

Three 18th Century Revolutions: British, American, French—Three Pathways to Modernity

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The 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in the United States presents a fit occasion to consider what actually happened during the American Revolution. The Declaration identifies the tyranny of King George III as triggering the rebellion, but new disclosures of George's writings cast severe doubt on that argument. A retrospective on the American Revolution brings us face-to-face with both George III of England and George Washington. In the former, we find an uncharacteristic recognition of the greatness of the latter. This is a telling fact, both regarding the characters of the two Georges and regarding the Revolution itself, in which we find these two great souls sparking—in different manners—the modern revolution.

Introduction

In the late 18th century, popular revolutions occurred in Britain, America, and France. They changed the nature of governance in the modern world, but while the latter two attract continual notice, the first has been almost entirely neglected. One reason for this neglect is that the revolution in Britain occurred as the revolution in the 13 colonies unfolded. The 18th century British revolution, however, is primarily the initiating cause of the American Revolution, which itself was inspiration for the French Revolution.

The British and American revolutions reflected the influence of and were inspired by a seminal work, *The Spirit of the Laws*, by Montesquieu; the revolution in France spurned the guidance of Montesquieu in favor of the “general will” theorizing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The first two revolutions produced the rise of what some have called sober popular government;¹ the latter produced the episodic rise of radical popular governments and intermittent authoritarianisms. The first two produced (albeit not without challenges) stable constitutional government; the latter produced more than a century of constitutional instability.

This essay assesses the principles and conditions under which the sober popular revolutions were successful. That assessment begins with the observation that the sober revolutions resulted from the embrace of Montesquieu’s principles by King George III and the lead organizer of the radical Whigs in England, as well as by the American Founders. The revolution in the United States took place in the aura of the revolution in England insofar as the parliamentary enactments and policies toward the colonies that triggered the American Revolution were directly related to the revision in constitutional practices initiated by George III in England.

The present argument draws upon newly released archives of George III’s early writings, which—contrary to popular belief—reveal a vision of liberal reform that he initiated upon ascending the throne and that ultimately led to a revolution in the British constitution. Such a revolution was not what George III intended. It resulted instead from the creative direction of Edmund Burke, working among the radical Whigs in collaboration with the organizing leadership of the unjustly neglected Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond (great-great grandson of Charles I). Heretofore, scholarship has identified Burke’s elaboration of the modern political party as his main contribution in this era. In fact, however, his main contribution was his success in establishing the House of Commons as the controlling authority for an executive administration in the country, thereby cementing its status as a popular government.

The British revolution introduced a wholly popular government even as it preserved the monarchy in a legitimizing role. This parallels James Madison’s description of America’s government in *Federalist* No. 14 as a government “wholly popular” and in *Federalist* No. 39 as entirely “republican”² even as it preserved the monarchy in a legitimizing role. In Britain, that was a fundamental constitutional change that avoided destabilizing the constitution. The sobriety of the revolution lay in that fact. Similarly, beginning with George Washington’s military leadership that cultivated deference to popular civilian authority, the American

Revolution also gave rise to sobriety. Only after the United States government had operated for a period of years, however, did that sobriety mature into the theory of the programmatic party that had developed in Britain in the prior decade.

The point of the modern political party (the programmatic party), in contrast to the ideological party that emerged from the French Revolution, was to legitimize dissent, a prerequisite of loyal opposition. The programmatic political party was bonded to policy commitments expressly made to the electorate and held accountable thereto within the context of constitutional union. Representatives were still understood to exercise their judgment in deliberations, and thus to be agents and not mere delegates, but were expected to retain deciding authority only insofar as they sustained the commitments they had made.

On such bases as these, the parties of the sober revolutions escaped the dynamic of governance by protest that has characterized the ideological parties of radical revolutions into the present era. To understand the difference, one must understand the lessons derived and applied from Montesquieu and elsewhere. Of these lessons, none is more important than the close study of Montesquieu by George III before his accession to the throne and by Charles Lennox, who even enjoyed a brief personal tutorial with the great philosopher. Of first importance, however, is George III, for if he had not launched his “measures *not* men” challenge to British constitutional practice, it is not likely that the Duke of Richmond’s “measures *and* men” response would have arisen.

The semi-quincentennial of the Declaration of Independence in the United States presents a fit occasion to consider what actually happened during the American Revolution. The Declaration, as is well known, identifies the tyranny of King George III as triggering the rebellion. These new disclosures of George’s writings cast severe doubt on that argument. The 250th commemoration in 2026 might well declare the Declaration to be “fake news” at least with respect to that central charge.

What follows accordingly elaborates the ideas of King George III, Edmund Burke, Montesquieu, and the Founders of the United States (George Washington above all). A retrospective on the American Revolution brings us face-to-face with George III of England and George Washington. In the former we find an uncharacteristic recognition of the greatness of the latter. This is a telling fact regarding the characters of both Georges and regarding the Revolution itself, in which we find these two great souls sparking—in different manners—the modern revolution.

George III: Tyrant or Liberal Reformer?

The notion that George III was a liberal reformer obviously runs counter to the received notion that he was a tyrant. As early as 1766, Americans were sermonizing about his tyranny,³ and the Declaration of Independence attributes every tyrannical exaction of the government of the United Kingdom to George III. This account even became the trope of a “literary” spoof, “A Dialogue Between the Devil, and George III, Tyrant of Britain.”⁴ A brief excerpt conveys its tenor:

Devil. George harken to my counsel.

George. Thy servant attends.

D. My trusty servants Bute and Mansfield have educated thee for my service, and taught thee the way wherein thou shouldst go, obey them and I will make thee a king indeed; make yourself absolute, or die in the attempt: a king dependent on the people, is no monarch; he is a mere puppy.

G. Your words I have a heart to obey; 'tis the bent of my soul, and the world shall soon know that I am a king in reality, and my people shall feel that my wrath is like the roaring of a lion.

D. I doubt not you will equal my ancient servants Nero, Caligula, Borgia, Charles, and others; but you must use great art lest a spirit of liberty should rise among the people and blast your great designs, as happened to my faithful servant Charles.

G. I will begin with my colonies; the idea of enslaving them to the power of parliament, and make them tributary to the old dominion, suits the pride and avarice of Britons: when this [is] done, the way will be open and easy to complete the work in Britain: with places pensions titles and bribes, I can soon make myself as absolute as any tyrant that ever slept.⁵

The spoof captures (perhaps unwittingly) the reality that there was work afoot in Britain that was the focus of George III's efforts and bore upon the colonies of North America only indirectly. Further, I maintain that George III launched an effort to reform constitutional practices in England, and that effort was itself the source of those vexations that led the colonists (as collateral victims) into rebellion.

The Problem That George Inherited. It has long been known that George III reigned as a “constitutional monarch,” but exactly what that means and why it may be said most significantly that he *founded* constitutional monarchy in the United Kingdom have seldom been noted. Before George III, and despite earlier political settlements dating from 1689 and the Acts of Union in 1707, the monarch (even though limited by the concession of parliamentary control of revenue) was not properly a constitutional monarch.

King George III ascended the throne in 1760 and in the ensuing decade churned through six Prime Ministers. He gained the crown as the country was at war with France—a war he terminated in the Paris Peace Treaty of 1763, resisting hawks who wanted to extend imperial conquest. George III had opened his reign determined to ease international stresses, but the new monarch instead had to dispatch a military expedition to quell rebellion in the American colonies while dealing with constitutional quarrels at home. He encountered correlative international stress (French and Spanish exploitation of the colonial war) and externalities from domestic constitutional struggles that adversely affected circumstances in the colonies.⁶

George was pulled into these conflicts much against his will. In contrast to his predecessors, domestic matters mattered most to him, and of these, none was more important than altering the practices of his grandfather, George II, and the administration of Robert Walpole.⁷ George III understood that the constitutional practice of that prior era had been corrupted by place-seeking and rent-seeking, captured best in the constant and ever-increasing burden of the Civil List, the annual sum paid to the monarch to cover official expenses, which was adopted by act of Parliament in 1727. The parliamentary system, in George III’s view, had devolved into purchased votes to the exclusion of deliberation, and the executive function (the monarch acting through ministers) had made the monarch little more than a plaything of the ministers insofar as “King in Parliament” meant ministers purporting to act in the name of the King by making free use of that term.

After the Settlement of 1707, it was firmly established that royal revenues (independent of private revenues of the monarch) had to be supplied by Parliament. They were to that extent public monies. However, once these funds were supplied, their use was left to the monarch’s discretion. The ministers overseeing these transactions accordingly served to produce a parliamentary supply (i.e., to orchestrate parliamentary majorities for the purpose) and then to make recommendations to the monarch for dispensing these same funds. That they routinely did so by returning funds to cooperative parliamentarians and their supporters is hardly surprising. The Civil List grew geometrically from this practice. Nor was the practice without some

public benefits to particular constituencies. However, the distribution of public revenues on the basis of favoritism in no way contributed to systematic and serious deliberation about the national interest.

Faction or Consensus? It was in this context that George III came to view the constitutional practices of the prior era as governing by factions rather than governing for the common good.⁸ At the outset of his reign, he called explicitly for “measures not men” as the basis of public deliberations in Parliament (and especially in the House of Commons). He did this specifically to create a distinction between governing by faction and governing by national consensus. He believed—and this is the crux of this entire account—that it was necessary to abolish the role of political parties, which he regarded as synonymous with faction, in legislative deliberations.

Readers of America’s Founding history will find that George III was not unlike many American statesmen in this respect, most notably George Washington himself. This initiative to abolish the role of political parties in legislative deliberations formed the dynamic germ from which both the challenges that ultimately reshaped British constitutional practices and the challenges that sparked the American Revolution arose.

