Popular Liberalism and Populist Reaction

Lessons from History in an Era of Resentment

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Abstract

Throughout the history of English-speaking countries, different philosophies of liberalism and liberty have developed as central ideological markers of their success. From the natural law origins of Magna Carta, English philosophers 're-discovered' these philosophies at the end of the Glorious Revolution, and cemented Whig concepts of a natural liberty based in contract theory into the English Bill of Rights. These charters became important tools for the American rebels when they petitioned King George III, and eventually broke with the Crown. Thomas Jefferson later merged British and French concepts of liberty, and the United States thereafter developed its own distinct organic liberalism, eventually leading to a social turn as a popular reaction to the failure of classical laissez-faire capitalism. The thesis argues that Anglo-American liberalism has been highly influential in shaping the hegemonic world order of today, but that its future is under threat if it does not heed history's lessons about populist correctives to legalistic and elitist rule.

Keywords: liberalism, social liberalism, world order, globalism, populism, sovereignty

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Preface

The thesis which you are holding in your hands, or perhaps has parked digitally in front of your eyes, is the result of a rather uncharacteristic spat of optimism on my own part. Missing the thrills of academic adventure, and being inspired to write on a topic which had gained fresh interest after Brexit and the election of Mr Trump, I applied for the MA course thinking like those blithering idiots on a plucky British motoring show: how hard can it be? Quite hard, it turned out, since I was attempting to finish my degree remotely whilst working full time. Then, of course, we were all hit by that meddling Covid pandemic, just to add some colour to an otherwise orderly existence. Thanks to the enormously accommodating nature of university staff and my own employers alike, however, I finally managed to produce a coherent project, and it is my hope that it will be appreciated for its style as well as its content. The aim, apart from satisfying my own curiosity, has been to illuminate the long and curvaceous lines of liberalism in the Anglophone world, where the United States eventually emerged as the new hegemon in 1945, transplanting her matured ideas of liberalism into the world theatre. I have further sought to problematise the lack of democratic response in modern globalism through analysis of populism and reaction throughout the great narrative of the American republic.

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1 Introduction: That went Quickly

Those who play the identity game, should be prepared to lose it.

– Mark Lilla[1]

When this thesis writer went back to university after several years out of academic life, the Lords of Chaos had seemingly descended upon the English-speaking world which is the focus of British-American area studies. Where Cameron and Obama in 2011 presided over a slick liberal machinery in pristine control of the globalism their countries had prescribed as vaccines against future hostilities, and with the Russians and Chinese still being lauded as strategic partners in all kinds of ways and sectors, the area of operations looked very different indeed only seven years later. In Europe, a chaotic series of negotiations were taking place between the United Kingdom and the EU, and governments as well as negotiating teams were falling by the wayside at uneven intervals. In America, Mr Trump had thrown all the old rules overboard in his quest for populist policy gains, including, some would argue, both decency and truth itself. And yet, despite universal astonishment and disdain amongst the chattering classes on the liberal side of politics, the world did not come to an immediate end, and their preferred parties and candidates did not storm on to landslide victories on the coattails of populist failure. The most obvious reason for this was, of course, that there ensued no populist failure, at least not in such dramatic ways as was predicted by the most eager commentators.

Nevertheless, something had obviously went very wrong very quickly for the elites living in global cities 'like tropical islands surrounded by oceans of resentment'.[2] Thus one has to pose the question: what happened with the liberalist idea, which for centuries has been the benefactor of popular uprisings, rather than their scapegoat? The quote at the top of this

[1] Edward Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017), p 98.
[2] Ibid, p 51.

page stayed with the thesis writer as a warning about the future, but identity politics is but a symptom of a far more menacing set of root causes.

1.1 Research Question, Methodology & Justification

The research questions chosen for this thesis are as follows:

a) How has liberalism developed in the Anglosphere, and why did it take a social turn in the first half of the twentieth century?
b) What role has popular sovereignty and populism played in this development?
c) Why is liberalism under pressure today, after its near total hegemony was secured by the collapse of other important ideologies?

The starting point for this analysis shall be two works by important scholars on both sides of the Atlantic: *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made it* by Richard Hofstadter,[3] and *Liberalism* by L. T. Hobhouse.[4] The latter of these shall be used for theoretical background, whilst the former will serve as a tool for in-depth analysis of important philosophical turns in the traditions and practices of American republicanism.

Through a historic narrative method an assertion will be put forward stating that the fundamental principles of the Anglosphere have always rested upon a rock bed of personal liberty, individuality, and self-determination, at home and abroad. Furthermore the thesis will endeavour to show that this platform of natural law and classical liberalism as it was understood in past centuries, constitutes a main mover for the recent so-called populist turn, challenging the prevailing liberal world order in its aims of institutional and permanent limitation of national sovereignty.

Comprehensive narrative analyses like this one seem to be somewhat out of fashion within academia, but in some cases the method is vital to provide a big picture with salient focal

[3] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition: And the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).
[4] Leonard T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

points serving as illustrations for larger ebbs and flows within society. The justification for this thesis is thus a desire to link theory with history in order to show how liberalism has shaped the Anglophone world and, more recently, the accepted framework for global governance. There are also many useful arguments and debates arising out of the recent populist turn, but often in a piecemeal and detached fashion, without proper focus on the underlying problems of modern developments within the philosophy itself. The thesis seeks to remedy this sufficiency.

