefferson’s political psychology, while undeniably influenced by Locke, nevertheless departs from him in three important respects.”²⁹ The first aspect for Yarbrough stems from what can be seen as an epistemological understanding of human nature. In observing Jefferson’s epistemological preferences, Yarbrough finds that “Jefferson follows the Scots in asserting the existence of certain innate moral sentiments, such as fidelity to compacts and a sense of justice, which, when properly developed by education and republican institutions, help to reconcile the tension between self-interest and moral duty.”³⁰

Jefferson espoused his inclination to moral sentiments in his *Opinion on the French Treaties* where he asserts “Questions of natural right are triable by their conformity with moral

²⁸ Letter to Peter Carr, August 10, 1787. Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 252.

²⁹ Engeman, Thomas S. *Thomas Jefferson and the Politics of Nature*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000, pg. 60

³⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 60

sense and reason of man.”³¹ As stated previously, reason as well as the subsequent morals that are derived from it serve to properly equip man for society. While Jefferson appeals to habituation as a way of fine tuning inherent moral inclinations, Locke finds:

“It is true every substance that exists has its peculiar constitution, whereon depend those sensible qualities and powers we observe in it; but the ranking of things into species (which is nothing but sorting them under several titles) is done by us according to the ideas that we have of them: which, though sufficient to distinguish them by names, so that we may be able to discourse of them we have them not present before us; yet if we suppose it to be done by their real internal constitutions, and that things existing are distinguished by nature into species, by real essences, according as we distinguish them into species by names, we shall be liable to great mistakes”³²

From the passage, Locke finds that man does not have the full capacity to distinguish ideas and thoughts as he exists originally in nature. For him, this notion seems to be especially true when man attempts to categorize ideas into tangible forms. Furthermore, Locke finds:

“...The real essences of those things which we distinguish into species, and as so distinguished we name ought to be known; i.e. we ought to have ideas of them but we are ignorant of these four points, the supposed real essences of things stand us not in stead for the distinguishing substances into species”³³

The four points being referred to by Locke describe the means with which man differentiates phenomena through habituation. For him, these four points portray how nature is imperfect in its designs thus making it difficult for it to equip man with ready-made inclinations.³⁴

According to Yarbrough, the second difference between Jefferson and Locke according arises from the view that “Jefferson rejects the Lockean hierarchy of the passions which elevates

³¹ *Opinion on the French Treaties*, April 28, 1793. Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 559.

³² Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Complete and Unabridged, Vol. 2*, pg. 69

³³ *Ibid*, pg. 70

³⁴ A further reading of the four points can be embarked upon in; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Complete and Unabridged, Vol. 2*, pg. 71. The second and third points discuss the phenomenon of monstrous births. For him, monstrous births show that nature is flawed in its essence as an architect. Furthermore, he classifies monsters as a species but finds that they do not possess innate qualities that would deem them proper species.

the desire for comfortable self-preservation as the single source of all natural rights.”³⁵ In

Locke’s hierarchy of passions, we see an instance where:

“Things then are good or evil, only in reference to pleasure or pain. That we call *good*, which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us; or else to procure or preserve us the possession of any other good or absence of any evil. And, on the contrary, we name that *evil* which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us: or else to procure us any evil, or deprive us of any good. By pleasure and pain, I must be understood to mean of body or mind, as they are commonly distinguished; though in truth they be only different constitutions of the *mind*, sometimes occasioned by disorder in the body, sometimes by thoughts of the mind.”³⁶

Yarbrough’s analysis of Locke’s hierarchy of passions rings true upon examining the words of Locke. The good for Locke entails mind and bodily pleasure while evil entails the presence of pain in mind and/or body. Yarbrough finds that the pursuit of happiness would be the apex in the Jefferson’s hierarchy of passions. At first glance, one may say the Jeffersonian pursuit of happiness can be easily equated to the Lockean concept of bodily pleasure as the apex of passions. However, Yarbrough disputes this claim by stating that the Jeffersonian concept of happiness is dependent on virtue. In speaking of virtue, Jefferson, in a letter to John Adams, finds:

“for virtue does not consist in the act we do, but in the end it is to effect. If it is to effect the happiness of him to whom it is directed, it is virtuous, while in a society under different circumstances and opinions the same act might produce pain, and would be vicious. The essence of virtue is doing good to others, while what is good may be one thing in one society, and it’s contrary in another.”³⁷

Thus for Jefferson, man by nature is inclined toward happiness. Unlike Locke, Jeffersonian happiness can only be realized through virtuous action. Furthermore, it is not

³⁵ Engeman, *Thomas Jefferson and the politics of nature*, pg. 60

³⁶ Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Complete and Unabridged, Vol. 1*, 1959. pg. 303

³⁷ Letter to John Adams, October 14, 1816. Cappon, Lester J., ed. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The complete correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams, 2 vols.* Vol. 2, pg. 492. New York: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959.

virtuous action alone that brings about happiness, but the end effect of the virtuous action.

Therefore, the Lockean apex passion can exist within a framework of man acting in self interest alone. However, with Jefferson, the presence of virtue, especially virtue through action ensures that man must act outside a singular framework in order to actualize happiness.³⁸

Adams on Human Nature

In his book, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, C. Bradley Thompson notes that “The study of politics for John Adams ultimately meant the study of human nature: it meant an inquiry into “how far” the theory and practice of politics “were founded on nature or created by fancy.”³⁹ For Adams, man by nature is inclined towards socialization and community. Adams’ connection between man’s nature and his communal-mindedness goes back to the Aristotelian concept of man as a political animal that finds fulfillment as an active participant in society. Like Aristotle, Adams finds that “Man is distinguished from other animals, his fellow inhabitants of this planet, by a capacity of acquiring knowledge and civility, more than by any excellency, corporeal, or mental, with which mere nature has furnished his species.”⁴⁰

It is this capacity for knowledge that imbues man with the tools he needs to participate in society. Thompson finds that Adams rejected the Calvinist, and to a certain extent Machiavellian view of human nature as one that is inclined towards evil.

³⁸ The third difference according to Yarbrough, deals with the social inclinations that exist in the Lockean and Jeffersonian approach to human nature. In my opinion, I find the third difference is inherent in the characteristics of the second difference. (Engeman, *Thomas Jefferson and the politics of nature*, pg. 60-61)

³⁹ Thompson, C. Bradley. *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*. Lawrence : University Press of Kansas, 1998, pg. 148

⁴⁰ *Essays and Controversial Papers of the Revolution*. Adams, John; ed. Thompson, C. Bradley. *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*. Liberty Fund : Indianapolis, 2000, pg. 3

In the *Discourses on Davila*, Adams observes that:

“Men, in their primitive conditions, however savage, were undoubtedly gregarious; and they continue to be social, not only in every stage of civilization, but in every possible situation in which they can be placed. As nature intended them for society, she has furnished them with passions, appetites, and propensities, as well as a variety of faculties, calculated both for their individual enjoyment, and to render them useful to each other in their social connections.”⁴¹

Similar to Locke and Jefferson, Adams finds that there are inherent passions within men that enable them to realize their full potential. Of the passions exhibited by men, Adams finds “There is none among them more essential or remarkable, than the *passion for distinction*.”⁴² This passion for the highest things is exhibited by man’s willingness to be recognized as a worthwhile member in society.

This distinction in Adams’ view brings forth reward and personal gratification for man in society. In assessing the characteristics of distinction, Adams finds that “Wherever men, women, or children, are to be found, whether they be old or young, rich or poor, high or low, wise or foolish, ignorant or learned, every individual is seen to be strongly actuated by a desire to be seen, heard, talked of, approved and respected, by the people about him, and within his knowledge.”⁴³ The yearning for recognition and praise is proportional to the fear of neglect a man can feel if his society expresses disdain towards him.

Within human nature, Adams finds a phenomenon he deems to be “Emulation.”⁴⁴ Emulation can be broken down into four aspects. First, when emulation seeks distinction within the framework of achieving power, it is called ambition. Hence, when man seeks to achieve power via a passionate and virtuous approach, he models himself after those who have virtuously

⁴¹ *Discourses on Davila*. Adams, John; ed. Adams, Charles Francis; *The Works of John Adams*. 10 vols. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co/Liberty Fund Inc., 1850-1856. Vol.6, pg. 156

⁴² *Ibid*, pg. 156

⁴³ *Ibid*, pg. 156

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 157

attained power and praise in society. Second, when emulation is succumbed by fear, Adams finds that man resorts to jealousy. Jealousy entails the absence of virtue and is therefore a corrupted version of emulation. Furthermore, jealousy can be brought about by uncertainty. Jealousy according to Adams is undertaken by those who feel “that another, who is now inferior, will become superior.”⁴⁵ The third manifestation of emulation is envy. Unlike jealousy, where one is afraid of the inferior becoming superior, envy creates a situation where the inferior man wants to bring the supposedly superior man down to his level. With jealousy and envy, Adams finds that fear, and to a certain extent the selfishness borne out of it, can lead to a life of actions without virtue (vice). The fourth manifestation of emulation is vanity. With vanity, Adams sees a situation where man has an elevated opinion of himself that is without foundation. With the proper exercise of emulation, man is duly elevated in society via his virtuous action. On the other hand, the vain man feels elevated not by the praise of others, but by praise he gives himself.

In looking at Adams’ assessment of the composite factors of emulation, one is immediately drawn to the Aristotelian concept of the means. In Book 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that:

“There are three kinds of disposition, then, two of them vices, involving excess and deficiency respectively, and one a virtue, viz. the mean, and all are in a sense opposed to all; for the extreme states are contrary both to the intermediate state and to each other, and the intermediate to the extremes; as the equal is greater relatively to the less, less relatively to the greater, so the middle states are excessive relatively to the deficiencies, deficient relatively to the excesses, both in passion and in actions.”⁴⁶

A juxtaposition of Adams’ passions with the Aristotelian means shows that envy and jealousy constitute the deficiency spectrum of the vices. After all, envy and jealousy both arise

⁴⁵ Ibid, pg. 157

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 2, Chp. 8, 1108b 11-18. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 962

from fear (with fear being a deficiency in confidence). Ambition suffices as the golden mean because it entails passion channeled in a virtuous manner. On the other hand, vanity would be the excessive vice because it entails the presence of overt confidence in one's self.

One can notice similarities in Adams' and Jefferson's hierarchy of passions. In both cases, Adams and Jefferson find that the highest passions are social by nature and ensure to a certain extent, the general uplifting of society. Likewise, Adams and Jefferson possess passion hierarchies that require virtue in order to actualize an ideal existence. It is the presence of these virtues that create an avenue for like-mindedness and communality within man. Thus, it would be fair to say that in looking to understand human nature, Adams and Jefferson looked to the classic philosophers for direction and understanding.

Adams finds that the presence of benevolence and *spectemur agendo* places a check on the unbridled selfishness that can exist in men. *Spectemur agendo* entails a scenario where man is observed as a being in action. Thompson finds that it serves two purposes. The first purpose is to encourage and promote the communal mindedness Adams posited as being pivotal to human nature. Secondly, it creates a scenario whereby the antisocial and selfish behavior will be punished and curbed.⁴⁷ For Adams, the realization of *spectemur agendo* brings forth the rewards of esteem and admiration in society.

Seeing that Adams believes that man by nature is passionate for distinction and a virtuous reputation, it is of interest to investigate where human nature derives its origins. In *A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, Adams asserts that "It is the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the

⁴⁷ Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, pg. 154

SUPREME BEING, the great CREATOR and Preserver of the universe.”⁴⁸ In calling mankind to worship the great Creator, Adams explicitly acknowledges the presence of an order within the cosmos. At the top of this order is the Creator/Providence who bestows these traits and rights upon man. In this guise, Adams accepts that man is subject to a higher order in the cosmos.

Human Nature, Slavery, and Order

Adams and Jefferson both believed that all men are equal by nature. However, equality in nature for them did not necessarily mean equality in society. In assessing equality, Adams notes:

“That all men are born to equal rights is true. Every being has a right to his own, as clear, as moral, as sacred, as any other being has. This is as indubitable as a moral government in the universe. But to teach that all men are born with equal powers and faculties, to equal influence in society, to equal property and advantages through life, is as gross a fraud,”⁴⁹

For Adams, equality in birth does not necessarily translate to equality in ability. He finds man to be hierarchical. By hierarchy, I am referring to a state of affairs where men of greater ability and virtue find themselves in positions of leadership. Jefferson also shared this notion of hierarchy. In a letter to Adams, Jefferson states “For I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men.”⁵⁰ For both men, aristocracy, or the rule of those of the highest merit, is part of human nature. Jefferson considered natural aristocracy to be a situation where “The grounds of this are virtue and talents.”⁵¹ While for Adams, “By *natural aristocracy*, in general,

⁴⁸ *The Report of A Constitution, or Form of Government, for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.* Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, pg. 298

⁴⁹ Letter to John Taylor, of Caroline, Virginia, in reply to his strictures on some parts of The Defence of the American Constitutions. Adams, *The Works of John Adams Vol. 6*, pg. 305

⁵⁰ Letter to John Adams, October 28, 1813. Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 187

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pg. 187

may be understood those superiorities of influence in society which grow out of the constitution of human nature.”⁵²

For both Adams and Jefferson, natural aristocracy is meritorious and virtuous. Their view of aristocracy is a logical conclusion of their societal appraisal of human nature. For them, the men who displayed the highest virtue within the community are best fit to rule. Jefferson noted that wealth, and to a certain extent noble-birth do not necessarily equate to natural aristocracy. However, wealth can sometimes be a sign of the virtues and merit which are necessary to be deemed naturally aristocratic.