George III’s Reform Vision

Against this backdrop, we can see unfold the influence of George III’s administration both on constitutional monarchy and on the looming revolution in British North America. To understand these developments, however, we must turn to George’s early writings, just recently made public.⁹ These extensive archives offer a new perspective on the role George III played in the liberal reform efforts underway in 18th century Britain. It turns out that George Hanover, then Prince of Wales, was no intellectual slouch and had broad visions of constitutional reform.

Paraphrase of *Spirit of the Laws*. My task, therefore, is to establish the premise for a reconsideration of George III. The single and most dramatic foundation for this premise is found in the lengthy manuscript contained in the Georgian Archives, which reveals the 17-year-old Prince of Wales patiently and intelligently working through the still fairly new magnum opus of Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de la Brede et de Montesquieu, *De L’Esprit des Lois* (*Spirit of the Laws*).

My new translation of and commentary on Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* appeared in 2024.¹⁰ I prepared the work believing that it was only the third English translation of this seminal work in 275 years. Imagine my surprise, then, to discover that it is actually the fourth. What is arguably

the first, loose-but-thorough translation is that of young George Hanover, Prince of Wales, soon to be King George III of England and the United Kingdom. That thunderbolt sent me scurrying to rethink not only George III, but also the American Revolution, for even a cursory reading of George's vigorous and extensive rendering reveals a mind-set of liberal reform.

In more than 400 manuscript pages, George produced a long-form paraphrase of Montesquieu's work that is essentially an English translation. The most conspicuous aspect of this paraphrase is George's nearly perfect mastery of the argument progressively developed by Montesquieu over the course of lengthy and almost aphoristic entries comprised of "infinite" detail (as Montesquieu described it). George got to the bottom line of a projection of republicanism founded on virtue, equality, liberty, and justice. He gleaned from it a commitment to representation as the principle of government constructed in the interests of the common good, and he fully embraced its project of liberal reform, which he described as "utopian," hidden "under the mask of monarchy." In doing so, George insightfully connected passages in Book V, Chapter 19 ("a nation in which a republic is disguised under the form of monarchy") and Book XI, Chapter 6 ("It is not my business to examine whether the English actually enjoy this liberty, or not. Sufficient it is for my purpose to observe, that it is established by their laws; and I inquire no farther").¹¹ That is particularly notable, inasmuch as Montesquieu eschewed such a description of his own work, which can fairly be described as anti-utopian.¹²

George identified several principles from *The Spirit of the Laws* that lay at the heart of modern politics:

- Rejection of the divine right of kings,
- Recognition of the natural basis of society in the family,
- Recognition that the people are the ultimate sovereign in society,
- Determination that government is primarily representative,
- Acceptance of the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the political architecture of a decent society,
- Recognition of the centrality of the liberty of the citizen and its connection with the political liberty of constitutionalism, and
- Rejection of slavery as unjust.

George's vision flowed from the realization that while society was natural (and not an artifact of contractual agreement among wandering savages), its political coherence required an explicit architectural vision of constitutional unity that could serve to sustain its peace and prosperity. That vision is very near the vision that animated the eventual Constitution of the United States.

Montesquieu, George III, and the Politics of Liberal Reform. George was not alone in reading Montesquieu attentively. The Duke of Richmond paid special attention to the commendation of a balanced constitution as well as its foundation in popular consent. The impact of *Spirit of the Laws* can also be seen in the 1795 trial of John Thelwall and others for treason, which took place in an atmosphere shrouded by reaction to the French Revolution. Thelwall was acquitted at the Old Bailey and subsequently published a "vindication" in which he cited several passages from *Spirit of the Laws* that emphasized democratic rights.¹³ No other source was cited with equal frequency in Thelwall's text, and of the two citations from Sir William Blackstone's legal commentary, one is actually an unattributed borrowing from Montesquieu ("every man thought to have a free soul ought to be self-governing").¹⁴

From such examples one may discern that "liberal" thought was the prevailing influence of Montesquieu. It is not to be understood, however, that this "liberal" thought is the "philosophy of liberalism" attributed to Thomas Hobbes.¹⁵ As I observed in 1975:

A return to Montesquieu...should rekindle fundamental consideration of our regime.... [T]he defect of right [Hobbes's] liberalism...is the notion that man's selfish desires could furnish the complete basis for his attachment to a regime and obviate the necessity for reasoned reflection on the nature of that regime.... The return to Montesquieu is an attempt to deal with th[at] crisis by reconsidering the charm, the dignity of the original vision: that emancipation from intolerance, religious and racial, imparted by easy commerce in goods and beliefs.... A return to fundamentals makes it possible to provide that kind of defense liberal democracy requires if it is to resist successfully the impulse to abandon all rule as merely arbitrary and hence illegitimate.... [A]s Montesquieu maintains, the impulse to abandon all rule is at once the impulse to establish tyrannical rule.¹⁶

In the context of British politics, the liberal reform effort of the late 18th century invoked constitutional fundamentals as a direct consequence of the politics of the time. The concern here is to identify the role of George

III in that politics. It is in his extensive paraphrase of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* that we discover the fund of liberal ideas with which George III capitalized his vision of the princely function.

Other Writings and Studies. George's intentions for liberal reform appear not only in his paraphrase of Montesquieu, but also in many other early studies of historical, philosophical, constitutional, and moral texts. The range of subject matter in his readings and writings that prepared him for the task he assumed as prince included:

- The Civil War to Charles II,
- The Civil Government of Rome,
- The history of Parliaments up to the reign of Henry IV,
- The feudal system and government in Scotland,
- The State of the Civil Power in Westminster,
- Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*,
- America and future colonial policy,
- Reform of the management of the East India Company,
- Great Britain's relationships with Europe,
- Trade and manufacture in England,
- Britain's Commercial Interest,
- "Political Arithmetick,"
- Charles Rollin's *manière d'enseigner et d'étudier* [*Way of Teaching and Studying*],
- A draft plan for "Lectures on Modern History,"
- The "Original and Nature of Government,"

- The legislative and the executive, and
- Classical antiquity.¹⁷

In his “Essay on Government,” for example, George noted that:

The Contract betwixt the governors, & Governed, the power of the Magistrate & obedience of the People; the measure of Power belonging to the great Lordship of the Realm, & the lesser Lordships have all their Foundation in the two following observations.

I. As the Conquerors were sole Masters of the Country, nobody could have possession of any piece of land, without the owner’s consent, & under the terms he pleased to fix, hence arose a territorial jurisdiction, & a right to control the actions of those who were not of the community, as well as of those who were.

II. As the victorious Nations were voluntary Societies, the Majority had the right to regulate the actions of individuals, while they continu’d members of the society.¹⁸

On this basis, young George embraced a “social contract” view, elaborated as a contract “between Prince & people, superior & vassal & individuals with regard to the whole community.”

The Peers of what denomination soever held originally of the Publick as well as of the King & ow’d homage & fealty to the community, as the German Princes do at this day to the Empire not to the Emperor....

In this free [condition], the German Nations continu’d, till the Civil Law long buried was reviv’d & the mistaken Princes made the Lex Regia, the ground for assuming despotism, & for that reason introduc’d that Law into their kingdoms. It prevails but too much over all Europe, but has been here [Britain] unsuccessfully attempted, & therefore this Government, comes the nearest to the Old Saxon idea of Liberty.¹⁹

This summation follows not only Montesquieu, but other historians, and it demonstrates that young George was saturated by what ultimately came to be called “Whig history” as reflected in Thomas Jefferson’s *Summary View*,²⁰ Alexander Hamilton’s *Federalist* No. 17,²¹ and other writings of the Founding era. George III attained this understanding by virtue of an education that he effectively described in his brief “Plan of Education for a Prince:”

[I]t is best to begin with the rules of Logick, by which he will learn to connect his ideas; then he should examine the most celebrated modern Philosophers, Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke's Human Understanding, Then enter upon the Science of Government by studying the Laws of Nature and of nations, the municipal Laws of the Country the Institutes of Civil Law and the Spirit of the Laws by M. de Montesquieu, History in the point of view of the interests of the different Nations and the Characters of Mankind, and by comparing those of the Dead with the Living, acquire a knowledge of those he has to act with.

The History of the Antient Republics elevate his mind by shewing him virtue, the Modern States, though viciously and weakly instituted, are full of useful lessons. From the History of England he will learn the rights of King and People, and how they have gradually come to their present perfection, and this will form his opinion of the Nation, see that...an enthusiastic love of Liberty is the predominant passion, a great fund of integrity, a natural inclination to religion and in general to those qualities that are respectable but the excellence with which the Government is composed naturally inclines it to changes and to jealousies.²²

While George III in this meditation on the essay by M. Thomas²³ was faithful to his source, he also introduced meaningful emendations, the most significant of which was the introduction of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* as an authoritative source. Thomas did not mention Montesquieu, save indirectly when he quoted from the preface of Montesquieu's work without attribution. Additionally, Thomas did not mention Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, and Isaac Newton, having specifically cited only Blaise Pascal, Nicolas Malebranche, and John Locke on "the development of the human mind." George III accordingly amplified the plan of education in a direction that underscores Enlightenment advances in science and political philosophy. Moreover, he conveyed indirectly Thomas's assurance that "[the prince's] more developed mind inclines him to pursue the great ideas of human equality." George not only read the essay, but modified it compatibly with Thomas's expectation, which itself reflected Montesquieu's invocation of virtue, liberty, and justice as the path of development for natural society.