If man by nature is inclined towards aristocracy and order, is slavery permissible within the natural fabric of man? In speaking of slavery, Aristotle finds that “Others affirm that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by law only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust.”⁵³ Aristotle goes further when he asks, “But is there anyone thus intended to by nature to be a slave, and to for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature?”⁵⁴ He answers:

“There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.”⁵⁵

For Aristotle, slavery is undoubtedly an aspect of human existence, be it by nature or societal inclination. In assessing natural slavery, Aristotle, like Jefferson and Adams, posits a state of affairs where men of lesser virtue become subservient to those of higher virtue.

⁵² Letter to John Taylor, of Caroline, Virginia, in reply to his strictures on some parts of The Defence of the American Constitutions. Adams, *The Works of John Adams Vol. 6*, pg. 305

⁵³ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 1, Chp. 2, 1253b 20-23*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1130-31

⁵⁴ Ibid, pg. 1132

⁵⁵ Ibid, pg. 1132

However, in assessing slavery by law, Aristotle speaks of a situation where man is subjected to another man through victory and the spoils of war. For Aristotle, slavery by law is fickle and without foundation. Hence he finds:

“But this right many jurists impeach, as they would an orator who brought forward an unconstitutional measure: they detest the notion that, because one man has power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject.”⁵⁶

For Adams, slavery by law was unacceptable. In his *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*, John Adams stated that:

“Let us see delineated before us the true map of man. Let us hear the dignity of his nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God,—that consenting to slavery is a sacrilegious breach of trust, as offensive in the sight of God as it is derogatory from our own honor or interest or happiness,—and that God Almighty has promulgated from heaven, liberty, peace, and good-will to man!”⁵⁷

Adams concurred with Aristotle that slavery by law had no basis within a virtuous human existence. Furthermore, it was an exercise in the vices found in human nature and thus needed to be curbed for the good of society. Adams never owned slaves.

For Jefferson, the issue of slavery by law was more delicate. In his autobiography, Jefferson stated:

“In 1769, I became a member of the legislature by the choice of the county in which I live, & continued in that until it was closed by the revolution. I made one effort in that body for the permission of the emancipation of slaves, which was rejected: and indeed, during the regal government, nothing liberal could expect success.”⁵⁸

Thus, it seems that Jefferson did not approve of slavery as a legal institution, nevertheless he owned slaves. Though Jefferson espoused the virtues of human nature, he succumbed to the vice of slavery.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pg. 1133

⁵⁷ *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*. Adams, *The Works of John Adam Vol. 3*, pg. 344

⁵⁸ *Autobiography*. Jefferson, Thomas; ed. Ford, Paul Leicester;. *The Works, Volume 1*. New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons/Liberty Fund Online, 1905. Pg. 21

On the whole, Adams and Jefferson seemed to share similar views on human nature. Both men believed that man by nature was inherently social (Aristotelian *zoon politikon*). They both believed that every man has in him rights that are inviolable either by government or his fellow man. Furthermore, they believed that man by nature tends to the highest/virtuous aspects of his being so as to realize an optimal existence. They split on the practicality of slavery. Adams opposed slavery by law and practiced this opposition to his death. Jefferson opposed it as law, but succumbed to it in practice.

CHAPTER TWO: ON POLITICS

The State/Political Community

Politics is the transition from human nature to society. It is his social nature that drives man toward politics. The state embodies the community that men set up amongst themselves to realize their highest goals. In the *Republic*, Socrates finds:

“The origin of the city, then said I, in my opinion, is to be found in the fact that we do not severally suffice for our own needs, but each of us lacks many things.”⁵⁹

For Socrates, man as an isolated creature is not sufficient within himself to realize the highest parts of his being. Likewise, seeing men are of diverse talents, their decision to coalesce into a city or state would ensure each individual’s needs are met to a point. Aristotle finds:

“Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.”⁶⁰

The state, as an entity is comprised of different communities. For Aristotle, villages and households (with households being a subset within the village structure) come together to form the state. If one were to take a bigger picture approach to the state, it could be placed in a hierarchical structure originating from individual-households-villages-state. For Aristotle, the state is a natural phenomenon. He finds “it is evident that the state is a creation of nature...”⁶¹ Aristotle believes the state precedes man within nature’s order. Thus, he finds the state is the only institution with which man can realize the highest good he was created for. Aristotle concludes:

⁵⁹Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 2, 369b5-8. Plato; ed. by Hamilton, Edith; Huntington, Cairns;. *The Collected Dialogues*. New York: Panthenon Books, 1961. pg. 615

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 1, Chp. 1, 1252a 1-6. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1127

⁶¹ Ibid, pg. 1130

“the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god; he is no part of the state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors.”⁶²

Locke finds the state to be a situation where men come together to realize a community in which each member will be able to achieve his highest potential. The state or community, despite being composed of different men is to be viewed as one body. Locke posits that in the state, men give up some of the rights and characteristics they possess by nature. It is the partial surrender of rights among men that essentially assures mankind the ability to realize the highest good. The only time where man may be justified in surrendering aspects of his nature is when embarking on creating a state.⁶³

When men give their consent in order to realize a community, there must be a form of organization that ensures the establishment and the propagation of this community. This organization is called government.

John Adams finds:

“We ought to consider what is the end of government, before we determine which is the best form. Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. From this principle it will follow, that the form of government which communicates ease, comfort, security, or, in one word, happiness, to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best.”⁶⁴

In assessing happiness as the end to which government aims, Adams mirrors Aristotle. In speaking of the highest good, Aristotle finds “Verbally, there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify

⁶² Ibid, pg. 1130

⁶³ Locke, John; ed. Cook, Thomas I. *Two Treatises of Government*. New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1947. pg. 122-123

⁶⁴ *Thoughts on Government*. Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 4, pg. 131

living well and doing well with being happy...”⁶⁵ Like Aristotle, Adams finds that man cannot attain the highest good without virtue. Hence the community of men and its constituent government must be virtuous. In Adams’ understanding of human nature its passions, fear leads man toward actions of vice as opposed to virtue. Bearing the notion of fear in mind, Adams finds in general:

“Fear is the foundation of most governments; but it is so sordid and brutal a passion, and renders men in whose breasts it predominates so stupid and miserable, that Americans will not be likely to approve of any political institution which is founded on it.”⁶⁶

Fear as a foundation in the formation of government can be found in the works of Montesquieu. Montesquieu finds that “fear would lead men to flee one another, but the marks of mutual fear would soon persuade them to approach one another. They would also be so inclined by the pleasure one animal feels at the approach of an animal of his own kind.”⁶⁷

For Jefferson, government exists primarily to preserve the rights afforded man by nature. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson writes:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”⁶⁸

In Jefferson’s notion of securing rights, he implicitly acknowledges Adams’ notion of fear as a reason for government. This view of security (be it born out of fear or simple prudence) and happiness as contributing to the realization of a political community deserves some analysis.

In his *Discourses on Government*, Algernon Sidney states:

“Is there any absurdity in saying, that since God in goodness and mercy to mankind, hath with an equal hand given to all the benefit of liberty, with some measure of understanding how to employ it, ‘tis lawful for any nation, as occasion shall require, to give the exercise

⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 1, Chp. 3, 1095a 16-19. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 937

⁶⁶ *Thoughts on Government*. Adams, *The Works*, Volume 4, pg. 131

⁶⁷ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Law*, pg. 6-7

⁶⁸ Becker, *The Declaration of Independence*, pg. 186

of that power to one or more men, under certain limitations or conditions; or to retain it in themselves, if they thought it good for them? If this may be done, we are at end of all controversies concerning one form of government, established by God, to which all mankind must submit; and we may safely conclude, that having given to all men in some degree a capacity of judging what is good for themselves, he hath granted to all likewise a liberty of inventing such forms as please them best, without favouring one more than another.”⁶⁹

For Sidney, man by nature is inclined to institute whatever form of government suits him best. The best for one man may be the worst for another. In assessing what one may deem best, matters such as the history and culture of particular domains must be properly studied to know what form of government suits them.

Sidney, like Jefferson, believed men have the right to abolish whatever the government they instituted if they find it unsuitable to the aims they sought to realize. By positing the right to abolish government, Sidney and Jefferson differ from Locke, who finds that whenever men have given their consent to one community, it would be improper for them to withdraw their consent.⁷⁰ However, like Locke, Sidney finds that in establishing a political community, man must give up some of the rights and liberties afforded him by nature. Thus he states:

“Reason leads them to this: No one man or family is able to provide that which is requisite for their convenience or security... The liberty of one is thwarted by that of another; and whilst they are all equal, none will yield to any, otherwise than by general consent. This is the ground of all just governments; for violence or fraud can create no right; and the same consent gives the form to them all, how much soever they differ from each other.”⁷¹

Despite having to surrender some of their natural rights and liberties, Sidney nevertheless believes that government at the end of the day is instituted towards the good of men. He finds “if governments arise from the consent of men, and are instituted by men according to their own

⁶⁹ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, pg. 20

⁷⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pg. 170-171

⁷¹ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, pg. 20

inclinations, they did therein seek their own good; for the will is ever drawn by some real good, or the appearance of it.”⁷²

Form of Government

Since it is established that men need government in order to realize the highest good, it is necessary to inquire as to what form of government is best suited for man. According to Adams, republicanism is the best form of government; he finds it to be an “empire of laws and not of men.”⁷³ This view of a republic as being law centered comes from Adams’ belief that in a republican form of government there exists a hierarchy in which citizens “depute power from the many to a few of the most wise and good.”⁷⁴ The transfer of power from the many to a more virtuous few makes practical sense. It resolves a logistical issue that may arise with a direct form of mass democracy where citizens would be required to vote on every law or motion in the community.

Jefferson was also inclined towards a republican form of government. In his autobiography, he noted, “I considered 4 of these bills, passed or reported, as forming a system by which every fibre would be eradicated of antient or future aristocracy; and a foundation laid for a government truly republican.”⁷⁵

Before proceeding, a proper assessment of republicanism as a form of government will be useful. Montesquieu considered republican government to be one “in which the people as a

⁷² Ibid, pg. 49

⁷³ *Thoughts on Government*. Adams, *The Works, Volume 4*, pg. 132

⁷⁴ Ibid, pg. 132

⁷⁵ *A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled*. Jefferson, *The Works, Volume 1*, pg.48

body, or only a part of the people, have sovereign power;”⁷⁶ Furthermore, “In a republic when the people as a body have sovereign power, it is a democracy.”⁷⁷

In understanding the underpinnings of republicanism, Sandoz finds that “The political theory of republicanism was explicitly identified with Aristotle’s mixed regime as the “free commonwealth” he ultimately preferred as the best practical form of government,”⁷⁸ For Aristotle, the concept of mixed government is a logical extension of his concept of the means. In the previous chapter, when human nature was being considered, one realizes that Aristotle posited a scenario wherein the mean characteristics were deemed virtuous. In observing political orders, Aristotle finds the existence of class within every polity. In all states, the rich and the poor exist, between them lies the middle class. The middle class lay the foundation of a prudent order. It is this middle class that can be deemed as a virtuous mean for Aristotle, it checks the excesses of the rich and poor. Hence Aristotle states:

“Wherefore the city which is composed of middle-class citizens is necessarily best constituted in respect of the elements of which we say the fabric of the state naturally consists. And this is the class of citizens which is most secure in a state, for they do not, like the poor, covet their neighbour’s goods; nor do others covet theirs, as the poor covet the goods of the rich; and as they neither plot against others, nor are themselves plotted against, they pass through life safely. Wisely then did Phocylides pray – Many things are best in the mean; I desire to be a middle condition in my city.”⁷⁹

For Adams, there are three forms of republican government; they are the modern democratic republic, aristocratic republic, and regal or monarchical republic. Adams finds that throughout history, there have been few instances where simple democracy, vis-à-vis, a rule of the masses, was able to foster a prudent political community. Hence, he notes:

⁷⁶ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, pg. 10

⁷⁷ Ibid, pg. 10

⁷⁸ Sandoz, *Republicanism, Religion, And the Soul of America*, pg. 6

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 4, Chp. 11, 1295b 27-34*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1221

“It might be easier to determine the question concerning the practicability or impracticability, the utility or inutility of a simple democracy, if we could find a number of examples of it. From the frightful pictures of a democratical city, drawn by the masterly pencils of ancient philosophers and historians, it may be conjectured that such governments existed in Greece and Italy, at least for short spaces of time; but no particular history of any one of them is come down to us; nor are we able to procure any more satisfaction to our curiosity from modern history.”⁸⁰

In realizing the historical impracticality of simple democracy, Adams finds that there have been societies that were able to incorporate some aspects of democracy to realize a prudent political order. For Adams, San Marino was such a republic. An important aspect of the republican nature of San Marino was the fact that within the polity existed a layered form of representation. There was the *arengo*, an assembly that constituted of representation on a household basis. There was also a general council that was comprised of forty men who served in a more exclusive role. There were also two *capitaneos* whom Adams deemed to “have such a power as the old Roman consuls had, but are chosen every six months.”⁸¹

Adams also found within the legislature plebeians and patricians.⁸² The fact that both rich and poor people had representation made it a republic and a democracy. This is especially pertinent if one were to take into account Montesquieu’s definition of the two concepts. The fact that the republic of San Marino was contemporary to Adams made it a modern democratic republic.

The second form of republicanism Adams observed was the aristocratic republic. In this form of government, only a select few are entitled to rule within the state. This form of government for Adams could be found in the Swiss canton of Fribourg where only a few families could actively participate in government. Here, the aristocrats were those who possessed property which was more than average in comparison to the rest of the populace. While wealth

⁸⁰ Chapter 1, *Of Modern Democratic Republics. San Marino*. Adams, *The Works, Volume 4*, pg. 193

⁸¹ *Ibid*, pg. 194

⁸² *Ibid*, pg. 196

and property do not necessarily equate to merit, it was deemed that good virtue coupled with high merit could bring about an increase in property. Furthermore, the aristocratic republics that Adams observed tended to be small in population. Their small population afforded them the ability to realize an aristocratic republic. Given that political office and decision making tend to be limited in states with small populations, it was usually deemed prudent that the best citizens ruled.

The third form of republicanism for Adams is the monarchical/regal republic. In this political order, Adams finds sovereignty rests in the hands of a single monarch, usually a king, who is surrounded by assisting nobles. Here, the mass man is virtually removed from politics and is more or less subject to the whims and inclinations of the king and the nobility.

C. Bradley Thompson finds that Adams was weary of “simple democratic government.”⁸³ Simple democratic government refers to a situation where a majority within a given community carries the day politically. For Adams, unicameralism embodied the worst aspect of simple democracy. Commenting on the characteristics of unicameralism, Adams finds:

“The great question therefore is, What combination of powers in society, or what form of government, will compel the formation, impartial execution, and faithful interpretation of good and equal laws, so that the citizens may constantly enjoy the benefit of them, and may be sure of their continuance? The controversy between M. Turgot and me is, whether a single assembly of representatives be this form? He maintains the affirmative. I am for the negative. Because such an assembly will, upon the first day of its existence, be an aristocracy; in a few days, or at least years, an oligarchy; and then it will divide into two or three parties, who will soon have as many armies; after which, when the battle is decided, the victorious general will govern without or with the advice of any council or assembly, as he pleases; or else, if the assembly continues united, it will in time exclude the people from all share even in elections, and make the government hereditary in a few families.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, pg. 175

⁸⁴ *Opinions of Philosophers*. Adams, *The Works, Volume 4*, pg. 254

For Adams, simple democracy is insufficient in checking the passions that exist within men. The necessity of a check on the passions of men comes from what Adams sees as the need for a balanced approach to one's existence. In speaking of balance, Adams notes:

“Men should endeavor at a *balance* of affections and appetites, under the monarchy of reason and conscience, within, as well as at a balance of power without. If they surrender the guidance for any course of time to any one passion, they may depend upon finding it, in the end, a usurping, domineering, cruel tyrant. They were intended by nature to live together in society, and in this way to restrain one another, and in general they are a very good kind of creatures; but they know each other's imbecility so well, that they ought never to lead one another into temptation.”⁸⁵

In a letter to John Taylor, Jefferson defined a republic as:

“a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules established by the majority; and that every other government is more or less republican, in proportion as it has in its composition more or less of this ingredient of the direct action of the citizens. Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population.”⁸⁶

One sees Montesquieu's influence on Jefferson's thought, especially when one recalls Montesquieu's notion that republicanism can entail a popular form of rule. The degree of popular involvement is proportional to the tendency towards republicanism in the polity. Jefferson finds republicanism permeates various institutions within the community. He states:

“Other shades of republicanism may be found in other forms of government, where the executive, judiciary and legislative functions, and the different branches of the latter, are chosen by the people more or less directly, for longer terms of years or for life, or made hereditary; or where there are mixtures of authorities, some dependent on, and others independent of the people.”⁸⁷

David N. Mayer in *The Constitutional Thought of Thomas Jefferson* finds “the omnipotence of the legislature was another major concern Jefferson had with the 1776 Virginia

⁸⁵ Ibid, pg. 255

⁸⁶ Letter to John Taylor, May 28, 1816. Jefferson, *The Works, Vol. 11*, pg. 296

⁸⁷ Ibid, pg. 297

Constitution.”⁸⁸ While Jefferson posited popular will was intrinsic to republicanism, it seems he also subscribed to Adams’ notion of balance where popular will would be checked by reason and virtue. Like Adams, Jefferson believed a tiered form of government was necessary to prevent the perils of a single figure rule or the turbulent rule of a mob. According to Mayer, Jefferson’s need for a separation of powers within the polity could be viewed through the lens of the *res publica* concept. For Mayer, *res publica* finds “government and society as two separate autonomous spheres: a realm of politics which encompassed what was truly of common interest, on the one hand, and on the other, a sphere in which individuals could fashion their lives as they saw fit,”⁸⁹

It is this through the prism of *res publica* that Jefferson laid his foundation for self-government and individual rights. For Mayer, Jefferson’s notion of self government was unknown to the classic philosophers. Mayer found that Jefferson’s notion of self government arose from the natural society concept. The concept of the natural society harps back to Jefferson’s belief that within human nature lies a hierarchy and social order based on the virtues of men. According to Mayer, Jefferson’s view of the natural society and the politics of self government came from “a synthesis of Enlightenment ideas: Lockean natural rights doctrine; Scottish moral sense philosophy, deistic natural religion, and the economic theories developed by British and French antimercantilists.”⁹⁰ Self-government as an appendage of republicanism created an avenue for citizenship within society. Citizenship ensures individuals within a community possess rights and duties that afford them a stake in the community.

⁸⁸ Mayer, David N. *The Constitutional Thought of Thomas Jefferson*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994. pg. 61

⁸⁹ Ibid, pg. 70

⁹⁰ Ibid, pg. 71

On Citizenship

Given that the state is comprised of men, it is generally agreed upon that those who have given their consent are citizens. No matter how sophisticated the designs of institutions are, the health of the community is dependent on the pursuit of virtue by its citizenry. Hence, it is of high importance that the citizens of a community seek the highest good inherent in their nature.

In understanding citizenship, we will return to the Aristotelian concept of *homonoia*, that is, a community-mindedness that exists among the inhabitants of a community. It should be understood that citizenship is not strictly a function of residence, but is intrinsically tied to history and culture. Aristotle finds that citizenship in its essence entails a situation where an individual “shares in the administration of justice, and in offices.”⁹¹ Therefore, a citizen is an individual who has a stake in the political process of the community. Then, it can be logically concluded that slaves are not citizens as they cannot participate in the political realm.

Adams, like Aristotle considers a citizen as one who rules and takes turns in ruling. Adams finds “The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals. It is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good.”⁹² Seeing the necessity of political participation as a requirement for citizenship, Adams believes virtue is essential in realizing a prudent citizenry. Coupled with his belief, Adams also found “The duties and rights of the man and the citizen are thus taught from early infancy to every creature.”⁹³ Adams’ notion of citizenship implicitly acknowledges the presence of communal mindedness in the state. In re-assessing Adams’ take on virtues, one recalls emulation. As noted in the

⁹¹Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 3, Chp. 1, 1275a 23-24. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1177

⁹² *The Report of a Constitution, or form of Government, for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 4, pg. 149

⁹³ *On the Permanent Seat of Government*. Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 3, pg. 319

previous chapter, emulation is the passion that drives individuals towards excellence in their endeavors. In nurturing good citizens, emulation must be imparted into the youth to ensure the longevity of the state as well as the virtue of the constituent citizenry.

Jefferson proposed that citizenship be limited to those of the white race who had lived in Virginia two years prior to the act being passed.⁹⁴ Through today's prism, one may decry Jefferson's opinions on citizenship as racist. While the accusations have some foundation, another way of looking at Jefferson's take on citizenship can be centered on *homonoia*. Jefferson rightly perceived that if citizenship were open to all races and peoples within the Commonwealth of Virginia, a situation would have ensued where the presence of different cultural interests would lead to a factional state politics capable of destabilizing the commonwealth.

In addition, loyalty to the commonwealth was also an important aspect of citizenship. In swearing an oath to the commonwealth, it was safely assumed that the individual had a vested interest in its stability and prosperity. As with Aristotle, Jefferson finds that citizenship entails a generational aspect to it. Hence when Aristotle said, "in practice a citizen is defined to be one of whom both the parents are citizens;"⁹⁵ one can easily juxtapose Jefferson's assertion that "all infants whosoever born, whose father, if living, or otherwise their mother becoming a citizen, or who migrate hither without father or mother, shall be deemed citizens of this commonwealth...."⁹⁶

For Jefferson, citizenship can be temporary; he finds that if an individual loses the will to be an active participant within the community, he has the right to exit the community. He states

⁹⁴ *A Bill Declaring Who Shall Be Deemed Citizens of this Commonwealth*. Jefferson, *Writings*, pg. 374

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 3, Chp. 2, 1275b 23-24. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1178

⁹⁶ *A Bill Declaring Who Shall Be Deemed Citizens of this Commonwealth*. Jefferson, *Writings*, pg. 374

that “citizens may divest themselves of that character, by declaring, by solemn deed, or in open court, that they mean to expatriate themselves, and no longer to be citizens of this state.”⁹⁷

When the rights and duties of citizens are observed within the framework of a community, the study known as civics emerges. With civics, men continually ensure the maintenance of the liberties afforded them by nature within their community. Hence Adams states that:

“The steady management of a good government is the most anxious, arduous, and hazardous vocation on this side the grave. Let us not encumber those, therefore, who have spirit enough to embark in such an enterprise, with any kind of opposition that the preservation or perfection of our mild, our happy, our most excellent constitution, does not soberly demand. But, on the other hand, as we know that ignorance, vanity, excessive ambition and venality, will, in spite of all human precautions, creep into government, and will ever be aspiring at extravagant and unconstitutional emoluments to individuals, let us never relax our attention, or our resolution, to keep these unhappy imperfections in human nature, out of which material, frail as it is, all our rulers must be compounded, under a strict inspection and a just control.”⁹⁸

For Jefferson, civic duty is deeply rooted in the notion of self government. For him, it was the essential duty of each citizen to ensure that the natural rights were in no way impeded. For Jefferson, civic consciousness could only be realistically achieved within the confines of ward systems.⁹⁹ The ward system affords citizens a realistic sphere of interaction where they can impact the affairs of their community. It was unrealistic for the citizen to impact all tiers of government; this was especially true when the population tended to be large. The ward system ensured a workable confine for the citizen to be civic-minded in the community.

From the enlightened republican citizen in Adams’ view, to the active citizen in the Jeffersonian ward system, virtue created the will power needed to realize civic mindedness.

⁹⁷*The Administration of Justice and the Description of the Laws.* Jefferson, *The Works*, Vol. 4, pg. 32

⁹⁸*On Self-Delusion.* Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 3, pg. 328

⁹⁹ Jefferson, *Jefferson: Political Writings*, pg. 213

Adams and Jefferson departed from Aristotle when assessing civic mindedness. For example, Aristotle noted “that the good citizen need not of necessity possess the virtue which makes a good man.”¹⁰⁰ For him, a man may not possess some of the classically defined virtues, yet, as long as he contributes to the fostering of the political community and follows the laws, he can be deemed a good citizen. Adams and Jefferson both disagreed as they found that a citizen without virtue was a citizen with no sense of civic mindedness.

On The Law

Seeing that the state is made up of citizens, and that civic mindedness ensures the longevity of the state, one must inquire as to what binds the citizen towards civic mindedness. This phenomenon is the law. As stated earlier, Adams found a republic to be nothing other than an empire of laws. Ultimately, it is the law that ensures the survival of the state.

For Adams, the law was among the “means and instruments of human happiness.”¹⁰¹ This view of the law as springing forth happiness stems from the belief that the law is the most prudent tool with which peace, stability, and prosperity can be achieved. Furthermore, he finds “The Law of Nations is or ought to be founded on the Law of Reason.”¹⁰² In this guise, the law men choose to govern themselves by must be consistent with the highest aspects of their being. For Adams, there are three main forms of law.¹⁰³ These are the canon, feudal, and common law. According to Adams, Canon law, which is based on religious or ecclesiastical tenets, proved to be insufficient in ordering men to the right mode of conduct. For him, canon law did not seek to

¹⁰⁰ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 3, Chp. 4, 1276b 34-35*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1180

¹⁰¹ *On Private Revenge*. Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, pg. 14

¹⁰² *Ibid*, pg. 136

¹⁰³ Adams’ take on canon and feudal law can be found in “A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law”, Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, pg. 21-35. His take on common law can be found in, Adams, *The Works, Vol. 3*, pg. 323-412

order men to the right course of action as it was “framed by the Romish clergy for the aggrandisement of their own order.”¹⁰⁴

Adams’ views on the canon law seem like an anti-Roman Catholic screed. While Roman Catholicism bore the brunt of the criticism within Adams’ take on canon law, the papacy was only meant to symbolize the greater tyranny associated with religious based law. Furthermore, when one thinks of religion and the institutions formed around it, one would suppose that the primary duty of these institutions would be to inform man on the rights bestowed upon him by the God or gods he worships. Instead, Adams found that canon law reduced the minds of men “to a state of sordid ignorance and staring timidity.”¹⁰⁵

Feudal law for Adams was as tyrannical and destructive to the cause of the human ideal as canon law. While canon law thrived in its oppression of man through religious institutions, feudal law was founded on the worst aspects of human nature. Adams believed that feudal law “was originally a code of laws for a vast army in a perpetual encampment.”¹⁰⁶ Such a law was ill-suited to create an atmosphere of peace and prosperity among men. Furthermore, it displayed an utter disregard for popular will which led Adams to claim that “the common people were held together in herds and clans in a state of servile dependence on their lords.”¹⁰⁷

In speaking of common law, Adams found:

“The grandeur and glory of the public, and the universal happiness of individuals, were never so skilfully and successfully consulted as in that most excellent monument of human art, the common law of England; a law that maintains a great superiority, not only to every other system of laws, martial or canon, or civil and military, even to majesty itself.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, pg. 22

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pg. 22

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pg. 23

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pg. 23

¹⁰⁸ *On Private Revenge*. Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 3, pg. 330-331

The common law embodied the very best that the English tradition had to offer. Adams derived his understanding of English common law from the works of the great English jurist Sir William Blackstone. In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, Blackstone noted that there existed two forms of law that guided the English political order; “the *lex non scripta*, the unwritten, or common law; and the *lex scripta*, the written, or statute law.”¹⁰⁹ English common law originated from the customs and mores of the English people over centuries. These customs, Blackstone found, eventually came to be codified and written in various law books on English history.