In addition to the background of general ideas, we find developed in George III's curriculum a fund of historical and jurisprudential reasoning, all of which points to an understanding of British constitutionalism. For example, he tackled the concept of despotism separately from his paraphrase of Montesquieu:

People are either governed by Laws & established Constitutions or Arbitrary Will; in the first case our dominion is not so absolute, nor does the subject lie under such a necessity to please, besides a Regal Government demands in the Prince a thoro knowledge of the People; this cannot be acquired without a great labour & study, but that is the bane of pleasure & revolts the natural idleness that attends us; absolute power removes this difficulty, dispenses from all application & fatiguing action, & reduces Men to a servile compliance to our will; in this government as Aristotle observes, there can exist but one freeman, all the rest are slaves.²⁴

The essay continues to contrast despotism with “moderate monarchy” and “the freest Republic,” in which diverse interests prevail as a result of separate interests deriving from inequality of persons, different views, ambition, etc. Such dynamics create opportunity for faction to divide citizens and manipulate the “Nobility & people.” This invites political schemers—“the worst of fathers, citizens, & subjects”—to build princely authority on arbitrary power. Kings must repulse their counsels and seek their own true interest in “submitting their own will to the Laws, rather than the Laws to their Will.”

[T]his is not only the method to reign in Peace & [] Prosperity, but to transmit the scepter to their posterity, which becomes otherwise a very precarious measure; few Princes however have ever seen or will see this in its proper light; the false lustre of sovereign power, idleness, & pleasure, that screens from their eyes the many perils that cirround them, will continually carry it over every other consideration, & the History of all times informs us that all governments sooner or later came to Despotism.²⁵

George III, in other words, was ambitious to avoid the fate of kings and states, and the principal focus of that ambition was the defeat of faction.

Views of Party and Faction. Why did George III identify faction with political party? Besides the immediate experience of government under his grandfather, George III had before him the inspiration of Bolingbroke’s *The Idea of a Patriot King*, which contained a significant addendum on “The State of Parties.” That analysis of British party politics from the accession of George I into the reign of George II developed in particular the competition between Whigs and Tories in the context of the struggles around Scottish Succession. Bolingbroke treated each party as honestly endeavoring to achieve what it saw as being in the national interest. Of the Whigs, however, he proceeded eventually to observe that:

[They] acted like a national party, who thought that their religion and liberty could be secured by no other expedient, and therefore adhered to this settlement of the crown with distinguished zeal. But this national party degenerated soon into faction; that is, the national interest became soon a secondary and subservient motive, and the cause of the succession was supported more for the sake of the party or faction, than for the sake of the nation; and with views that went more directly to the establishment of their own administration, than to a solid settlement of the present royal family....²⁶

Bolingbroke's essay was published in 1738 before the fall of Robert Walpole and the final defeat of the Stuart Pretender. George III, who was born in 1738, doubtless read the account of political parties in the earlier era in light of the experiences of which he was well aware by the time he read Bolingbroke.

Besides formulating views of political parties, George III received at the hands of Bolingbroke the idea of a "patriot king" who receives reverence not in his person, but in his office. "The spring from which this legal reverence, for so I may call it, arises, is *national*, not *personal*.... [M]ajesty is not an inherent, but a reflected light."²⁷ George added to inherited perspectives or attitudes the specific inspiration to be, as Bolingbroke put it, a "*king...in the true meaning of the word, a patriot, [who] can govern Britain with ease, security, honor, dignity....*" "To attain these great and noble ends," however, "the patriot must be *real*, and not in shew alone.... To constitute a *patriot*, whether *king* or *subject*, there must be something more substantial than a desire of *fame*.... *Patriotism* must be founded in *great principles*, and supported by *great virtues*...."²⁸

A careful reading of his own numerous writings reveals that George became demonstrably high-minded. His extensive education clearly reveals the mindset of a liberal reformer—and nowhere is George III's understanding conveyed so thoroughly as it is in his extensive paraphrase of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. In this light, George's motto "measures not men" proves to be no empty slogan. His aim was to make the Parliament not merely a voting body, but a deliberative body, thereby elevating principle above faction, and to reorient British government toward the common good rather than aristocratic scheming.

The Politics of Revolution in Britain

The fly in the ointment of George III's reform of British constitutional practices lay in the reaction of the political parties. None was more

significant than that of the Rockingham Whigs, which grew out of the short-lived Rockingham ministry of Charles Watson-Wentworth, Second Marquis of Rockingham. Preeminent among the Rockingham Whigs were the Duke of Richmond and Edmund Burke.

Against this background, therefore, it is important to observe how the growing conflicts were eventually resolved, all while carrying on the military effort to quell rebellion in the North American colonies. At first, opposition in Britain took up the cause of reconciliation with the colonies, although the major figures in this opposition never embraced American independence outright. At the same time, the opposition forces ultimately provided the rationale for resolution of the conflicts in play by introducing a previously unheard-of defense of political opposition as integral to the conduct of governance in a free society.

Political Opposition, Ministerial Instability. To understand the conflict, one must examine the leading particulars of the period between 1760 and 1780–1783. After a brief period, George III began his reign by seeking an “outsider” to carry out his plan to reform—*not* to revolutionize—constitutional practices. In 1762, he chose his erstwhile tutor John Stuart, Third Earl of Bute, to replace Walpole heir Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle. Bute, however, was ostracized by the dominant Whigs, who interacted with him on the same terms that had previously prevailed, expecting acknowledgment of their privileges and positions as the price of cooperation. The old guard so isolated Bute (who served for scarcely three years) that George III was forced into what became the revolving door of ministries that were entering into the on-again, off-again policies that would induce revolution in the American colonies.²⁹ In the ensuing decade, as noted previously, the King churned through six prime ministers, sometimes seeking to engage confidential figures who would support his initiatives and sometimes settling on figures that he knew were opposed to them.

By the time the Rockingham ministry arose, George actually was working with a party that was dedicated to defeating his initial attempt to deploy a nonpartisan ministry (or council) positioned between the official ministry of parliamentarians and the monarch. The King’s opponents called this nonpartisan body of counsellors the “double cabinet” or “interior cabinet.” In short, the political universe was acutely aware of tensions at the center of constitutional practice—tensions that would determine whether future public deliberations would be in the national interest or the interests of parties.

The Rockingham Whigs. Rockingham resigned from his first term in 1766 and returned as Prime Minister in 1782 following the strategic

surrender of British arms at Yorktown, only to die shortly thereafter. In the interim, however, he had developed a full-fledged program of political reform (to which he personally gave only half-hearted support) through the agency of Whig stalwarts Edmund Burke and the Duke of Richmond, who was also the patron of Thomas Paine.³⁰ The Rockingham opposition centered on such known figures as (among others) Richmond, Burke, and William Pitt the Younger. In some ways, they constituted a motley assembly with Paine and John Wilkes, both of whom conveyed strong anti-aristocratic and anti-monarchical sentiments, combined with Richmond, an inveterate aristocrat, and Burke, who explicitly rejected anti-monarchism. At the same time, Richmond resolutely defended universal suffrage for the House of Commons, but Burke did not view universal manhood suffrage as essential to the principle of popular government. In their persistent writings and speeches, however, they defended the open expression of opposition as key to free government.

It is fair to say that Burke and Richmond were the authoritative voices of the opposition. Their surrogates, such as Paine, were reflections of their patrons. In fact, it is fair to say that Paine wrote not in his voice, but with an aristocratic tongue as long as he was in service to the opposition and did not assume his own voice until he arrived in America.

Rockingham had a close relationship with the Duke of Richmond, who initiated a campaign of public but anonymous criticism and denunciation of Crown and Ministry (“King’s friends”). The yeoman’s work for the radical Whigs, however, was performed by Edmund Burke and became dramatically evident in his 1770 publication of *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*.³¹

Edmund Burke and the Politics of Liberal Reform

Burke’s pamphlet emerged as the first and most dramatic contribution to resolution of the constitutional crisis. Burke made it very clear that he understood precisely the characterization of liberal reform set forth by George III: That is the predicate, the context, of everything else that followed. Burke’s ideas reveal the reason why George III’s attempt to sideline political parties (as factions) failed even though the eventual result reached the King’s goal. Burke’s formulations integrated political opposition as a permanent feature of free society, thus making efforts to eliminate divergent opinion unnecessary. To that extent, Burke was the anti-Bolingbroke. Burke’s characterization of the political party was fundamental and innovative. Ultimately, however, his appeal to “popular sovereignty” in the House

of Commons would solidify sober, popular government and prove to be even more critical in leading Britain out of its constitutional crisis.

Party vs. Faction. In his text, Burke introduced a distinction between the political party and the faction that may be described as the difference between the “programmatically party” (the party that by prior agreement arrives at policy commitments) and the “party of interest” (the opportunistic party). On this basis, Burke proposed that “measures not men” be replaced by another formulation: “men committed to measures.”³²

Burke thereby outlined the architecture of the political party that ever since then has shaped the course of popular politics. “Party,” as he defined it, “is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, *upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.*” He continued:

*Without a proscription of others, they are bound to give to their own party the preference in all things; and by no means, for private considerations, to accept any offers of power in which the whole body is not included; nor to suffer themselves to be led, or to be controuled, or to be over-balanced, in office or in council, by those who contradict the very fundamental principles on which their party is formed, and even those upon which every fair connexion must stand. Such a generous contention for power, on such manly and honourable maxims, will easily be distinguished from the mean and interested [factious] struggle for place and emolument.*³³

Popular Sovereignty in the House of Commons. Far more than a defensive screed for the opposition, Burke’s pamphlet set forth the theoretical and political case for broader representation, specifically in the House of Commons.³⁴ Moreover, he implied in that essay and went on subsequently to emphasize that he was calling for the preeminence of the House of Commons in constituting the executive administration of the state. In short, although the inherited constitution centered executive authority in the monarch, the revision effected by the revolution in this era was to displace the monarch’s executive authority by subjecting it to prior selection of the House of Commons. The move extended so far as even to empower the House of Commons to name peers—theretofore a royal prerogative.³⁵

At the heart of the changes Burke sought in company with his coadjutors, especially Richmond, and for which he did the heavy lifting for the liberal Whig coalition was the tacit but dramatic argument that the source of and authority for the constitution was the people, despite the absence of any express popular act of constitutional approval. “I am no friend to aristocracy,

in the sense at least in which that word is usually understood.” Accordingly, Burke hammered the point: The nation would be served best by “a Ministry, which thinks itself accountable to the House of Commons, when the House of Commons thinks itself accountable to its constituents.”³⁶

Accordingly, Burke described his political opponents as undermining “compliance with the will of the people” and even treating the very idea as “that monstrous evil of governing in concurrence with the opinion of the people.”³⁷ It therefore followed that:

[W]e are now no longer quarreling about the character, or about the conduct of men, or the tenour of measures; but we are grown out of humour with the English Constitution itself; this is become the object of the animosity of Englishmen.... It is to this humour, and it is to the measures growing out of it, that I set myself (I hope not alone) in the most determined opposition.³⁸

Burke sought to retrieve a Whig party that was consistent with this vision and that believed Parliament’s “first duty” was “*to refuse to support Government, until Power was in the hands of persons who were acceptable to the people, or while factions predominated in the Court in which the nation had no confidence.*”³⁹ In other words, Burke treated George III’s reaction to the Whig oligarchy as mistaking an ephemeral deviation for prevailing constitutional practice.