English common law as observed by Blackstone possessed a mixture of various non-English customs derived from groups such as the Danes and Romans. Adams, in observing the roots of common law, also noticed that “Out of the Mercian laws, the laws of the West Saxons, and the Danish law, King Edward the Confessor extracted one uniform digest of laws, to be observed throughout the whole kingdom.”¹¹⁰

According to Blackstone there were three aspects to common law: they were general customs, particular customs, and certain particular laws. General customs for Blackstone were those laws that governed society on a broad basis. They also dealt with parliamentary acts and procedures, legitimacy of contracts, and issues with land distribution. These were the sorts of laws that regulated kingdoms and realms and were meant to ensure uniformity throughout the political order.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Blackstone, Sir William; ed. Sharswood, George;. *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, 2 vols. Volume I. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co./Liberty Fund Online, 1893, pg. 60

¹¹⁰ *The Independence of the Judiciary; A Controversy between William Brattle and John Adams, 1783*. Adams, *The Works*, Volume 3, pg. 395

¹¹¹ Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, Volume 1, pg. 62-63

Particular customs were tailored by local communities to maintain autonomy in dealing with issues specifically related to them. Blackstone observed particular customs preceded the general customs of common law.¹¹² English rulers tolerated particular laws within localities as a sign of good faith towards communities who had more or less given up some autonomy to realize the creation of the general customs within English common law.

Certain particular customs were the third aspect of common law for Blackstone. These laws were created to address canon and civil issues within the English political order.

Blackstone found that:

“They bind not the subjects of England, because their materials were collected from popes or emperors, were digested by Justinian, or declared to be authentic by Gregory. These considerations give them no authority here; for the legislature of England doth not, nor ever did, recognise any foreign power as superior or equal to it in this kingdom, or as having the right to give law to any, the meanest, of its subjects.”¹¹³

One sees that Blackstone believed the law, as imagined by man, was created to regulate communal behavior while promoting individual liberty. One can see why Adams was a champion of common law. First, the multilayered aspect of common law espoused by Blackstone mirrored Adams’ take on republicanism as a form of government that posited order. A theory of law that intrinsically advocated ordered liberty would seamlessly blend with the hierarchical characteristics found in man by nature. Secondly, the notion that common law ensured the exclusion of canon and civil law must have thoroughly delighted Adams. As a people whose foundations were English, Adams believed that the adoption of English common law in America would foster the liberty of the American people.

¹¹² Ibid, pg. 61-62

¹¹³ Ibid, pg. 60

Similarly, Jefferson found that English common law was the most suited form of law to instruct the burgeoning nation of America on how to conduct its legal affairs.¹¹⁴ While Adams looked to Blackstone for a proper understanding of common law, Jefferson found the works of Sir Edward Coke to be more instructive. Of the works of Coke, *Commentary upon Littleton* and *Institutes of the Laws of England* proved to be most valuable to Jefferson.¹¹⁵ For Coke, “Common Law is nothing else but common reason; and yet we meane thereby nothing lesse, then that common reason where-with a man is naturally endued, but that perfection of reason which is gotten by long and continuall study....”¹¹⁶

Coke traces the origins of English common law to the *Magna Carta*, the historic document signed by King John in 1215 which essentially curbed the powers of the monarch and laid the foundation for a constitutional monarchy. Furthermore, he found common law to be an essential tool in statecraft. This led him to assert “That the surest construction of a State is by the rule and reason of the common Law.”¹¹⁷ Coke’s belief that the law was necessary in realizing a political order must have informed Jefferson’s belief that republicanism was but a concept of “*lex majoris partis* founded in common law and common right.”¹¹⁸

Jefferson, unlike Blackstone, deemed common law to be written law. While Blackstone found that common law had transformed from its oral origins to become written, Jefferson assessed that common law from its origins had been textual in form. Furthermore, Jefferson found that common law was but one of the two systems of law that existed in America, the

¹¹⁴ Letter to Edmund Randolph, August 18 1799. Jefferson, *Writings*, pg. 1068

¹¹⁵ Mayer, in assessing Jefferson’s legal perspective found Jefferson more inclined to Coke as opposed to Blackstone. Mayer, *The Constitutional Thought of Thomas Jefferson*, pg. 10-11

¹¹⁶ Coke, Sir Edward; ed. Sheppard, Steve;. *The Selected Writings of Sir Edward Coke. 2 vols. Vol 2*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund /Liberty Fund Online, 2003. pg. 41

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 145

¹¹⁸ *The Constitution of the State and its Several Charters*. Jefferson, *The Works*, Vol. 4, pg. 25

second being the Chancery.¹¹⁹ The chancery for Jefferson was a system of law that dealt with matters where:

“1. Where the common law gives no remedy. 2. Where its remedy is imperfect. 3. Where it would do injustice by comprehending within it’s letter cases not within it’s reason, nor intended to have been comprehended.”¹²⁰

Jefferson found that the chancery system of law arose within ecclesiastic ranks. When issues beyond the purview of common law came before the king, the matter was usually handled by the king’s Chancellor, who was usually of a religious bearing. For Jefferson, legal proceedings from the chancery should have been put to text so as to be incorporated to common law. Such a transition would ensure the supremacy of common law especially in light of his belief that “Much of the business of Chancery is now actually in a state of perfect preparation for removal into the common law.”¹²¹

As seen earlier, Adams believed that civil and canon law had no place within the framework of the American legal system. Likewise, Jefferson asserted that Christianity had no foundation within the framework of common law. He traced the origins of common law back to the fifth century. On the other hand, Christianity did not come to England for another 200 years. Thus, Christianity and common law were not naturally aligned in the eyes of Jefferson. Secondly, Jefferson found that many great English legal scholars, e.g. Ranulf de Glanvill and Henry Bracton (Bracton belonged to the ecclesiastical class) made no mention of Christianity in their assessment of common law, implying that their omission of Christianity was intentional as they saw no need for it in the English legal code.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pg. 300

¹²⁰ Ibid, pg. 301

¹²¹ Ibid, pg. 302

¹²² Jefferson, *The Works, Vol. 1*, pg. 222-225

For Adams and Jefferson human nature is actualized through politics. Politics is manifested through man's actions in society, while the constituent government provides the opportunity to build a virtuous society. Both men agree that a republican form of government is best suited for man. Within this theater of republicanism, they find the law to be of the utmost importance as it tempers and informs man as to the right course of action.

CHAPTER THREE: IMPLICATIONS FOR A REPUBLIC

Introduction

Adams and Jefferson have a special place when assessing the American founding. While both have been historically acknowledged as among the most profound thinkers of the founding generation, these two men also had the distinguished honor of being the second and third presidents of the American republic. The first two chapters looked at their views of human nature and the mode of politics that arose from it. This chapter will assess how the political theories of Adams and Jefferson translated into the real world where the virtues of men may not be as desired. Here, the real world process of statecraft will be unveiled. One will come to see the successes and failures which arise during the creation of a political order.

Prior to being presidents, Adams and Jefferson already had distinguished careers in public service. Adams had been an influential member of the Continental Congress. It was at his behest that George Washington was named the Commander -in- Chief of the Continental Army. He was Ambassador to the Netherlands during the revolutionary era as well as being the first Vice President of the United States. Meanwhile, Jefferson had been the revolutionary governor of Virginia, U.S. Ambassador to France, and the first Secretary of State. Despite their many years of public service, it was the presidency that afforded both men the opportunity to put their theories to practice. If one were to look into every political decision made during their presidencies, a hundred dissertations would not suffice to cover them. Nevertheless, a sure-hearted attempt to adequately assess the presidencies of the political icons will be undertaken.

After eight years as vice president to George Washington, Adams was elected president of the United States on the Federalist Party ticket in 1796. He defeated Jefferson, who was the candidate for the Democratic-Republican Party ticket. On the 4th of March 1797, Adams became president.

Coming from a region of the world filled with autocrats, many of whom were founding fathers, it is quite astounding to see the ease with which George Washington voluntarily relinquished power to Adams. Indeed, when one assesses the American presidency today, one sees that the president is limited to serve two full terms under normal circumstances. This was not the case during the founding era as there were no term limits.¹²³ Nevertheless most presidents adhered to Washington's precedent of serving only two terms.

The presidential transition of 1797 was a victory for republicanism in the young American state. The absence of great political upheaval, vis-à-vis, the proverbial "storming of the presidential palace" by the losers of the election proved to be a good omen for the young republic. Likewise, the smooth transition proved that the political instruments and institutions set up by the founding fathers were adequate for the political order they realized.

Presidency of John Adams

Despite the eight years of goodwill that seemed to coincide with Washington's presidency, the American republic was undergoing some of the growing pains common in young states. Adams faced an uphill task in ensuring the ship of state continued to sail in a relatively smooth manner. Many of Adams' contemporaries viewed him as a closeted monarchist despite his professed love for republicanism. This view took hold shortly after the first election of

¹²³ Terms limits came into law via the 22nd Amendment in 1947.

Washington where Adams seemed to strongly advocate the bestowing of titles. In his biography on Adams, David McCullough notes that “little at all went agreeably for Adams in the weeks to follow. In the Senate, the issue of titles, and particularly the question of how the president was to be addressed, superceded all other business.”¹²⁴

McCullough rightly posits that Adams insistence on titles was meant to dignify the office of the president and not necessarily to establish kingship or nobility. Furthermore, since Adams was the first president to be elected on a party platform, it meant the opposition readily sought whatever they deemed useful to undermine his credibility.

A key aspect to understanding Adams’ presidency was his affiliation with the Federalist Party. His membership of the Federalist Party implied a divide in theory and practice. In the past Adams found that the presence of factions or political parties proved detrimental to the health and survival of a republic. As McCullough notes “Adams had become increasingly distraught over the rise of political divisiveness, the forming of parties or factions. That political parties were an evil that could bring the ruination of republican government was doctrine he, with others, had long accepted and espoused.”¹²⁵ As Adams noted himself, “There is nothing I dread so much as a division of the Republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader and converting measures in opposition to each other.”¹²⁶ The main issue with partisanship is its tendency to destroy the communal mindedness that exists within society. Moreover, the hyper charged nature of factionalism renders the concept of *res publica* apart.

¹²⁴ McCullough, David. *John Adams*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001. pg. 404

¹²⁵ McCullough, *John Adams*, pg. 422

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 422. Original quote can be found in Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 9, pg. 525

For Adams, the affiliation with the Federalist Party proved to be a double-edged sword. Ralph Adams Brown asserts that “While it was expected that the Republicans, or Jeffersonians, would oppose many of Adams’ ideas and suggestions, the Federalists were often as recalcitrant and as bitter toward the president.”¹²⁷ A key federalist who opposed Adams’ agenda was Alexander Hamilton. Despite being members of Washington’s cabinet, Hamilton and Adams disliked each other. A particular source of their dislike stemmed from their divergent economic outlook. Hamilton and his wing of the Federalist Party believed in a strong central government that would be active in the business sector of society. Furthermore, Hamilton’s federalists seemed to favor industry, especially big business, as opposed to agriculture. Adams had his own biases as he seemed to be a strong advocate of the agricultural sector of the American republic. In a letter to Ralph Izard, Adams notes:

“Your sentiments of the fisheries as a source of wealth, of commerce, and naval power are perfectly just. Nevertheless,, agriculture is the most essential interest of America, and even of the Massachusetts Bay: and it is very possible to injure both by diverting too much of the thoughts and labor of the people from the cultivation of the earth to adventures upon the sea.”¹²⁸

Adams’ view of agriculture within a political society had its roots in Aristotle’s thought. In the *Politics*, Aristotle finds that “the best material of democracy is an agricultural population, there is no difficulty in forming a democracy where the mass of the people live by agriculture or tend to cattle.”¹²⁹ The presence of agriculture in a polity ensured that the masses had an avenue to be productive members of the political community. In this way, the masses would have less of a desire to envy the rich. Hence, the presence of an agricultural sector would promote the

¹²⁷ Brown, Ralph Adams. *The Presidency of John Adams*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975. pg. 25

¹²⁸ Dauer, Manning J. *The Adams Federalists*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953. pg. 56-57. Original letter can be found in; Letter to Ralph Izard, Sep. 25, 1778. Adams, *Works*, Vol. 7, pg. 64

¹²⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 6, Chp. 4, 1318b 9-12. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1268

stability of the community. Thus Adams' advocacy for agriculture – which was much to the chagrin of Hamilton and his wing of the Federalist Party – existed so as to maintain a core tenet of a republic.