“Court Party” as Faction. Most interestingly, however, Burke targeted counselors to the King and “the private inclinations of a Court” for ruling “against the general sense of the people.”

[T]his Faction, whilst it pursues a scheme for undermining all the foundations of our freedom, weakens (for the present at least) all *the powers of executive Government*, rendering us abroad contemptible, and at home distracted.... [N]othing but a firm combination of public men against this body, and that, too supported by the heavy concurrence of the people at large, can possibly get the better of it. The people will see the necessity of restoring public men to an attention to the public opinion and restoring the Constitution to its original principles. Above all, they will endeavour to keep the House of Commons from assuming a character which does not belong to it. They will endeavour to keep that House, for its existence for its powers, and its privileges, as independent of every other, and as dependent upon themselves as possible. This servitude is to an House of Commons (like obedience to the Divine law), “perfect freedom.”⁴⁰

Burke characterized the “Court Party” as a faction that sought to sideline the ministry with “responsibility” while maintaining “power” in its own hands. Although the existence of an “inner cabinet” may have been more myth (or fear) than reality, Burke nevertheless considered the reforms of George III and the several ministries he engaged to be insincere covers for, and, in fact, continuations of the Whigocracy’s practices. “[T]heir maxims have a plausible air; and, on a cursory view, appear equal to first principles.... Of this stamp is the cant of *Not men but measures*....”⁴¹ As Burke explained:

[O]thers [besides the monarch]...thought they now beheld an opportunity...of drawing to themselves, by the aggrandisement of a Court Faction, a degree of power which they could never hope to derive from natural influence or from honourable service; and which it was impossible they could hold with the least security, whilst the system of Administration rested upon its former bottom. In order to facilitate the execution of their design, it was necessary to make many alterations in political arrangement, and a signal change in the opinions, habits, and connexions of the greatest part of those who at that time acted in publick.⁴²

Accordingly, “[t]his marvellous abhorrence which the Court had suddenly taken to all influence, was not only circulated in conversation through the kingdom, but pompously announced to the publick....”⁴³ “Party was to be totally done away, with all its evil works,” and it was now “time to unlock the sealed fountain of Royal bounty, which had been infamously monopolized and huckstered, and to let it flow at large upon the whole people.”⁴⁴ The reform of “measures not men,” in other words, concealed place-seeking and revenue-seeking. To reach this conclusion, Burke had to abstract from much that George III did and said (such as voluntarily relinquishing upon his accession the royal claim on public revenue and his manifest willingness to recruit Commons into the ministry). It is true, of course, that he inherited Newcastle, the successor to Walpole, which produced at best hesitance to undertake reform.

Fundamental Alignment with George III. The foregoing summation reflects the heart of Burke’s ideas. The defense of popular government requires the supremacy of the House of Commons in the constitutional architecture to ensure executive ministry can be properly established only upon nomination by the Commons. The argument takes direct aim at the monarch’s discretion and constitutes the beginning of the development that produced the modern monarchy.

However, Burke’s argument contradicts George III’s views only obliquely. The King defended the proposition that the people constitute the true

foundation of the constitution, but he also believed that representation of the national interest, and hence the sentiments of the people, required administration by men of integrity who would diligently search out the public's opinion and needs. What Burke contributes is the notion that these representatives must be chosen by the people on the basis of their express commitment to articulated public policies.

Burke also knew that his conception departed from what prevailed in the “golden era” when “Parliament was indeed the great object of all those politicks, the end at which they aimed as well as the instrument by which they were to operate.”⁴⁵ Those Whigs “believed that the only proper method of rising into power was through hard essays of practiced friendship and experimented fidelity” and “that no men could act with effect, who did not act in concert; that no men could act in concert, who did not act with confidence; that no men could act with confidence, who were not bound together by common opinions, common affections, and common interests.”⁴⁶

Those “hard essays,” however, were consistent with George III's understanding and did not involve any express commitments to constituencies. Burke's plan was to systematize friendship and fidelity through the specific discipline of the political party, which would bind constituents by “[c]ommon opinions, common affections, and common interests.” In other words, the majority-rule procedure in the House of Commons avoids the problem of faction because only the party that attains a majority determines and executes the policy.

In Burke's new architecture, the modern political party emerges as the anchor of constitutional politics. We find, therefore, that the practical politics of the era and the underlying political theory converge in an inventive atmosphere that fundamentally alters the British constitution while incidentally sparking American constitutionalism. Burke understood that he advanced changes in constitutional practice while clinging to a somewhat redefined constitutional heritage as distinct from those “material alterations [that] have been insensibly brought about in the policy and character of governments and nations....”⁴⁷

Resolution

Burke's purpose seems to have been to create a pristine Whig tradition on the grounds of which the labors of the liberal/radical Whigs of his day could be justified as consistent with constitutional tradition. That is, Burke's “traditionalism” is a work of art:

The lines of morality are not like the ideal lines of mathematicks. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logick, but by the rules of prudence. Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all.⁴⁸

On these grounds, Burke and other radical Whigs, including the Duke of Richmond, would eventually make their peace with monarchy and even with George III. Richmond himself, along with several of his colleagues, formally acknowledged loyalty to the King—not on demand but quite voluntarily. Several of Richmond’s relatives and colleagues, and even Richmond, had served on the Privy Council.⁴⁹ That is not to say that there was something amiss. Indeed, the elaboration of a “constitutional monarchy” may be said to require construction of such a foundation independent of the foundation on which an original creation might be based. Burke captured this in poignant language: “It is in the nature of things, that they who are in the centre of a circle should appear directly opposed to those who view them from any part of the circumference.”⁵⁰

George III, by all appearances, did not much like Burke. The King had found a stabilizing force in Lord North as Prime Minister (who served from 1770–1782), but that served in time only to pave the way for his coming to terms with the opposition. George’s primary goal was to reconcile with the reform effort in Britain, and he eventually came to terms with the Burke campaign when he turned to William Pitt the Younger to lead the ministry with a coterie of liberal Whigs following the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. Pitt’s ascension to the prime ministry ended the succession of ill-fated interims, and although split between Pitt and Fox, Whigs flowered.

Edmund Burke as the original propagandist of the liberal/radical Whigs accordingly accounts for those political developments that produced the American Revolution and subsequently secured Britain against the infections flowing from the French Revolution. At the same time, he did George III the favor of consummating the reform for which George III had sighed if not altogether foreseen. Or did he? George III once reportedly said that “there was no man in his dominions by whom he had been so much offended, and no man to whom he was so much indebted as the Duke of Richmond.”⁵¹ Perhaps, then, George III understood more than he let on. It is certainly true that no man in the kingdom raised the paeon of popular sovereignty and the rights of man more prominently than the Duke of Richmond did, and perhaps no man in Britain drew back from the political river’s edge more dramatically than the Duke of Richmond did.

Success of the British Revolution and Implications for the Colonies. The Enlightenment principles that George III embraced refashioned the extended British Union to very good effect, altering politics fundamentally by making the Prime Minister no longer an instrument to represent the monarch's commands to Parliament but, instead, an instrument to represent Parliament to the King. The fundamental liberal reform was to refashion politics with command subject to and not united with authority. On that basis, the Union grew in strength and stability, as was well illustrated in the long-subsisting inclusion of Canada in the Union (full independence not being accomplished until beyond the middle of the 20th century).

But that reality poses the question of what happened with respect to the 13 colonies of British North America. Why were they not incorporated into the British Union with equal success? The frequent response that the geography was too imposing is dispelled by the story of Canada. It seems, rather, that factors revolving around the transient destabilizing constitutional transition in England had more to do with the failure to retain the colonies than it did with any "tyranny" of George III. In the nature of things, once such liberal reforms begin, the devil is in their implementation. Errors do occur. Such errors, however, do not necessarily mean that the intended objective or principle was erroneous. Considering that George III was otherwise successful in transitioning the kingdom, it would be erroneous to repudiate his liberal vision simply because of particular errors that affected America. In fact, it may even be true that the loss of America was not too high a price to pay for the achievement of constitutional unity in England.

America and the Unintended Consequences of British Reform

To make the matter plain, the debates over taxation, judicial administration, and virtual representation were secondary, not primary, causes of the American Revolution. What sparked the Revolution was the effort to clarify the role of Parliament—especially, again, the House of Commons, which was subject in principle to popular election—in Britain, an effort that resulted in attempts to demonstrate the power of Parliament both at home and abroad.⁵²

Before then, and setting the stage for revolution, Parliament passed the liberal Quebec Act, which was followed at the beginning of the Grenville Ministry by the Stamp Act. When the Quebec Act was adopted, the American colonists misperceived it as hostile to their interests while correctly perceiving in the Stamp Act a direct challenge in its tacit exertion of

Parliament's sovereignty. Therefore, when the Rockingham Whigs emerged in control in 1765 and repealed the Stamp Act (with the King's consent), repeal was accompanied by passage of the Declaratory Act, which asserted sovereignty over the colonies in principle if not in fact, and therefore failed to promote reconciliation. The Americans did not find this reassuring, and for good reason. The Rockingham Whigs retained power for less than a year, and the series of new revenue proposals, police enforcements, and a coldness to petitions for redress (which mirrored a process that would arise with full force in Britain itself not long thereafter) fueled the momentum toward resistance and independence.

George III earnestly wished to subdue the colonies, but he did not see that as more important than coming to terms with the reform effort in Britain. Moreover, the fact that the King had been drawn into international wars much against his will because of this rebellion concentrated his attention on putting Britain's house in order so that it could marshal resources adequate to the national interest, such as defending control of the seas. What was happening in America was simply not his highest priority. He had his hands full in attempting to shape administration along new lines in which forcing ministers and members to formulate policy was all important. Thus, inconstant and sometimes impetuous policymaking, beginning with the proclamation to prohibit westward expansion beyond the Appalachians despite the pledged compensation to colonials who fought in the Seven Years War, impeded any effort to approach the colonies with the architectural vision in play in England.

The Americans were mainly unaware of the larger reality in Britain, even though such emissaries as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams were on the ground at times. Franklin, who was even introduced to Paine and the coterie around Richmond, nevertheless seemed not to perceive fully how far the organized opposition to the Crown would affect the disposition of American petitions. In fact, the successive ministries deliberating on such questions as Stamp Act repeal, Townshend duties, and the Declaratory Act were focused as much on who was to decide as they were on what should be decided. The challenge to the old process of "purchasing" representation in the House of Commons had made the creation of a stable policymaking environment more difficult. The Americans were, to coin a phrase, yanked around.

George III became the focal point of colonial frustration. Unaware of the constitutional dynamics transpiring in Britain, the colonists interpreted Parliament's actions as tyranny and placed the blame squarely on King George. By the time American independence was recognized in the Treaty of Paris in 1783, it had long been a *fait accompli*. A practical consequence of the

successful struggle to establish the supremacy of the House of Commons in Britain was to make it all the more unlikely that any form of constitutional relationship between Britain and its American dependencies could ever be achieved. Beyond the specious argument against virtual representation, there was simply no basis for integration of the Americans into the nascent party processes in Britain. Although Burke never advocated independence, his argument in his famous speech on reconciliation with the colonies was still part and parcel of the ground for urging reconciliation: Britain needed to put its own house in order.

America's Parallel Sober Reform

Moreover, although the Americans seem to have been unaware of the constitutional dynamics transpiring in Britain, there were clear signs that America was headed quite independently in the same direction. Two salient facts demonstrate this point.

First, developments in the colonies began to point toward the eventuality of independence before the era of George III's reforms. Sam Adams was radicalized before the rise of struggles between the colonies and Parliament. His radicalization began with that of his father, Samuel Adams, Sr., who was notably injured in the "land bank" fiasco of the 1740s and thereafter, the lingering effects of which dogged Adams, Jr., throughout his life. As Sam Adams began the protests and organizing that morphed into mid-1760s rebellion, he was already defending opposition ground, not with abstract arguments about taxation or even parliamentary authority, but with the passionate appeal to liberty that had characterized *Cato's Letters* under the reign of George II and Robert Walpole in the 1740s. The strident defense of liberty and the entrenched resentment of oligarchical practices tilled the soil in which the seeds of revolution would sprout.⁵³

How, then, do we account for the practices that led the colonies to declare their independence? We can find no better source than Sam's cousin, John Adams. Sam was a "founder of revolution," but John was also a founder of the Constitution. He provided strong evidence that this would be so during the run-up to the Declaration of Independence. A proclamation for the General Court of Massachusetts that he drafted in January 1776, for example, declared unequivocally that:

As the Happiness of the People is the sole End of Government, So the Consent of the People is the only Foundation of it, in Reason, Morality, and the natural Fitness of things: and therefore every Act of Government, every Exercise of

Sovereignty, against, or without, the Consent of the People, is Injustice, Usurpation, and Tyranny.... But this power resides always in the Body of the People, and it never was, or can be delegated, to one Man, or a few, *the great Creator having never given to Men a right to vest others with Authority over them*, unlimited either in Duration or Degree.⁵⁴

Three things are specified. First, there is the end: “the Happiness of the People.” Then there is the foundation, explicitly stated as such: “Consent of the People.” Finally, we have the means. Adams invokes the acquisition of knowledge and of virtue, the development of habits, manners, religion, and integrity, which is to say that only people acting in a certain way and under certain constraints can express that informed consent. The connection between the foundation and the means is made entirely explicit.

Putting it differently, consent of the people stands upon the bulwark of information, of knowledge, of understanding and is informed by religion, morality, manners—good habits. A moral foundation is essential not only to the expression, but also to the achievement of the ends of the Revolution. In this recognition, we connect with George Washington’s Farewell Address, in which he said that “[o]f all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports.”⁵⁵

Second, consider George Washington’s tacit recognition of developments transpiring in Britain when he engaged in an extended correspondence debate with General Sir Thomas Gage over Washington’s superior claim to legitimate authority as having its source in “the people” as opposed to Gage’s commission from the King. Without the experience of party dynamics in Britain, Washington landed precisely upon the point that would drive constitutional reform in Britain as the launching pad for independence in America. In that sense, the Declaration of Independence was the recognition of an existing reality rather than the creation of a new reality. Only much later would America develop the party dynamics to complement the heritage of English liberty, yet America and Britain were headed in precisely the same direction.

What, then, of the Declaration of Independence? If the British constitutional reform was not “traditionalist,” how likely is it that American constitutionalism was traditionalist—and, in particular, British traditionalist? The answer: not at all. While there was appeal to certain traditions, it was not to the tradition of British liberty. A brief review of the thinking in the Declaration will make that plain.

Twelve score and 10 years ago and still counting, a new world emerged in North America, an infant state crying, “We want to be free.” The new United

States was born fraught with perils and freighted with sins but determined to stand on the ground of equal rights to life, liberty, and happiness for all humankind. Its birth pangs were not muffled in a private closet, but shouted out for all the world to hear—a candid world that would judge the fitness of the claim to freedom. The framers of the Declaration of Independence did not react negatively to tyranny, gambling on the possibility of a future free of oppression. Instead, they acted with confident assurance of a providential destiny—as George Washington phrased it—which they were obliged to strive to fulfill.

Against every evidence to the contrary and thousands of years of history discounting the possibility, they insisted on their—and all men’s—capacity for self-government, on account of which a government under the laws of God and Nature must arise with the consent of the governed. It was such trust in humankind as was demonstrated at Shiloh when “a new nation was born in a day.” From the first secure settlements in North America up to the era of the Founding, the shapers of this nation had been inspired by the example of Shiloh, the original “Shining City on a Hill.” They believed that they could undertake the mission assigned by God to the people of Israel in North America since the era of broken covenant (the prophetic era of the Old Testament) had been succeeded by the renewed covenant (the era of the New Testament).

They did not claim to be a “new” chosen people. They claimed, rather, to be ready to embrace the grace offered to humankind and put forth such efforts as would prove men at length capable of measuring up to the task. That is the light in which we can best understand the Declaration of Independence. It was a public acknowledgement of the responsibility that belongs to the being that had received that portion of the divine power which is moral power—the power to judge aright regarding obligations to men and God.

As noted, John Adams made this foundation evident in his anticipation of the Declaration of Independence in the proclamation of the General Court in Massachusetts. The three things laid out there—the end, the foundation in consent, and the means (the acquisition of knowledge, virtue, habits, manners, religion, and integrity)—all affirm that the people alone can express the informed consent that gives rise to government and supports the pursuit of happiness. And the connection between the foundation and the means is made entirely explicit. In its final clause, the proclamation invoked the assistance of the ministers of the Gospel, who, “hav[ing] during the late Relaxation of the Powers of civil Government, exerted themselves for our Safety, it is hereby recommended to them, still to continue their virtuous Labours for the good of the People, inculcating by their Public

Ministry and private Example, the Necessity of Religion, Morality, and good order.” Put differently, consent of the people stands upon informed consent. What informs consent are religion, morality, manners, and good habits. Accordingly, a moral foundation is essential not only to the expression, but to the achievement of the ends of the Revolution. This observation connects with George Washington’s “Farewell Address,” where he said that “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports.”

The idea of self-direction or self-government accordingly constitutes the nub of this political philosophy, and it is illuminated by the otherwise perplexing enumeration of the natural rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” What is perplexing in the enumeration is precisely the appearance that the three identified rights correspond to three distinct functions.

Now, whether “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” constitutes a series of distinct functions or two functions (life and liberty) with a dependent apposition (pursuit of happiness) connected to the second is the heart of the matter. John Adams had already anticipated this inquiry upon introducing “pursuit of happiness” in the Proclamation of the General Court and subsequently in his *Thoughts On Government* prior to the emergence of the Declaration of Independence. *He argued that “pursuit of happiness” is the function of liberty performed toward moral excellence.* Liberty, a function of self-direction that admits the necessity of options or choices, is nonetheless not indifferent to the choices made. While the function—or endowment of soul—is susceptible to diverse performance, Adams nonetheless maintains that, within the variance, there is rightful and wrongful performance. The human person is paradoxically required to lean one way or the other—to act with liberty—but does so well only in one direction.