The first few months of Adams' presidency was preoccupied with the fallout that arose from the Jay Treaty.¹³⁰ The Jay Treaty of 1794 was enacted to prevent the United States from going to war with Great Britain. The possibility for war began when Britain seized American ships during the Anglo-French war. The 1783 Treaty of Paris stipulated that the British would recognize the new American republic and treat it in good faith,¹³¹ it therefore seemed to President Washington that a new set of negotiations were necessary to re-establish the hard fought peace that was realized eleven years earlier as a new era of British belligerence ensued.

By signing a new treaty, many Americans felt that Washington and Adams had subjugated America to the pleasures of Britain. Jefferson and his supporters shared this view. They viewed the treaty as America surrendering her terms of independence to the British. Furthermore, they believed that the Jay Treaty inherently disregarded America's 1778 Treaty of Alliance that was signed with France.

As vice-president, Adams had supported the treaty as he deemed it reasonable to prevent the new nation from being dragged into another war. Adams found Jefferson's opposition troubling. He felt that Jefferson and his supporters were blinded by their love for the French, as

¹³⁰ Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 23

¹³¹ In Article 7 of the Paris Treaty, it states that "There shall be a firm and perpetual peace between his Britannic Majesty and the said states, and between the subjects of the one and the citizens of the other, wherefore all hostilities both by sea and land shall from henceforth cease..." (Treaty of Paris, Sep. 3 1783. Courtesy of the Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy. Yale Law School)

well as an admiration of the ideals of the French revolution.¹³² As a result of the Jay Treaty, France refused to receive Charles Coatsworth Pinckney, the envoy sent by the recently elected president Adams.

During his time as vice-president, Adams was appalled at what he saw as a concerted move by Jefferson and the Republicans to curb spending on America's defenses. In describing the conflict between Federalists and Republicans, Brown notes that for the Republicans "there was no need to spend additional money for arms, ships and men; France they insisted, posed no threat to the United States."¹³³ During the early years of his presidency, Adams sought to enact changes to America's defenses. Steps were taken to realize a navy that would provide safe passage for American merchant ships.¹³⁴

Adams' move to strengthen America's defenses had both positive and negative effects on republicanism. By bolstering her forces, America afforded herself greater security within the geopolitical sphere. This ensured that citizens at home would be able to pursue a prosperous life without the fear of undue foreign interference. On the other hand, Adams believed that standing armies inclined the state towards violence rather than peace. Thus, Adams noted that "in time of peace [standing] armies are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be maintained without the consent of the legislature; and the military power shall always be held in an exact subordination to the civil authority, and be governed by it."¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid, pg. 42

¹³³ Brown, Ralph Adams. *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 38

¹³⁴ Ibid, pg. 42

¹³⁵ *A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Adams, *The Works*, Vol. 4, pg. 152

The XYZ affair threatened to bring about war between France and the United States. After the rejection of Pinckney as the envoy to France, Adams sent more diplomats to France in order to resolve the impasse that arose from the Jay Treaty. Representing the United States in the negotiation were Pinckney, John Marshall, and Elbridge Gerry.¹³⁶

Upon reaching France, the American emissaries encountered a cold reception. This was especially true when it came to the newly appointed French Foreign Minister, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. Talleyrand demanded that the American diplomats pay him a bribe of \$250,000 in order for any form of negotiation to take place. Talleyrand's demand for bribes was done through three of his acolytes, Jean Conrad Hottinguer, Pierre Bellamy, and Lucien Hauteval. Apart from the personal bribes to Talleyrand, the French demanded a sizeable loan to the tune of \$10,000,000 from the young American republic.¹³⁷ When news of France's behavior got back to America's shores, there was great furor in the land. The Federalists urged Adams to prepare for a full-scale war with France. On the other hand the Republicans believed Adams' diplomats had gone to France to coax the French into war. The public supported Adams and the Federalists as they found the actions of the French distasteful.

Upon hearing the outcry in America over the XYZ affair, Talleyrand came to the conclusion that a war with America would in no way serve France's interests. Adams, despite his increasing popularity at home, resisted the urge to go to war with France as it would have proven disastrous for the young republic. On the 18th of January 1799, Adams sent William

¹³⁶ Brown, Ralph Adams. *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 44

¹³⁷ McCullough, *John Adams*, pg. 495

Vans Murray to negotiate peace with France. The next year, 1800, the Treaty of Mortefontaine was signed, re-establishing peace between the United States and France.¹³⁸

The peace with France was a masterstroke in foreign policy for Adams. His insistence on shoring up the young nation's defenses, especially on the naval side provided a bargaining chip for the United States. Furthermore, the bold stance taken by the American diplomats in France proved essential in realizing peace. However, his foreign policy success came at a huge cost domestically. For many in the opposition, Adams used the threat of a looming war with France to stifle dissent and centralize power in the federal government.¹³⁹ Key to the stifling of dissent were the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.

These were four bills passed during the height of the standoff between the United States and France. Dauer finds "these laws were a manifestation of the Federalist belief that they alone were fit to rule, and a resentment of all criticism of their policy."¹⁴⁰ John C. Miller meanwhile asserts that "when the Federalists saw resistance to their policies rising in the United States, they called it "faction" and "enmity to the Constitution." Opposition to the administration thus became opposition to the Constitution..."¹⁴¹

The first of these acts, the *Naturalization Act*, originated on the 19th of April 1798 when Joshua Coit, a Federalist from Connecticut, introduced a bill that sought to properly define and outline the terms of naturalization in the republic.¹⁴² When the debate on naturalization ensued, many Federalists saw opportunity to put in language that would enable them to bully the Republican opposition. According to Dauer, "Harper proposed that the rights of United States

¹³⁸ Brown, Ralph Adams. *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 173

¹³⁹ *ibid*, pg. 121

¹⁴⁰ Dauer, *The Adams Federalists*, pg. 153

¹⁴¹ Miller, John C. *Crisis in Freedom: the Alien and Sedition Acts*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951. pg. 11

¹⁴² According to Manning J. Dauer, Coit was a moderate Federalist (Dauer, *The Adams Federalists*, pg. 152) thus it seems that Coit's motive may not have been strictly partisan but was introduced in order to realize clarity when it came to citizenship.

citizenship should be restricted to the native born. Otis proposed that none but native born should hold office in the federal government. In both cases these proposals were withdrawn, being beyond the power of Congress. The latter proposition, however, was recommended as a subject for a constitutional amendment by several states.”¹⁴³ A key aspect of the Naturalization Act was the requirement of 14 years of residency within the United States to become a citizen. The previous length required was five years as per the Naturalization Act of 1795. For Brown, “This act reflected the nativistic fear of immigrant influence as well as the political fact that the majority of the new citizens were joining the Jeffersonian party.”¹⁴⁴

Despite the presence of some unseemly elements within the Naturalization Act, it passed and became law on the 18th of June 1798. With the passage of the Naturalization Act, a flood of similar acts ensued. The *Act Concerning Aliens (Alien Act)* passed on the 25th of June 1798, the *Act Respecting Alien Enemies* passed on the 6th of July 1798; the final and most notorious of these acts was the *Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes (Sedition Act)* which passed on the 14th of July 1798. The Alien Act, as Brown observed “empowered the president to deport any alien he considered dangerous to the public peace,”¹⁴⁵ likewise, the “Alien Enemies Act allowed the president to deport citizens of any country with which the United States was at war.”¹⁴⁶ The Sedition Act provided an avenue whereby criticism of the President or Congress could be punished with a fine and possible imprisonment.

The Alien and Sedition Acts sowed the seeds of destruction for the Federalist Party. Furthermore, it seems Adams, a man who had long resisted tyranny from his youth, succumbed

¹⁴³ Dauer, *The Adams Federalists*, pg. 152-153. Harper and Otis refer to Robert Goodloe Harper and Harrison Gray Otis respectively. Harper was a Federalist congressman from South Carolina while Otis was a Federalist Congressman from Massachusetts.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 122

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, pg. 122

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, pg. 122

to *libido dominandi*. History has proven inconclusive as to Adams' personal stance on the Alien and Sedition Acts. However, given that he did not veto these acts, one can interpret the non-veto as acquiescence on his part.¹⁴⁷

With the passing of the French crisis and the Alien and Sedition Acts, Adams' high tide of popularity had begun to dissipate. The Hamiltonian Federalists began to view Adams as a weak and ineffective president. By the summer of 1799, it was an open secret that Hamilton was plotting to remove Adams from the Federalist ticket in time for the election of 1800. The plot failed because Hamilton could not garner enough support within the party rank and file.¹⁴⁸

In assessing Adams' presidency, the republic made good strides as and suffered some setbacks in its goal to become a prudent political order. Adams' insistence on economic balance, that is, neither favoring the industrial class nor the agrarian, class proved beneficial to republicanism. His handling of foreign policy issues ensured that the young republic did not get ensnared into wars that would doom her. Factionalism, which Adams personally despised, produced the blot on his otherwise steady-handed presidency.

The Election of 1800

The election of 1800 pitted John Adams against Thomas Jefferson. Adams and Jefferson had been revolutionary contemporaries and friends. Even after Adams defeated Jefferson in 1796, both men still maintained their friendship. It was the XYZ crisis and its fallout that fractured their relationship. Shortly before the election, the Federalists and the Republicans saw

¹⁴⁷ Brown's assessment on the debate of Adams' view can be found in Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 124. While assessing the Sedition Act, especially when it came to the criticism of the President and Congress, John C. Miller asserts that "the Federalists contended, it followed that the Sedition Act did not interfere with the true freedom of the press – it merely restrained its licentiousness, and, as Blackstone said "to censure the licentiousness is to maintain the liberty of the press." (Miller, *Crisis in Freedom: the Alien and Sedition Acts*, pg. 81). The quote ascribed to Blackstone by the Federalist can be found in, Blackstone, *The Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books, Vol. 2, pg. 383*.

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 175-176

reversals in their political fortunes. Support for the Federalists waned. Key to the loss of support was a public backlash against the Alien and Sedition Acts as well as an intra party fight over the peace with France. By 1799, the Republicans began to make electoral gains in Federalist territory. Republicans won the majority of seats in the New Jersey state legislature, the New York Assembly, and the Pennsylvania governorship.¹⁴⁹ These Republican victories signaled that the Federalists were going to face an uphill task in the election of 1800.

John Ferling found that “Many of the actions taken by President Adams in the first months of 1800 bear the stamp of a man seeking to rehabilitate himself on the eve of an uphill election battle.”¹⁵⁰ Some of the rehabilitative steps Adams took included the passage of a bipartisan bill in Congress that put an end to the Provisional Army set up during the French crisis.¹⁵¹ Adams also sought to regain control of his cabinet by removing Hamilton’s acolytes. Bernard A. Weisberger observed the United States was at a point politically where tyrannical or ineffective political leadership would negatively impact her future. Thus he noted “The stakes were even higher than the contestants realized. The Second Census showed the signs of demographic explosion. The population had increased 30 percent, from a little under 4 million

¹⁴⁹ Ferling, John. *Adams Vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. pg. 127. The fact that the Republicans had seized control of the New York was a heavy blow for John Adams who had won all twelve electoral votes in the 1796 election. Just as the Republican victory was a blow to Adams; it was an even bigger embarrassment to Hamilton whom many saw as the *de facto* head of the Federalist Party. The Republican feat was chiefly achieved by Aaron Burr outflanking Hamilton within New York’s political community (Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 177). Burr’s ability to outflank Hamilton emanated from Burr’s ability to appeal to the workers of the state of New York who felt that Hamilton and his party had neglected the middle and lower class polity within the state in favor of the more monied polity (Ferling, *Adams Vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*, pg. 128-129)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pg. 126

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pg. 126

to a little over 5.25. Almost all of it was rural, and some 85 percent of it was white.”¹⁵²

Immigration was a substantial part of the population increase.

In speaking of population size, Aristotle, in the *Politics* stated: “Moreover, experience shows that a very populous city can rarely, if ever, be well governed; since all cities which have a reputation for good government have a limit of population. For law is order, and good law is good order, but a very great multitude cannot be orderly: to introduce order into the unlimited is the work of a divine power – of such power as holds the together the universe.”¹⁵³ Besides the statesman-like leadership that would be needed to rule an expanding republic, Aristotle also realized dangers that arose when an increasing population had within it a sizeable foreign-born segment that was unassimilated. Thus, he stated “Besides, in-an over-populous state foreigners and metics will readily acquire the rights of citizens, for who will find them out?”¹⁵⁴

In addition to the demographic issues, the United States was also going through an economic and cultural transformation. Weisberger observed “An industrial revolution was beginning too. Working steamboats had actually run on the Delaware River and New York City’s Collect Pond... American makers of glass, leather, hats, paper, gunpowder, and shipping and farm tools were already exploring how to replace scarce labor with machinery powered by flowing steams.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Weisberger, Bernard A. *America Afire: Jefferson, Adams, and the Revolutionary Election of 1800*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000. pg. 231

¹⁵³ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 7, Chp. 4, 1326a 24-32*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1283

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk. 7, Chp. 4, 1326b 20-23*. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1283. In the case of the expanding foreign populace within the United States, it would be the job of the statesmen and the enlightened citizens of the political order that would suffice in “finding out” the foreigners and metics. However, the finding out in the American context would entail the fact that citizens ensured that foreigners who sought to become citizens would adhere to the tenets of the American creed so as to ensure communality as well as the maintaining of civic virtue within the American political order. Hence, the election of 1800 and the stability of the political order afterwards was of high importance.