What produces the paradox is human fallibility tied to the requirement for the individual to conduct him or herself by his or her own lights. While it may appear that liberty is the openness to error (choose how one will, one must choose), it is instead the case that one functions (conducts himself rather than being compelled by necessity) truly at liberty only when he or she chooses well—that is, pursues happiness. British thinker Thomas Hobbes introduced Enlightenment thought when he sought to convert the biblical “seek peace” from the other-regarding to the self-regarding, seeking to displace recourse to moral reasoning. Hobbes sought to replace the “I must” with the “I will,” which could readily be made congruent with civil authority.

In the context of the Declaration, religion, and the Enlightenment, this means that the Declaration is formed of moral alloys, with firmness and stability provided by “the laws of nature and of nature’s God,” and flexibility

and adaptability (what we may be tempted to call realism) supplied by Enlightenment ideas of utility. In that relationship, Enlightenment ideas *serve without shaping* the political experience under the Declaration. For the substantial reality of that experience confirms a truth seldom recognized, which is that what may be (but is seldom) said of human beings in the best of circumstances is precisely what is so casually said of human beings in the worst of circumstances—namely, men will be men.

In that light, their recognition of the right to create a government that could “effect their safety and happiness” meant nothing less than the assertion that they—and their posterity—could exercise that right with the attention to justice that their “future security” requires.

As founders—originators—of this commitment, the framers bore a special burden, for they set sail in uncharted waters on faith. As heirs to their accomplishment, we bear a different burden, not the burden of worshipping—or even celebrating—the past (really no burden at all), but rather the burden of being no less ready to stand on the firm ground of the Declaration of Independence, affirming that all men are created equal and are entitled to rights and liberties entailed by God and nature. The burden of our age is to be no less ready to cry “We want to be free” even in these, the adolescent years of our national existence. The accomplishment of framers who hazarded all to create must compel us, the heirs, no less to hazard all to preserve.

While we cannot refund or resanctify the blessed birth of this nation, it does fall to us not to stain that birth by abandoning—aborting—its cry for freedom, a freedom of value to us only in proportion as we recognize its value for all of humankind. Let this period of semi-quincentennial reflection fill our throats with praise for liberty, with praise for the Declaration of Independence.

Revisiting George III

Despite the colonists’ flawed views of George III and fragmented knowledge of Britain’s constitutional tumult, they achieved their own form of sober popular government inspired by the same basic principles of prudent radicalism that animated the revolution in Britain. The irony, of course, is that the liberal reforms that George III initiated in Britain became the very source of the grievances that led the colonists to rebel and forge their own path toward independence. In the process, the King became a symbol of tyranny—and this reputation seems to persist nearly 250 years after America declared its independence. Given the recent disclosures about George III, it is time to correct the record.

Two Georges. This retrospective on the American Revolution brings us face-to-face with George III of England and George Washington—and the former’s uncharacteristic admiration of the latter. We find a fellowship in greatness that is no less betokened by George III’s full embrace of Enlightenment-era liberal reform. When that account is joined with George III’s recognition of George Washington, we acquire a new foundation for understanding the American Revolution—a foundation that substantially refashions the traditional account of the revolt against tyranny.

We might reconsider George III’s assessment, as recounted by Benjamin West, that George Washington’s voluntary resignation of command in 1783 and the presidency in 1796 “placed him in a light the most distinguished of any man living.”⁵⁶ This comment no longer appears as the perhaps rueful cry of a defeated spirit. In fact, it suggests profound understanding, which in turn illuminates George III’s endeavors as prince. As I have previously observed, Washington’s actions were consistent with the advice of Niccolo Machiavelli in his *Discourses*:

The gravamen of Machiavelli’s advice was that a general whose great virtue had acquired for his prince or country new domain or secure liberty should anticipate suspicion. In this case he can act only in one of two ways, to resign the great powers he has acquired or to use those powers to establish himself in supreme office. Resigning would operate not only to defend against suspicion but also to build reputation.⁵⁷

We have no evidence that Washington actually read this Machiavellian advice, but we do have evidence that George III did. He cites the *Discourses* in a manuscript essay only recently made public. Moreover, he read Machiavelli’s *Prince* sensitively enough to come to employ the term “prince” as a function rather than a title, recognition of an *officium* in keeping with the emphasis in Cicero’s classic work.⁵⁸

On this basis, I now fairly believe that George III’s characterization of Washington was not a grudging submission to reality. Rather, it was very likely great-souled recognition of greatness in an adversary—much in the manner of Winston Churchill’s expressed admiration for Field Marshal Erwin Rommel’s tactics in the deserts of North Africa. In other words, it took greatness in George III to recognize and acknowledge greatness in George Washington.

Rehabilitation by John Quincy Adams. It is, however, not altogether an innovation to question the charge of tyranny against George III. This subject was anticipated (albeit on different grounds) by the American

Founder who lived longest and had the most intimate knowledge of British politics—John Quincy Adams.⁵⁹

In 1837, Adams delivered a Fourth of July oration expressly declaring that King George was not a tyrant. Adams did not have the documentary evidence that has led the present author to make that observation. He had, rather, a moral and political objective to which the claim was instrumental. Adams decided that he needed to turn the attention of the citizens of 1837 away from reaction to oppressions suffered at the hands of Britain and toward the aspiration—the providential dispensation—to form a *novus ordo seclorum* (a new order of the ages). We learn as much by comparing his Fourth of July oration of 1837 with that of 1821. The 1837 address contained the remarkable observation that:

[T]he separation of the one People from the other was a solitary fact in their common history; a mere incident in the progress of human events, not more deserving of special and annual commemoration by one of the separated parts, than by the other. Still less were the causes of the separation subjects for joyous retrospection by either of the parties. — The causes were acts of misgovernment committed by the King and Parliament of Great Britain. *In the exasperation of the moment they were alleged to be acts of personal tyranny and oppression by the King.* George the Third was held individually responsible for them all. The real and most culpable oppressor, the British Parliament, was not even named, in the bill of pains and penalties brought against the monarch. — They were described only as “others” combined with him; and, after a recapitulation of all the grievances with which the Colonies had been afflicted by oppressive usurped British Legislation, *the dreary catalogue was closed by the sentence of unqualified condemnation, that a prince, whose character was thus marked by every act which might define a tyrant, was unworthy to be the ruler of a free people.*⁶⁰

In his 1821 address, Adams counseled Americans to let bygones be bygones while memorializing unworthy and tyrannical acts of oppression. He did indict Parliament as the chief culprit, but he did not exculpate George III.⁶¹ However, in 1837, we read the full rehabilitation of George III:

The King, thus denounced by a portion of his subjects, casting off their allegiance to his crown, has long since gone to his reward. His reign was long, and disastrous to his people, and his life presents a melancholy picture of the wretchedness of all human grandeur; but *we may now, with the candour of impartial history, acknowledge that he was not a tyrant.* His personal character

was endowed with many estimable qualities. His intentions were good; his disposition benevolent; his integrity unsullied; his domestic virtues exemplary; his religious impressions strong and conscientious; his private morals pure; his spirit munificent, in the promotion of the arts, literature and sciences; and his most fervent wishes devoted to the welfare of his people.⁶²

Adams was wrong to see George III's six-decade reign as disastrous because through it, George III both accomplished the development of constitutional monarchy and managed to preserve the nation through an almost constant succession of wars, none of which he initiated if we properly see the onset of the American struggle not as a resort to war but as a police action. What John Quincy Adams accomplished by the complete rehabilitation of George III was nothing less than to establish that the American Revolution rested fully on the foundation of its own providential mission.

France and the Ideological Party

As we have seen, Burke's case for the programmatic political party is strictly connected with the defense of popular government, albeit not direct democracy. By the end of the 18th century, it set the terms for resolution of the constitutional crisis in Britain and at the same time provided the blueprint for modernity. Not only did the Americans implicitly follow in that trajectory—that is, development of the political party by Jefferson and Madison—but, more importantly, the distinction served to steer the war on faction away from parties *per se*.

As noted previously, Burke's formulation integrated political opposition as a permanent feature of free society, thus making efforts to eliminate divergent opinion unnecessary. To that extent, Burke liberated George III's reform instinct from what could have become a fatal cul-de-sac. The French Revolution, which arose subsequently to Burke's formulation, introduced the ideological party—especially during the Reign of Terror—that deliberately rejected the possibility of opposition and thereby introduced the prospect of totalitarianism. The ideological party does not commit to specific measures; it commits to power to adopt any measures that fit its "vision."

In the United States, Jefferson originally saluted the flag of French radicalism, but he drew back when its horrors became too plain to deny. He, with Madison, built a party tradition that eschewed the French path. The impulses of modern liberalism coursed through the social capillaries of all three societies. However, the concrete measures associated with prudent or

sober radicalism—universal suffrage, economic reforms (mainly cutting off “civil list” grifting), equal representation, et al.—all advanced new political agendas while judiciously retrieving traditions to institutionalize them. The selective retrieval of traditions was perhaps the great gift that Burke provided for the United Kingdom. However, although the United States had a built-in foundation—the Declaration of Independence—Burke’s architecture also gave birth by the mid to late 20th century to the American form of prudent radicalism: political conservatism. In that vein, the cutting off of grifting upon public revenues must be distinguished from cutting off the heads of grifters. The one is prudent radicalism; the other is heedless radicalism.

Burke was eventually cast out of the Whig party by followers of Charles James Fox and others on account of his published views on the French Revolution. In his 1791 *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, Burke distinguished the revolution to which he contributed (but which he would not call by that name) from the “pretended” revolution in France (which he called by the name of anarchy).⁶³ Eventually, however, even Fox drew back and made his peace with constitutional monarchy, in the process becoming the first person in Britain to introduce a measure to abolish slavery.