¹⁵⁵ Weisberger, *America Afire: Jefferson, Adams, and the Revolutionary Election of 1800*, pg. 232

Moreover, “Intellectual and cultural change was bubbling, too. There were 903 post offices in 1800 compared with just 75 in 1790, and as many as 200 newspapers that they were helping to exchange among communities.”¹⁵⁶ These changes had an effect on the religious community as well, hence, “Evangelical Christianity flourished too. Methodist and Baptist congregations multiplied at a dizzy pace, and “revivals of religion” rocked places as seemingly diverse as elite Yale College and raw frontier Kentucky....”¹⁵⁷ One sees America was going through a work, thought, and spiritual metamorphosis. Wiesberger concludes, “The winners in the 1800 would be taking control of a country at the dawn of modernization. That, too made the election unlike any other.”¹⁵⁸

During the founding era, presidential candidates did not campaign for votes. The founders considered campaigning as ungentlemanly and unbecoming of statesmen. Thus, presidential candidates stayed at home and accepted the fate handed them by the electors. Despite the statesman-like demeanor exercised by both Adams and Jefferson, the same could not be said for their supporters. Through their partisan newspapers of choice, the Republican *Aurora* and the Federalist *Gazette of the United States*, both factions hurled accusations at each other. To the Republicans, Adams was a closeted monarchist and a womanizer.¹⁵⁹ For the Federalists, Jefferson was an atheist, and a lover of the French Revolution.¹⁶⁰

Following the election, Republicans gained control of Congress which almost guaranteed the executive and legislature would belong to them. The deadlock between Jefferson and Burr

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, pg. 232

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, pg. 232

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pg. 232

¹⁵⁹ Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 187-188. Adams had always been accused of favoring monarchy from his days as vice president. In this case however, unfounded rumors spread that he sought to create an Anglo-American marriage alliance by having one of his sons marry a daughter of King George III. The issue of womanizing emanated from rumours that Adams sent General Pinckney to England in order to secure women for himself and the General.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, pg. 186.

ensured Congress would decide on the next president. As James Roger Sharp observed; “Of crucial importance to the 1800 presidential election, however, was that the new, Republican-dominated Congress would not convene until December 1801. Thus, it was the heavily Federalist Congress that would be asked to resolve the Electoral College deadlock and decide who the next president and vice president would be.”¹⁶¹ Having the outgoing Federalists choose between two Republican candidates for president was a recipe for disaster. Rumors and conspiracies spread throughout the country. There were fears the country would fall apart. However, after much bargaining, the Federalist-led Congress voted Jefferson as the next president. Jefferson was chosen for two main reasons. First, he had won the popular vote, thus it would have been unseemly for the Federalists to go against the people’s choice. Second, Hamilton hated Burr, a fellow New Yorker. Thus, for Hamilton, anyone but Burr was better suited to be president.¹⁶²

The 1800 election proved to be a watershed event for the American republic. It was the beginning of an epoch in American politics. Despite threats of civil war and political insolvency, cooler heads prevailed and the republic was spared. History is replete with scenarios where disputed elections brought about the end or total destabilization of the political order within certain nations.

Sharp observed that the 1800 election brought about democratic politics within the American republic. He noted “the 1800 election was a pivotal milestone in the process of

¹⁶¹ Sharp, James Roger. *The Deadlocked Election of 1800: Jefferson, Burr, and the Union in Balance*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010. pg. 128

¹⁶² Ferling, *Adams Vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800*, pg. 180

transforming national politics from deferential, elitist, and narrowly based to what would eventually become a more democratic, mass based, two-party system.”¹⁶³

Presidency of Thomas Jefferson

On the 4th of March 1801, Thomas Jefferson became president of the United States with Aaron Burr as vice president. Forrest McDonald noted that Jefferson subscribed to the Whig form of British history which argued for the existence of democratic roots and institutions long before the arrival of the Normans to Great Britain. For McDonald, this Whig notion of British democracy greatly influenced Jefferson’s view that Americans could realize the democratic institutions that were utilized by their ancestors across the ocean.¹⁶⁴ Jefferson’s first business as president was bureaucratic and administrative reform based on the republican principles on which he was elected. Bureaucratic reform proved to be tricky for Jefferson because Adams in his final days in office began to fill empty federal positions with Federalists.¹⁶⁵ This was in no doubt done by Adams to frustrate the incoming president. Also, the new capital, Washington D.C., was not fully habitable and proved to be a logistical nightmare for the new Administration. The offices in the capital were quite inadequate and were more often than not established on a temporary basis.

¹⁶³ Sharp, James Roger. *The Deadlocked Election of 1800: Jefferson, Burr, and the Union in Balance*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010. pg. 175

¹⁶⁴ McDonald, Forrest. *The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson*. Lawrence/Manhattan/Wichita: University of Kansas Press, 1976. pg. 33. Jefferson’s Whig approach to British history and the political philosophy was highly informed by the writings of Henry St. John, 1st Viscount of Bolingbroke whom despite being a Tory provided a lot of insight into on British Whig history and polity.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *The Presidency of John Adams*, pg. 200

Unlike Adams, who retained most of his predecessor's cabinet, Jefferson appointed people to his cabinet who shared similar views.¹⁶⁶ This step was important for Jefferson because it allowed him to successfully execute his agenda. It also limited overt dissent within the ranks.

Unlike the Federalists who favored strong central government, Jefferson sought to limit the scope of the federal government. He believed that the federal government had to devolve power to the states, granting them greater autonomy in their political and economic activity. Lynton K. Caldwell found Jefferson's political theories to be congruent with his administrative style. The foundation of Jefferson's administrative theory were: "(1) that government must be decentralized to the extent that each citizen may personally participate in the administration of public affairs and (2) that government must serve to school the people in political wisdom and must train a self-reliant citizenry to know ambition under all its shapes and to be prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes."¹⁶⁷

Merrill D. Peterson also noted of Jefferson that "He did not believe, as Hamilton most assuredly did, in administration as a political engine. He was more concerned with the control

¹⁶⁶ This is especially true when one assesses the likes of James Madison, Jefferson's Secretary of State, and Adam Gallatin, Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury. In assessing the relationship between Jefferson and Madison, Jefferson biographer Merrill D. Peterson noted that "The two Virginians acted in perfect friendship, intimacy, and trust." Even when speaking of Gallatin, Peterson noted that "The Pennsylvanian shared Jefferson's Republican principles and scientific interests... He was completely loyal to his chief." (Peterson, Merrill D. *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. pg. 660-661)

¹⁶⁷ Caldwell, Lynton K. *The Administrative Theories of Hamilton & Jefferson: Their Contribution to Thought on Public Administration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944. pg. 116. The two quotes within the large quote can be found in *A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* written by Thomas Jefferson (Jefferson, *The Works, Volume 2*, pg. 266)

than the organization of power, with responsibility than with energy, with administration as a simple tool rather than an awesome machine.”¹⁶⁸

Jefferson’s bureaucratic and administrative styles were an offshoot of his political theory. As Caldwell notes, Jefferson’s republican approach to administration (and politics) was anything but revolutionary. As he puts it “If Jefferson’s triumph in the election of 1800 can be called a revolution, it must be called a conservative revolution; and Jefferson himself viewed it as a return to the pure republican principles of the Revolutionary Era.”¹⁶⁹

Jefferson believed in and espoused an agrarian-based political order. For Jefferson, agriculture was the most virtuous form of economic activity that could be undertaken in a republic. For him, the presence of an agricultural economy fostered democratic principles and norms within society. In assessing Jefferson’s inclination towards agriculture, Doron S. Ben-Atar stated “[Jefferson] believed that the nature of the American economy, based on agricultural production and the general availability of land, fostered equality, while in Europe, unequal land distribution combined with manufacturing produced plenty for the rich and impoverishment for the masses.”¹⁷⁰

Jefferson found that agriculture nurtured the virtues he deemed necessary in a republican order. In a letter to John Jay, Jefferson wrote “Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independant, the most virtuous, & they are tied to

¹⁶⁸ Peterson, Merrill D. *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography*, pg. 663

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 109

¹⁷⁰ Ben-Atar, Doron S. *The Origins of Jeffersonian Commercial Policy and Diplomacy*. New York: St. Martin Press Inc., 1993. pg. 39 The equality being referred to in this sense is not an equality brought about through social levelling. The equality meant in this sense is an Aristotelian form of equality wherein citizens recognize each other as peers due to the fact that each has a stake in the prosperity and propagation of the political order. While the quantity of the stake may differ from citizen to citizen, the mere presence of a stake entails a notion of equality. A further understanding of Aristotle’s take on the citizen being an active participant in a political order can be found in here: (Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. 3, Chp. 1, 1275a 22-24, Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1177)

their country & wedded to it's liberty & interests by the most lasting bonds.”¹⁷¹ Jefferson subscribed to the Aristotelian notion of agriculture as being essential to the fabric of the best society.

For Jefferson, manufacturing and industry were inimical to well being of a republic.¹⁷² With manufacturing and industry came the formation of large cities. During his time in Europe, Jefferson had observed the adverse effects that came with urbanization. Industrial cities were so populous to the extent that the kind of politics that existed in such places tended to be the most debased form of democracy.¹⁷³ With the rise of industry came the need for finance. He found financiers' and merchants' only loyalty was to profit making. Aristotle was also weary of finance:

“There are two sorts of wealth-getting, as I have said ²³; one is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honourable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural, and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term interest²⁴, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural.”¹⁷⁴

As noted earlier, the late eighteenth century featured the transformation of America's economy from one based on agriculture, to one based on manufacturing. Jefferson therefore had to accept an economic reality different from his agricultural leanings. Jefferson took a laissez

¹⁷¹Letter to John Jay, Aug. 23 1785. Jefferson, *The Works, Volume 4*, pg. 289

¹⁷² *The Present State of Manufactures, Commerce, Interior, and Exterior Trade*. Jefferson, *The Works, Vol 4.*, pg. 52

¹⁷³ Jefferson's distaste for large cities can be found in his *The Present State of Manufactures, Commerce, Interior, and Exterior Trade*. In it he stated “The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.” Jefferson, *The Works, Vol 4.*, pg. 52

¹⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Politics, Bk.1, Chp. 10, 1258a 38-1258b 8*, Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1141. Footnote 23 recalls a segment Aristotle had referred to pertaining to the subject at hand. This footnote can be found in; Aristotle, *Politics, Bk.1, Chp.8-10, 1256a15 – 1258a 18*, Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, pg. 1136-1140. Footnote 24 seeks to shed light on the concept of birthgiving or offspringing which is *tokos* in Greek.

faire approach to industrialism in the United States; for Caldwell, this would go on to have “profound consequences for the history of the American people.”¹⁷⁵

Joseph Dorfman asserts that Jefferson co-opted some of the policies of his Federalist predecessors. Dorfman notes:

“Upon entering the presidency in 1801, Jefferson did not discard Hamilton's policies. The public debt, he said, was the first charge on the government's revenues.³⁴ Critics called him a hypocrite, but his supporters praised him for respecting the national good faith and the “eternal mandates of justice.” By eliminating the Hamiltonian measures, Jefferson could have lowered taxes and crushed the rising aristocracy, but he had gallantly refused to listen to this spirit of “unprincipled ambition, of demoniacal revenge.”³⁵¹⁷⁶

By adopting some of the economic policies of the Federalists, Jefferson showed pragmatic leadership. Over the next century and a half, the United States would surpass Europe as the industrial giant of the world. This growth brought about unparalleled prosperity for the United States and its citizens. Despite his reservations, Jefferson’s pragmatism sowed the seeds of prosperity for future generations.

For Jefferson, it seemed that the realm of domestic and foreign policy were greatly intertwined. His agricultural economic ideal provided an avenue whereby the American citizen would be able to provide for himself (creating a means of independence in living and thought) while being able to realize a modicum of wealth through exports and the opening of markets for American products abroad. This duality of domestic and foreign policy pragmatism can be

¹⁷⁵ Caldwell, *The Administrative Theories of Hamilton & Jefferson: Their Contribution to Thought on Public Administration*, pg. 111.

¹⁷⁶ Dorfman, Joseph. "The Economic Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson." *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Mar. 1940: 98-121. pg. 110. Footnote 34 within the Dorfman article can be found in Jefferson’s letter to Albert Gallatin (Jefferson, *The Works*, Vol. 9, pg. 254). Footnote 35 in the Dorfman article can be found in *A Defence of the Administration of Thomas Jefferson* by John Taylor (Taylor, John. *A Defence of the Administration of Thomas Jefferson*. Printed by Samuel H. Smith/Courtesy of Google Books, 1804/Digitized in 2007. pg. 52)

observed in Jefferson's historic purchase of Louisiana in 1803. Ever since America's independence, many founding fathers believed that the only way for America to achieve a healthy amount of sovereignty was through territorial expansion within the North American continent. Some founding fathers saw territorial expansion as a means to slowly but surely create an American empire (Hamilton), while others found that territorial expansion would mean less interference by European powers in American affairs (Jefferson belonged to this school of thought).¹⁷⁷

While America experienced a political epoch in 1800, the prior year marked a political epoch for the state of France. The political leadership of France, known as the Directory, was overthrown in 1799 by a young soldier named Napoleon Bonaparte. Upon seizing the reins of power in France, Napoleon began engaging in conflict with numerous European states. In 1800, France reacquired Louisiana from Spain in the *Third Treaty of San Ildefonso*.¹⁷⁸ This acquisition of Louisiana is historically referred to as the retrocession of Louisiana. Upon reclaiming Louisiana as French territory, Napoleon sought to expand his sphere of influence into the North American continent. When word got back of Napoleon's intent, there was much consternation within Jefferson's administration. For Jefferson, French presence within the continent did not bode well for the young republic. The acquisition of New Orleans as part of the retrocession was what unsettled him most. New Orleans was a key commercial gateway for the young republic; the fact that France now owned it meant that America's economic destiny was partially

¹⁷⁷ Letter to Archibald Stuart, Jan. 25, 1786. Jefferson, *The Works, Volume 5*, pg.48

¹⁷⁸ Article 3 and 4 dictate the terms of the retrocession of Louisiana to France." (Treaty of San Ildefonso: Oct. 1, 1800. Courtesy of the Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy. Yale Law School)

subservient to the inclinations of France. Bearing this in mind, Jefferson began to explore the likelihood of a French sale of New Orleans to the United States.