While the French Revolution began, like its British and American counterparts, with grievances against unaccountable power, it devolved into a program of anarchy and ideological purification. The rejection of Montesquieu in favor of Rousseau’s “general will” led to more than a century of constitutional instability and intermittent authoritarianisms that persisted until the fall of the Vichy regime under Philippe Petain following World War II.

Conclusion: Three Pathways to Modernity

On the whole, we may say of the 18th century’s three revolutions that, to varying degrees, they have arrived in the early 21st century at a terminus of prudent radicalism. Such a conclusion is warranted on the premise that popular government, historically speaking, is a radical departure. Nevertheless, they stand differently situated in relation to popular government. In Britain and the United States, government is founded on a formal preference for the popular legislative body; in France, it is founded on a formal preference for a single executive. All three governments depart from France’s original heedless radicalism, but the British and American reflect more fully Burke’s prudent or sober radicalism. It is therefore appropriate to observe that the modern expression of the three pathways confirm the

liberalism-cum-conservatism that emerged once Burke was cast out by his former allies for insufficient deference to French ideologies.⁶⁴ By his own account, the eventually Tory Burke was the same as the liberal Whig Burke.

In the end, we must acknowledge that the modern pathways all affirm the maxim that *salus populi suprema lex est* (the welfare of the people is the supreme law). In their respective chants—“all men are created equal,” “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” “God save the King”—all three stand on a central premise with every other point on the spectrum an extreme opposite.

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Appendix I

Transcripts of the Georgian Papers Archives at the Omohundro Institute (Name, Title of Document, RA Reference, Collection, Series)

RI35621, “The Civil War to Charles II,” RA GEO/ADD/32/195-205, George III Essays, History/Histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain.

RI35624, “James II,” RA GEO/ADD/32/206-252, George III Essays, History/Histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain.

RI35630, 1, Notes on the History of Great Britain from the Time of the Gauls to the Romans, GEO/ADD/32/262, George III Essays, History/Histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain.

RI35631, “Notes on Hume’s History of England,” GEO/ADD/32/263-266, George III Essays, History/Histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain.

RI35625, Transcripts of Letters from James II to “the French Ministry,” GEO/ADD/32/253-253a, George III Essays, History/Histories of England, Scotland, and Great Britain.

RI36437, “The Life of Pomponius Atticus,” GEO/ADD/32/2210, George III Essays, History/Ancient History.

RI36434, “The Civil Government of Rome,” GEO/ADD/32/2058, George III Essays, History/Ancient History.

RI36101, Essays on Classical Antiquity, GEO/ADD/32/680-705, George III Essays, History/Ancient History.

RI36102, Of Laws Relative to Government in General, RA GEO/ADD/32/706-912, RA GEO/ADD/32/1071-1077, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36178, Notes on « De l’esprit des loix, » RA GEO/ADD/32/1044-1047, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36175, Draft Essays on Despotism, RA GEO/ADD/32/1048-1063, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36034, Essay on the history of Parliaments up to the reign of Henry VII, RA GEO/ADD/32/272, RA GEO/ADD/32/1034-1036, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36142, Fair copy of essay on the legislative and the executive, GEO/ADD/32/1022, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36139, Essay and draft essay on government, RA GEO/ADD/32/914-917, RA GEO/ADD/32/929- 936, RA GEO/ADD/32/957-995, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36664, Draft essay on government, RA GEO/ADD/32/1025-1033, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36663, Essay on government, RA GEO/ADD/32/918-928, RA GEO/ADD/32/937-956, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI35569, A State of the Civil Power in Westminster, RA GEO/ADD/32/1, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36176, Essay on the feudal system and government in Scotland, RA GEO/ADD/32/1078-1086, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36181, Notes on “An Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government,” RA GEO/ADD/32/1039, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36185, “A Short Abridgment of Mr Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England,” GEO/ADD/32/996-1021, GEO/ADD/32/1042, GEO/ADD/32/1685, GEO/ADD/32/1687-1691, George III Essays, History/Constitution.

RI36419, Essay on America and future colonial policy, RA GEO/ADD/32/2010-2011, George III Essays, History/Political Economy.

RI36346, Essay proposing reform of the management of the East India Company, RA GEO/ADD/32/1698-1699, George III Essays, History/Political Economy.

RI35628, Essay on Great Britain’s relationships with Europe, RA GEO/ADD/32/257-258, George III Essays, History/Political Economy.

RI35629, Notes on trade and manufacture in England, RA GEO/ADD/32/259-260, George III Essays, History/Political Economy.

RI36567, Notes on “Britain’s Commercial Interest,” RA GEO/ADD/32/261, RA GEO/ADD/32/2045-2047, George III Essays, History/Political Economy.

RI36416, Mixt Observations on Political Arithmetick, RA GEO/ADD/32/1961-1963, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

RI36348, Notes on Reading Rollin’s *manière d’enseigner et d’étudier les Belles Lettres*, RA GEO/ADD/32/1729, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

RI36138, Draft plan for “Lectures on Modern History,” RA GEO/ADD/32/913, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

RI36364, The Plan of Education for a Prince taken from Mr. Thomas, “Eloge of the late Dauphin,” RA GEO/ADD/32/1732, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

RI36350, Some short notes concerning the Education of a Prince, RA GEO/ADD/32/1731, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

RI36365, Sketch of the Education I mean to give unto my sons, RA GEO/ADD/32/1733, George III Essays, Miscellaneous/Education.

Appendix II

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Earl A. Reitan, “The Civil List in Eighteenth-Century British Politics: Parliamentary Supremacy Versus the Independence of the Crown,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1966), pp. 318–337.

Stephen Taylor, “Robert Walpole, First Earl of Orford,” in *Biographical Dictionary of British Prime Ministers*, ed. Robert Eccleshall and Graham Walker (London: Routledge, 1998).

Endnotes

1. See Martin Diamond, "The Revolution of Sober Expectations," American Enterprise Institute *Distinguished Lecture Series on the Bicentennial*, October 24, 1973, <https://aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/BicentenUSA02.pdf> (accessed September 7, 2025); Irving Kristol, Martin Diamond, and G. Warren Nutter, *The American Revolution: Three Views* (New York: American Brands, 1975).
2. "[E]ven in modern Europe, to which we owe the great principle of representation, no example is seen of a government wholly popular, and founded, at the same time, wholly on that principle." James Madison, *Federalist* No. 14, November 30, 1787, National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0185> (accessed September 10, 2025). "It is ESSENTIAL to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it; otherwise a handful of tyrannical nobles, exercising their oppressions by a delegation of their powers, might aspire to the rank of republicans, and claim for their government the honorable title of republic. It is SUFFICIENT for such a government that the persons administering it be appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the people; and that they hold their appointments by either of the tenures just specified; otherwise every government in the United States, as well as every other popular government that has been or can be well organized or well executed, would be degraded from the republican character." James Madison, *Federalist* No. 39, January 16, 1788, National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0234> (accessed September 10, 2025). Emphasis in original.
3. Jonathan Mayhew, "'The Snare Broken,' A Thanksgiving Discourse, PREACHED At the Desire of the West Church, Boston, N.E., Friday May 23, 1766, OCCASIONED BY THE REPEAL OF The Stamp-Act," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805*, 2nd ed., ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), Vol. I, p. 231, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/816/0018.01_Bk.pdf (accessed September 30, 2025).
4. Anonymous, "A Dialogue Between the Devil, and George III, Tyrant of Britain," Boston, 1782, in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805*, 2nd ed., ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), Vol. I, pp. 687–710, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/816/0018.01_Bk.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 691. Italics in original.
6. It is not immaterial to observe that from Marlborough's victories at the opening of the 18th century to Nelson's victory at Trafalgar early in the 19th century, England was persistently—if intermittently—at war with France (including the proxy war with the Scottish Pretender). Thus, the geopolitical context of the revolution weighs significantly on what occurred in North America.
7. Note that I speak of reforming "constitutional practices" and not of "reforming the constitution." George III did not intend to "change" the constitution, nor was there such a thing independent of constitutional practices. We shall see that his prior musings on the British constitution convey effective understanding of this distinction.
8. George approached the leading political questions of his day—which involved the location of sovereignty, including anxiety about persisting loyalties to the Scottish Pretender who had been defeated in 1645; the reform of Parliament; patronage under the Civil List Act of 1727; East India governance; and the role of political parties—with a reform agenda.
9. See Appendix I, *infra*.
10. William B. Allen, ed. and trans., *Montesquieu's The Spirit of the Laws: A Critical Edition* (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2024).
11. *The Spirit of Laws, Translated from the French of M. de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: Printed for J. Nourse and P. Vaillant, 1773), Vol. 1, pp. 99 and 237, https://ia601007.us.archive.org/22/items/bim_eighteenth-century_the-spirit-of-laws-tran_montesquieu-charles-de-_1773_1/bim_eighteenth-century_the-spirit-of-laws-tran_montesquieu-charles-de-_1773_1.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025).
12. See "The Spirit of Montesquieu," in Allen, ed. and trans., *Montesquieu's The Spirit of the Laws: A Critical Edition*, ch. 7, "The Verdict of History," especially p. 850. See also *ibid.*, Part II, "The Mind Behind the Laws," Chapter 1, pp. 751–753, and the whole of Chapter 7, "The Verdict of History," pp. 845–862.
13. *The Natural and Constitutional Right of Britons to Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and the Freedom of Popular Association: Being a Vindication of the Motives and Political Conduct of John Thelwall, and of the London Corresponding Society, in General* (London: Printed for the Author, 1795), https://dn720507.ca.archive.org/0/items/bim_eighteenth-century_the-natural-and-constitu_thelwall-john_1795/bim_eighteenth-century_the-natural-and-constitu_thelwall-john_1795.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025); *The Making of Modern Law: Trials, 1600–1926*, <https://www.gale.com/c/making-of-modern-law-trials-1600-1926> (accessed September 8, 2025).
14. Blackstone contextualized this as "English man," but it is noteworthy that the passage appears in the chapter on the English constitution (Book XI, Chapter 6) in *Spirit of the Laws*.
15. William B. Allen, "Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on The Spirit of the Laws," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 1975), pp. 256–259.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See Appendix I, *infra*.
18. RI36139, Essay and draft essay on government, Omohundro Institute, RA GEO/ADD/32/914-917, RA GEO/ADD/32/929- 936, RA GEO/ADD/32/957-995, George III Essays, History/Constitution.
19. *Ibid.*

20. Thomas Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America Set Forth in Some Resolutions Intended for the Inspection of the Present Delegates of the People of Virginia Now in Convention," 1774, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/rbc0001/2003/2003jeff16823/2003jeff16823.pdf> (accessed September 10, 2025).
21. Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* No. 17, December 5, 1787, National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-04-02-0171> (accessed September 10, 2025).
22. "Transcription of GEO/ADD/32/1732, 'The Plan of Education for a Prince taken from Mr. Thomas Eloge of the late Dauphin,' [1766–1805]," <https://georgianpapers.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/The-Plan-of-Education.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2025). Spelling and Punctuation as in original.
23. M. Thomas, *Eloge de Louis Dauphin de France [Praise of Louis Dauphin of France]* Paris: Regnard, 1766), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5625078h.textelimage> (accessed September 10, 2025).
24. RI36175, Draft Essays on Despotism, Omohundro Institute, RA GEO/ADD/32/1048-1063, George III Essays, History/Constitution.
25. Ibid.
26. "Letter III. Of the State of Parties at the Accession of King George I," in Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism on the Idea of a Patriot King: and on the State of Parties at the Accession of King George the First* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1752), pp. 272–273, <https://ia601603.us.archive.org/1/items/lettersonspirito00boli/lettersonspirito00boli.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2025).
27. "Letter II. The Idea of a Patriot King," in *ibid.*, p. 94. Emphasis in original.
28. Ibid., pp. 106–107. Emphasis in original.
29. Burke "was of [the] opinion that our general rights over that country would have been preserved by this timely concession. When, instead of this, a Boston port bill, a Massachuset's charter bill, a Fishery bill, an Intercourse bill, I know not many hostile bills rushed out like so many tempests from all points of the compass, and were accompanied first with great fleets and armies of English, and followed afterwards with great bodies of foreign troops, he thought that their cause grew daily better, because daily more defensive; and that ours, because daily more offensive, grew daily worse." In *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, In Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, Relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1791), pp. 38–39, <https://dn790001.ca.archive.org/0/items/appealfromnewtoo00burkiala/appealfromnewtoo00burkiala.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2025).
30. During this period, following the strategic surrender of British arms at Yorktown, the partisan contest in Britain had taken a decisive turn. During the development of the liberal Whigs, Whigs in general had devolved into separate parts (those still attached to pre-George III practices and those stridently advocating for reform). Of the two, however, the reform Whigs did not enlist under the King's banner, opting instead to make the King the target, thereby avoiding making explicit the role of the peers or aristocracy. As a result, the argument for Whig governing became an explicit argument for party governing in direct challenge to the familiar identification of party with faction. See Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan Press, 1957).
31. Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," 1770, in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, Vol. 1, ed. Francis Canavan (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), Vol. 1, pp. 69–156, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/796/0005.01_Bk.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025). Cited hereafter as *Select Works*.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 150. Emphasis added.
34. It is vital to recall that, beginning with Hobbes and continuing through Locke to Blackstone (though there were earlier theories of sovereignty), the concept of sovereignty as decisive with respect to the Constitution was firmly established and proved to be corollary to the events that sparked the American Revolution. In addition to his "Present Discontents," Burke's contributions on the "Middlesex Elections" (the theory of representation), the "Powers of Juries," the "Bill for Shortening the Duration of Parliaments," and "Reform of Representation in the House of Commons" all critically establish the architecture for a new understanding of the role of the representative legislature, which is primarily the House of Commons exclusive of the House of Lords.
35. This is inverse to the practice in the United States of executive nomination and legislative confirmation and even less politically significant because of the very low likelihood of a monarch's disconfirming.
36. Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," in *Select Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 89, 156.
37. Ibid., p. 115.
38. Burke, "Speech on Reform of the Representation in the Commons in Parliament," May 7, 1782, in *Select Works*, Vol. 4, p. 29.
39. Burke, "Thoughts on the Present Discontents," in *Select Works*, Vol. 1, p. 101. Emphasis in original.
40. Ibid., pp. 154–155. Emphasis added.
41. Ibid., p. 151. Emphasis in original.
42. Ibid., p. 83.
43. Ibid., p. 85.

44. Ibid., p. 86.
45. Ibid., p. 117.
46. Ibid., p. 149.
47. Ibid., p. 75.
48. Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, p. 19.
49. Privy Council 1765: The Duke of Grafton (1735–1811); The Marquess of Rockingham (1730–1782); Thomas Pelham (1728–1805); The Duke of Richmond (1735–1806). Privy Council 1782: Edmund Burke (1729–1797). Privy Council 1806: The Hon. Charles James Fox (1749–1806).
50. Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, p. 45.
51. Rt. Hon. Lord John Russell, ed., *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox*, Vol. I (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1853), Vol. I, p. 351, <https://ia801507.us.archive.org/23/items/memorialscorresp01fox/memorialscorresp01fox.pdf> (accessed September 8, 2025).
52. This dynamic did not uniquely affect the 13 American colonies, as Jack Greene has demonstrated with regard to the West Indian colonies, particularly Jamaica. See Jack P. Greene, “The Jamaica Privilege Controversy, 1764–66: An Episode in the Process of Constitutional Definition in the Early Modern British Empire,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1994), pp. 16–53, and Jack P. Greene, “‘Of Liberty and of the Colonies’: A Case Study of Constitutional Conflict in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British American Empire,” in *Liberty and American Experience in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. David Womersley (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), pp. 21–102, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1727/1363_LFeBk.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025). See also Jack P. Greene and Craig B. Yirush, eds., *Exploring the Bounds of Liberty: Political Writings of Colonial British America from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution*, Latin trans. Kathleen Alvis (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2018), Vol. II, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/2785/Greene_1670-02_Bk.pdf (accessed September 8, 2025).
53. See, especially, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato’s Letters or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious and Other Important Subjects*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), Vol. 1 (November 5, 1720, to June 17, 1721); Vol. 2 (June 24, 1721, to March 3, 1722); Vol. 3 (March 10, 1722, to December 1, 1722); and Vol. 4 (December 8, 1722, to December 7, 1723), <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/trenchard-catos-letters-4-vols-in-2-1f-ed> (accessed September 9, 2025); Joseph Priestley, “Of Religious Liberty, And Toleration in General,” in *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1771), pp. 110 and 116, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1767/0893_Bk.pdf (accessed September 9, 2025): “THE most important question concerning the extent of civil government is, whether the civil magistrate ought to extend his authority to matters of religion; and the only method of deciding this important question, as it appears to me, is to have recourse at once to first principles, and the ultimate rule concerning every thing that respects a society; viz. whether such interference of the civil magistrate appear to be for the public good.... ¶ Not that I think religion will ever be a matter of indifference in civil society: that is impossible, if the word be understood in its greatest latitude, and by religion we mean that principle whereby men are influenced by the dread of evil, or the hope of reward from any unknown and invisible causes, whether the good or evil be expected to take place in this world or another; comprehending enthusiasm, superstition, and every species of false religion, as well as the true.”
54. “IV. A Proclamation by the General Court, 19 January 1776,” National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-03-02-0195-0005> (accessed September 8, 2025). Emphasis added.
55. George Washington, “Farewell Address,” September 19, 1796, National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-20-02-0440-0002> (accessed September 12, 2025).
56. Benjamin West to Rufus King, May 3, 1797, in *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King*, ed. Charles R. King (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896), Vol. III, 1799–1801, p. 545, <https://dn790001.ca.archive.org/0/items/rufuskinglife03kingrich/rufuskinglife03kingrich.pdf> (accessed September 9, 2025).
57. See “George Washington: President,” in W. B. Allen, *George Washington: America’s First Progressive* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 72 (quoting Nicolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*, Book 1, Chapter 30).
58. See Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Andrew P. Peabody (Boston: Little, Brown, 1887), https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/542/0265_Bk.pdf (accessed September 9, 2025).
59. See David Zanotti and W. B. Allen, *An Oration: John Quincy Adams’ Christian America*, American Policy Roundtable, forthcoming, which demonstrates that John Quincy Adams must be considered a Founder in terms of his presence and roles throughout the Revolution and beyond.
60. John Quincy Adams, “Speech on Independence Day,” July 4, 1837, Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, Teaching American History, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-on-independence-day-2/> (accessed September 9, 2025). Emphasis added.
61. See John Quincy Adams, “An Address...Celebrating the Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1821, Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, Teaching American History, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-on-independence-day/> (accessed September 12, 2025).
62. Adams, “Speech on Independence Day,” July 4, 1837. Emphasis added.
63. “[In] the case of a revolution in government, this, I think may be safely affirmed, that a sore and pressing evil is to be removed, and that a good, great in its amount, and unequivocal in its nature, must be probable almost to certainty, before the inestimable price of our own morals, and the well-being of a number of our fellow-citizens, is paid for a revolution.” Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, p. 20.
64. It is important to observe as well that it was Burke’s strident impeachment prosecution of Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India, in the name of just dealings and natural rights that primarily secured his early 19th century American reputation as the most prominent liberal in Britain.