Fortunately for Jefferson and America, Napoleon's conquest to regain St. Domingo had encountered disaster. Disgusted with the loss, Napoleon decided to cease French activity within the American hemisphere. Jefferson seized this opportunity to reveal his true intent to the French regime. Jefferson's Minister to France, Robert Livingston, ramped up negotiations with the French regime. Jefferson's friend, Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, as well as James Monroe, himself a former Minister to France, assisted Livingston with the negotiations. On the 30th of April 1803, the United States and France signed the Louisiana Purchase Treaty which effectively ceded control of New Orleans and the territory of Louisiana to the United States.

The total cost of the deal was about fourteen million dollars; France would only get about eleven and a quarter million (about sixty million francs), the other three and three quarter million would remain with the United States as compensation due to the damages inflicted upon American vessels by France during the Quasi War of Adams' administration.¹⁷⁹ Historians have noted the Louisiana Purchase as a diplomatic masterpiece. For those who assess this historic event, there is consensus that this diplomatic coup was more a result of luck as rather than diplomatic knowhow.¹⁸⁰

The Louisiana Purchase essentially doubled the size of the United States. New Orleans, the crown jewel of the purchase, was now firmly in American hands. While America had

¹⁷⁹ Cerami, Charles A. *Jefferson's Great Gamble: The Remarkable Story of Jefferson, Napoleon and the Men Behind the Louisiana Purchas*. Naperville: SourceBooks Inc., 2003. pg. 204

¹⁸⁰ Peter S. Onuf and Leonard J. Sadosky state in their book that "The Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson's greatest diplomatic triumph, thus was also the result of fortuitous international circumstances, not of design or policy. Yet contemporaries were willing to credit Jefferson's administration for their good fortune." (Onuf, Peters S., and Leonard J. Sadosky. *Jeffersonian America*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002. pg. 22)

achieved greater security via this purchase, its acquisition was not without controversy. Even at the time of the purchase, there were those who found that Jefferson had exercised extra-constitutional measures in the purchase of Louisiana. This was especially the case within Jefferson's party as the Republicans took pride in being known as strict constitutionalists. Ironically, Hamilton was one of Jefferson's most ardent supporters when it came to the Louisiana Purchase as he found that it strengthened America's economy and national security.

As noted from the beginning, republicanism as a political concept is founded on the concept of communal mindedness. A fear shared by those who opposed the purchase was how those who resided within Louisiana would be able to assimilate and adopt the values of the young republic. In assessing the recently purchased Louisiana, James E. Lewis Jr. noted that "The more settled part of Louisiana included an incredibly heterogeneous population—French and French creole, Spanish and Spanish creole, German, English, and American immigrants, refugees from Acadia and Saint Domingue, Native American, free people of color, and African slaves."¹⁸¹ Even Jefferson admitted to the difficulty of political assimilation for Louisiana when he stated that "it is acknowledged that our new fellow citizens are as yet as incapable of self government as children."¹⁸² Despite opposition and accusation of extra-constitutionality, the Senate ratified the Louisiana Treaty by a vote of twenty four to seven. In this guise, even the detractors of the purchase realized the prudence that the acquisition afforded the young republic.

Like Adams, Jefferson's tenure as president was a mixed bag. For many, the mixed results of Jefferson's presidency stemmed from what his enigmatic character. Despite his distaste for the Hamiltonian system of government, Jefferson adopted Hamilton's tactics economically and politically. While Adams failed to get re-elected, Jefferson soundly defeated

¹⁸¹ Lewis, James E. *The Louisiana Purchase: Jefferson's Noble Bargain?* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. pg. 81

¹⁸² Letter to De Witt Clinton. Jefferson, *The Works*, Vol. 10, pg. 43.

Federalist George Clinton in 1804 only to win a second term that has been historically deemed as mediocre when compared to his first term. All in all, the United States, two hundred and fourteen years after Adams was sworn in as president, has achieved heights greater than any nation or empire that ever existed. The presidency of Adams and Jefferson undoubtedly contributed to this progress.

When one describes the presidency of these two great men as a mixed bag, one is essentially subscribing to the tenets of human nature and its effects on society. One would be a fool to expect perfection in the realm of politics. The only realm where politics can be perfected is in the mind of the totalitarian despot. As men, our inclination towards the good is constantly weighed down by the passions of vice that exist within all of us. In this guise, one is reminded of the great Christian apostle Paul, who lamented in Romans 7:15 that “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would that do I not, but what I hate, that do I.”¹⁸³ While the Sandozian axiom posits that “man is virtually ungovernable” holds true, there lies within each and every man, the aspiration to the higher things, an aspiration guided by reason, principle, and order.

¹⁸³ Romans 7:15. *King James Reference Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000, pg. 1535

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES ON NIGERIA

Introduction

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa with a population of over a 140 million people, is a state filled with great potential. This potential is easily and most importantly manifested in the human capital of the nation; secondary to this human capital are the natural resources that abound within the nation. Given that the first three chapters of the thesis investigate the unfolding of the American political order through the thought of Adams and Jefferson, one will seek to adopt some of the aspects of the American political metamorphosis to the Nigerian political experience.

Nigeria in its current state of affairs can learn a lot from the political history of the United States. For one, they both adhere to the principle of autonomous/federated republicanism as a form of government. Secondly, both adhere to the presidential system of government with a bicameral legislature and an independent judiciary. As stated in the beginning of this thesis, it would be improper and unrealistic for one state to emulate another lock, stock, and barrel as no two individuals share identical traits and no two nations possess an identical history or share identical politics. However, gaining insight into theories of government that have proven successful for one political order is a prudent mode of approach for a state seeking to realize a good order of its own. To learn is to observe, we observe to emulate, we emulate to grow, we grow to succeed.

Road to Independence

“As the clock struck midnight, [they] took their positions on the dais and watched the lowering of the Union Jack and the hoisting of the Nigerian flag... And so ended 100 years of British rule... 100 years of colonial bondage... A nation conceived in faith and unity is born today... And I am happy. And I am sobbing...” – Babatunde Jose, Daily Times Newspaper, October 1 1960

A hundred and eighty four years after the United States declared independence from Great Britain, Nigeria also gained her independence from Britain on the 1st of October 1960. Unlike the Americans who had to battle the great empire to realize her freedom, the Nigerian independence story was more or less a bloodless affair.¹⁸⁴ Despite sharing a colonial master, the American and Nigerian political experience differ in one important aspect; the American settlers were direct descendants of the British while the Nigerian citizen possessed a totally different history and culture from the British. Hence, in building upon the institutions left behind by the British, the American settlers had an easier go due to the fact that they had an intrinsic understanding of the British political mindset. Furthermore, the relative homogeneity of the American populace provided an acceptable presence of communal mindedness needed to establish a prudent political order.

Apart from possessing a distinct socio-political culture before British colonization (which began in the mid nineteenth century), Nigeria as polity is far from homogenous. As a body politic, Nigeria is comprised of over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups who possess an even greater amount of languages and dialects between them. Nevertheless, to properly understand Nigeria, one needs to be availed some insight into its three major ethnic groups, the Hausa,

¹⁸⁴ The relatively peaceful nature of Nigeria’s independence is reflected on her flag. The green and white color composition of the flag point to the peaceful nature of Nigeria’s independence movement.

Yoruba, and the Igbo. The Hausa, the most populous of the three ethnic groups reside in the northern region of Nigeria and tend to be predominantly Muslim. The Yoruba, the second most populous of the three ethnic groups reside in the southwest of Nigeria and are evenly split between the Christian and Muslim religion. The Igbo are the least populous of the three ethnic groups; they reside in the southeastern region of Nigeria and are overwhelmingly Christian. Geographically, the north, southwest and southeast regions are separated by the Niger River. Up until 1914, when Lord Frederick Lugard brought all three regions under one administration (historically known as the Amalgamation of 1914), the concept of Nigeria or Nigerian identity was entirely foreign to the inhabitants of these three regions.

Bearing the heterogeneous nature of the polity, one would at first glance deem that a republican form of government would be difficult to achieve within Nigeria's shores. This would be especially true when recalling that Adams, Jefferson, and the classic philosophers posited that homogeneity was primary in realizing a republic. Despite the cultural similarity that existed in the United States, it was observed in the third chapter of this thesis that partisan faction came close to undoing the young republic. In the Nigerian case, ethnic heterogeneity and political factionalism go hand in hand to make the prospects for republicanism all the more difficult. In 1950, after constant agitation for a greater say in their political affairs, the British created a constitution, popularly known as the Macpherson Constitution (named after the overseer of the constitution, Sir John Macpherson) that afforded Nigerians a modicum of self rule. In observing the nature of the 1950 constitution, historians Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton find that:

“The Macpherson Constitution created a Council of Ministers, made up of twelve Nigerian ministers, four from each region, and six official members. The central legislature became a House of Representatives with half the representatives allocated to

the North and half divided between the southwest and southeast. Regional assemblies were expanded; in the Western and Northern Regions the regional assemblies were made bicameral, with a House of Assembly and a House of Chiefs; in the Eastern Region the assembly remained unicameral. Greater legislative and financial powers were granted to the regional assemblies as well. The most important contribution of the Macpherson constitution however, was that it provided for the first general election in Nigerian history.”¹⁸⁵

The 1952 and 1954 elections (based on the Macpherson constitution) exposed the tribal politics that many feared would come to prevail in the burgeoning Nigerian polity. From the results of the elections one saw that the Igbo party, NCNC (National Council of Nigerian Citizens) conquered the southeast and nowhere else. In a similar vein, the Action Group, the Yoruba party, and the Northern People’s Congress, the Hausa party, conquered their own regions respectively and were unable to make inroads into others. In order to foster greater national unity, a new constitution, the Lyttleton Constitution, was adopted in 1954. This constitution was adopted to realize a stronger national government in order to foster a more unified polity. Nevertheless, the original tenets that were found in the Macpherson Constitution were still adhered to.

By early 1959, the British had come to an agreement with Nigerians that they would be granted independence by 1960. Given this promise, elections were held in 1959. The results of these elections would determine the political composition of the independent Nigeria that was to come. When the results were released, NPC, the northern party, won a plurality of the seats in parliament. They were able to form a majority government with the NCNC, the party of the southeast thus leaving the southwestern party, AG, as the opposition party.¹⁸⁶ Thus, on the 1st of October 1960, Tafawa Balewa, the leader of the NPC, became Nigeria’s first prime minister. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the NCNC, was appointed as the governor general. Although a

¹⁸⁵ Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. pg. 152

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, pg. 156

Nigerian state had been realized, the concept of nationhood and a national identity still seemed a distant dream.

Republicanism, Politics, and the Military

Between 1960 and 1963, Nigeria was a constitutional monarchy. The Queen of England still served as her head of state with the Governor General (in the person of Nnamdi Azikiwe) represented her within Nigeria's boundaries. In those three years, Nigeria maintained its parliamentary form of government. The three regions functioned more or less in a confederate manner. The central government headed by the prime minister was effectively weak and had virtually no control in any of the regions.

This three year period of constitutional monarchy closely mirrors the years of confederation in the American republic. Between 1776 and 1789, the newly independent United States existed as loosely confederated states. While the Articles of Confederation afforded the states a greatly deal of autonomy, it created political anarchy on the national level. For many founders, the anarchy that existed on the national level would eventually spell the end of America's independence if the status quo remained. Thus, the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was convened in order to address the issues of unity within the American polity. In a similar vein, upon seeing failure of the confederate system within the new Nigeria, a move was made to ensure a more national and unified government, hence on the 1st of October 1963, Nigeria became a federal republic.

In both the American and Nigerian case, the political class came to the conclusion that in order to realize a stable and prudent political order, the classic notion of giving up some natural right and liberty was of the utmost importance. In transitioning to republicanism, Nigeria hoped

to realize the concept of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one). Furthermore, a republican polity ensured that Nigeria fully shed the ties that had bound her to the Crown. Thus, Azikiwe went from being the Governor General who served at the behest of the Queen, to becoming Nigeria's first president.¹⁸⁷ In returning to the concept of national unity, the founding generation in Nigeria hoped that the emergent federalism that would come to be associated with this new republic would enable them realize institutions that would foster greater unity.

For Nigeria, the move towards republicanism seemed to be stylistic. The institutions that existed during the constitutional monarchy from 1960 to 1963 remained intact even after the conversion to republicanism. For Adams and Jefferson, republicanism entailed the existence of tiered political system that would balance the tyrannical aspects that existed within all men. Furthermore, both men found that unicameralism as a political institution was alien to the concept of republicanism.¹⁸⁸ In republican Nigeria, the House of Representatives remained the only legislative arm of government within the polity. Furthermore, given the parliamentary nature of the republic, a scenario was realized where the executive and the legislative were fused, thus doubling the prospects for tyranny in the young republic.

The election of 1964 greatly exposed the shaky political foundations of the republic. Fearing the increasing power of the northern region in Nigeria's political affairs, the parties of the southern region formed an alliance in order to check the power of the north.¹⁸⁹ Despite the

¹⁸⁷ Given that Nigeria still adhered to a parliamentary system at that time, hence Azikiwe's presidency was strictly ceremonial given that he was only the head of state. Tafawa Balewa still remained as prime minister and head of government.

¹⁸⁸ References to Adams' and Jefferson's distrust of unicameralism can be found in; *Opinions of Philosophers*. Adams, *The Works, Volume 4*, pg. 254 and ; Mayer, David N. *The Constitutional Thought of Thomas Jefferson*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1994. pg. 61. In Mayer's book, the author found that despite Jefferson's belief in the legislature as an important institution within a republic, its omnipotence could transform a republic to a tyranny via demagogic or mob rule.

¹⁸⁹ In 1962, a national census was conducted to gauge the population of the new nation. The results showed that the populations in the southeast and the southwest regions had grown by 70 percent while the population of the northern

purported population advantage possessed by the north, the NPC still resorted to electoral rigging in order to ensure victory in the 1964 election. Upon assessing the electoral results, the parties of the southern region called for a boycott of the elections, a national crisis ensued. Riots occurred throughout the southern region of Nigeria, the NPC led government was unable to placate the south; meanwhile, the Nigerian military, seemingly uninterested in politics at that time began to pay close attention. On the 15th of January 1966, Nigeria's first military coup took place. The first Nigerian republic was aborted; it was less than three years of age.

When observing the Nigerian elections of 1964, one cannot but compare it to the 1796 presidential election of the United States. Despite the fact that there had been presidential elections in 1789 and 1792, the 1796 election was the first real contested presidential election of the young republic. The 1796 election as noted in the third chapter of this thesis was a close one; Adams only ascended the presidency via three electoral votes. Such a close margin could have warranted Jefferson and the Republicans to destabilize the political order as the results did not favor them. Washington, the outgoing president and a former general, could have seized upon the crisis to further his stay as president, all under the guise of securing the republic. However, the American founding generation exercised prudence and high-mindedness with reference to the 1796 election.

Why did this high-mindedness not exist after the 1964 election with Nigerian's founding generation? A possible answer to this question lies in the fact that Nigeria's founding generation did not take the necessary steps to embed the political institutions that existed after Nigeria's

region had grown by only 30 percent. These results were unacceptable to the NPC dominated government. Hence, in 1963, another census was conducted which showed that all three regions of the nation had grown at the same pace. Thus, the NPC had ensured that the northern region would be able to maintain its hegemony when it came to the allocation of seats in the federal assembly for the foreseeable future (Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria.*, pg. 168)

independence. In the United States, there was a twenty-two year gap between independence and constitutional ratification. This time gap ultimately served as a maturation period for the founding fathers as they could fully articulate and espouse the kind of republic they desired. On the other hand, in Nigeria, the transition period between independence and the founding of the republic was only three years. Furthermore, it seemed that for the American founding generation, politics was a means of realizing the political order that would be best suited for attaining the highest good. On the other hand, it seemed that the Nigeria's founding generation saw politics to be a means whereby power, ultimate power, in a sense could be realized. Hence in assessing politics after independence, O. Aluko stated:

“The end of the anti-colonial struggle was the beginning of politics--and what was politics if not tribalism? What else was there to argue about? Tribes were more sharply differentiated than social classes... Now that the British were gone, the main thing to argue about was how to share a severely limited national cake.”¹⁹⁰

This assessment by a Nigerian historian reveals the base nature of politics that came to be associated with the first republic. In essence, the corruption that came to be associated with the polis fostered the rise of the military.

From 1966 to 1979, Nigeria underwent military rule. During this time, the polity endured the tyranny that comes with military dictatorship. In that thirteen year period, the rights of citizens were severely curbed; dissidents were thrown in jail, and governmental corruption was the norm and not the exception. The most important event in this thirteen year period was the

¹⁹⁰ Ajayi, Adegboyega Isaac. *The Military and the Nigerian State*. Trenton, Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007. pg. 34 Original quote came from O. Aluko in his piece, “Politics of Decolonisation in British West Africa, 1945-1960”, can be found in; Ajayi, J.F.A, and M. Crowder. *History of West Africa, Vol. 2*. Longman, 1974. pg. 174

Nigerian Civil War. In 1967, Nigeria was already under its second military government¹⁹¹, the ethnic tension that effectively ended civilian rule in Nigeria was now plaguing the military. Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, an Igbo military officer and a superior to Yakubu Gowon (Gowon belonged to the northern region of Nigeria), felt that Nigeria's new military dictator was unqualified in his new role. Furthermore, Igbo inhabitants were being killed en masse in the north as fallout from the 1966 coup¹⁹² and Gowon, in Ojukwu's mind, was nonchalant to the plight of the Igbo who resided in the north. Hence, on the 30th of May 1967, under the leadership of Ojukwu, the southeastern region of Nigeria seceded and was called the Republic of Biafra.

Estimates have shown that the Nigerian Civil war claimed between a million and three million lives;¹⁹³ by December 1969 it was clear to all and sundry that the Nigerian government would emerge victorious in a matter of time. On the 12th of January 1970, Biafra surrendered to the Nigerian government, the civil war was officially over. After the civil war, Nigeria's military leadership realized the need for greater national unity; hence the old confederacy system that was comprised of three regions was abolished, a more federalized system of states was enacted. In adopting a federal state system, Falola and Heaton observed that the military elite believed that "In theory, state creation would promise national unity by distributing the resources of the federal government more equitably, thereby engendering respect for the federal government and

¹⁹¹ General Aguyi Ironsi, became Nigeria's first military dictator after the dust of the January 1966 coup settled. His tenure lasted only seven months. On the 29th of July 1966, a coup occurred and General Ironsi was killed in Ibadan. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon became the second military dictator of Nigeria.

¹⁹² The fallout emanated from the fact that the original coup plotters of 1966 were predominantly Igbo, the coup overthrew a predominantly northern/Hausa dominated government. Nigeria's first dictator, Gen. Ironsi was Igbo; many viewed his seven month rule as being overtly biased in favor of the Igbo ethnic group.

¹⁹³ Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, pg. 180

allaying fears that government was a tool used by the majority to oppress the minority.”¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, in 1975, the military began a four year plan to re-transition Nigeria back to civilian rule. For the military elite, civilian rule, mixed with a federalized state system would re-invigorate civic mindedness throughout the nation and would eventually foster the national unity that seemed to be missing in the first republic. In 1978, under the supervision of the military, a new constitution was devised to serve the incoming republic of 1979. According to the 1978 constitution, an American style presidential system would be the form of governance for the new republic. The adoption of American presidentialism seemed to be an implicit admittance by the Nigerian polity of the failure of the Westminster political system that defined the first republic. This especially true when realizing the unicameral nature of the House of Representatives exacerbated ethnic tensions as well as creating an atmosphere of one party dominance in the first republic.

On the 1st of October 1979, the second republic of Nigeria came to being. Based on the federal election results of July and August 1979, NPN, the National Party of Nigeria won the presidency as well as both Houses of the Nigerian legislature. Hence, Shehu Shagari became the president of the second republic of Nigeria. It seems that the problems that plagued the first republic also plagued the second. The politicians that had been a part of the failed first republic re-emerged in the second republic and still held much sway within the Nigerian polity. Hence, the corruption and ethnic division that doomed the first republic also re-emerged. Furthermore, the corruption that plagued the first republic was amateurish as compared to the corruption in the second republic. The increase in corruption was particularly as a result of the oil boom that occurred in the seventies. With the coffers of the federal government awash with surpluses, many

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, pg. 191

public officials seized the opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of national development. Religious and ethnic tensions came to the fore once again. In 1980, fundamentalist Muslims began pressing for the implementation of sharia, Islamic based law, throughout the states of the northern region of Nigeria despite the fact that the 1978 constitution declared Nigeria to be a secular state. Hence, ethnic tensions once again flared up in the north as Muslims began to persecute Christians. In order prevent another civil war, the federal government gave the military and the police free reign to quell the tensions in the north. By giving the military a carte blanche, the civilian government had unwittingly re-energized, and to a certain extent re-politicized the military. Thus, by the time the elections of 1983 came around, many had come to the conclusion that there existed only two credible political entities within the Nigerian polity; the ruling party, NPN, and the military.¹⁹⁵ The 1983 elections saw the NPN regain power. There were wide spread accusations of electoral fraud combined with the suppression of oppositions parties. Violence ensued nationwide as a result of the elections; on the 31st of December 1983, Major General Muhammadu Buhari led a bloodless coup that brought about the end of the second republic of Nigeria. For the next sixteen years, Nigeria remained under military rule.

In assessing the first twenty three years of Nigeria's independence, one can see the failure of the Westminster and the American form of government. It would be easy to blame Nigeria's woes on the tribalism; however, virtue, or the lack of it seems to be the root problem in the Nigerian polity. While it would be easier to ascribe Nigeria's woes to corrupt political leadership, the truth is political leadership is but a manifestation of the aggregate morality of a society. Our political leaders are more often than not a reflection of who we are. No matter how prudent or masterfully fashioned any political institution is, if those who seek to utilize these

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, pg. 207

institutions lack the proper virtue, the political order that comes to be realized out of it will always be despotic or tyrannical.

On the 29th of May 1999, Nigeria returned to a republican form of government after sixteen years of military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo, the military general that oversaw the birth of the second republic in 1979, was sworn in as the democratically elected president of Nigeria's fourth republic.¹⁹⁶ As with the second republic, an American-style federal republic was instituted. As this thesis is being written, the fourth republic is in its twelfth year of existence, the longest tenure for any civilian form of government in Nigeria's young history.

Politics in Nigeria still remains far from ideal; tribalism and political corruption still plague the polity. However, there is cause for hope. Hope lies in the current generation of Nigeria, the information age has exposed many Nigerian youth to societies abroad that have been able to realize prudent political orders. Furthermore, the political quietism that plagued the previous generation is virtually non-existent in the current generation. In the past, virtuous Nigerians would decry the state of political affairs and leave it at that; they believed the current state of politics was beyond salvage and thus sought to lead an ascetic life. Thus, a political generation was lost because the good and virtuous left politics to the tyrants and sycophants. In this guise, the current generation can learn from Adams and Jefferson, men who while still less than thirty years of age were already greatly impacting America's fight for independence.

¹⁹⁶ In 1993, General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's then ruling dictator, annulled the electoral results of 1993 that were supposed to usher in the third republic. Hence for many Nigerians, the third republic is but a figment of our imagination.

CONCLUSION

Statecraft, i.e. the art of building a prudent political order, is a mixture of virtue and vision. In studying the process of statecraft through the lens of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, one has come to realize that the thirst for the highest good is what ultimately fosters the realization of a community conducive for human existence. By the highest good, one means a situation where men can live peaceably among one another while realizing prosperity. In the modern era, prosperity has been equated with material wealth. Prosperity is beyond materialism; it entails the possession of balance in mind, body, and soul. In Proverbs 22:1 we are informed that “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.”¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, Mark 8:36 asks “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”¹⁹⁸ Prosperity without virtue is no prosperity at all.

Politics, that is, the means by which men interact with each other in society, is not perfect. It was never meant to be perfect. Instead, politics seeks to create compromise in outcome (not necessarily a compromise of ideals) when assessing the mode of living and conduct in society. With Adams, Jefferson, and the four republics of Nigeria, one sees the frailty of human nature manifesting itself in the realm of politics. Despite this frailty, history has shown that the habituation of our better aspects ultimately brings about the prudent order man desires to realize. In this guise, it is necessary for the Nigerian polity to maintain the socio-political habituation being undergone via the realization of a fourth republic.

In a sense, this thesis can be seen as a mini-treatise on the superiority of republican government. Of all the forms of government instituted by men, republicanism is the only one

¹⁹⁷ Proverbs 22:1, *King James Reference Bible*, pg. 920

¹⁹⁸ Mark 8:36. *Ibid*, pg. 1361

that seems to entail the popular will as well as the rule of law. In this regime, the tendency towards corruption and anarchy by the masses is tempered by the law, thus creating communal balance. Is Nigeria suited for a republican form of government? The answer is unequivocally yes. Despite the fact that she has undergone three unsuccessful attempts at republicanism, the Nigerian polity possesses the ingredients for republicanism. For one, given the population of Nigeria, only a decentralized form of government would be logistically feasible to ensure political stability across the state. Two, in order for any form of government to be deemed legitimate in Nigeria, the people must be afforded some control through political representation and participation. Many may say these characteristics were present in the first two republics. To this, I say yes, nevertheless, habituation and the fruitful seeds that are borne out of it take time. All good things come in their own time. Nigeria's time is on its way. As the philosophers of old always posited, *salus populi, suprema lex esto*, is the *raison d'être* of politics, it serves no other purpose.

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” – Habbakuk 2:3-4

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