1.2 Limitations and Miscellaneous Matters

When work was begun on this paper its scope was hopelessly wide, and its subject matter vast enough to put the fear of God into even the most hardened MA supervisor. Thankfully, subjects such as the natural law origins of Jeffersonian republicanism as posited by Plato and Thomas Aquinas were prudently dropped from its analysis after gentle guidance, but the long lines of liberalist traditions within Anglo-American history still left a considerable array of potential research firmly on the table.

It has therefore been necessary to discipline the project by focusing on the two main sources mentioned above – one theoretical and British, the other historical and American – thereby acquiring a panorama view without losing the necessary focus or depth. The thesis is centred around these two sources, and a thorough analysis exists for each, but some of the more peripheral concepts and historical objects have been axed in the service of space and cohesion.

Additionally, a number of primary and secondary sources support the main arguments of the paper wherever the need for verification or opposition so dictates. For some sections of Chapter 3, which contains the main thrust of analysis, second opinions have been introduced alongside Professor Hofstadter. This has been deemed especially beneficial when discussing some of the older developments in America, and when establishing the foundational philosophies upon which later evolution rests. More recent and well-documented figures have instead been afforded their most authoritative biographies as background, without full engagement in the text itself. This has been a conscious choice on the part of the author, as

the theory of Chapter 2 and the conclusions in Chapter 4 needed adequate room in order to fully answer the research questions posed.

Choice of sources has been made through a combination of former study, search sessions through Oria, and of course ample and learned guidance from the thesis supervisor. When doubt has arisen as to which sources should be prioritised, an attempt has been made to determine the reputation of authors and current trends within the field. Apart from these considerations, the chosen books and articles have made it simply because they poked the interest and curiosity of the thesis writer.

1.3 Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 contains this introduction, in which a brief history of how the current world order came into being will follow. It also provides the reader with summaries of two main critiques against liberal globalism. Chapter 2 is concerned with the theoretical underpinnings of anglophone liberal philosophy as it was analysed and modified by British author Leonard T Hobhouse, including a succinct historiography of the English school. In Chapter 3 the main thrust of analysis has its home, based on the narrative American history provided by Richard Hofstadter. Chapter 4 is where the threads are gathered into a conclusion.

1.4 The Traditional History of World Order

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has written extensively on the question of how the world came to an arrangement of sovereign nation states interacting and cooperating through a framework of international governance.[5] His starting point is a categorisation of the four systems which he sees as influential alternative modes of organisation, namely European,[6] Chinese,[7] Islamist,[8] and American.[9] 'Of all these concepts of order', so he continues, 'Westphalian principles are, at this writing, the sole generally recognized basis of what exists of a world order.' This system, which was conceived at a series of conferences in

[5] Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).
[6] Ibid, pp 3-4.
[7] Ibid, pp 4-5.
[8] Ibid, p 5.
[9] Ibid, p 6.

Münster and Osnabrück with treaties signed in 1648, came about as a result of all the major powers of Europe being wary after the Thirty Years' War, fought over the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, with added secular power plays. Its stated goal was 'a Christian, universal, perpetual, true, and sincere peace and friendship' for 'the glory of God and the security of Christendom'.[10] Despite such haughty aspirations, Kissinger shows his preference for a mode of explanation closer to the cold calculations of *realpolitik*:

> The genius of this system, and the reason it spread across the world, was that its provisions were procedural, not substantive. If a state would accept these basic requirements, it could be recognized as an international citizen able to maintain its own culture, politics, religion, and internal policies, shielded by the international system from outside intervention.[11]

The 'basic requirements' to which Kissinger refers in this passage, were concerned with the foundational elements of the world, as the Europeans knew it, in that 'the state, not the empire, dynasty, or religious confession, was affirmed as the building block of European order'.[12] Furthermore, a 'system of "international relations' was set up for the purpose of facilitating orderly conduct amongst the signatories.

Westphalia Sovereignty and the Westphalia mechanisms for intercourse between nations have remained the defining attributes of world order ever since the treaties were signed in the seventeenth century, according to Kissinger. It became the 'world order' envisioned by the leading European states, which then took hold as an 'international order' once Europe established its hegemony during the imperial period:

> World order describes the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. An international order is the practical application of these concepts to a substantial part of the globe – large enough to affect the global balance of power.[13]

[10] Ibid, p 25.
[11] Ibid, p 27.
[12] Ibid, p 26.
[13] Ibid, p 9.

With the decline of universally accepted divine sanction for absolutist monarchies as a result of the Westphalia peace, new philosophies were needed in order to 'explain the origin and justify the functions of secular political order'. As shall be expanded upon further in Chapter 2, English natural rights Whigs were in full swing during the Civil War, Restoration and Glorious Revolution in the British Isles, but the foundations were in many ways provided by Thomas Hobbes, as Kissinger contends. In *Leviathan* he 'imagined a "state of nature" in the past when the absence of authority produced a "war of all against all."' As a means of creating an ordered society, 'people delivered their rights to a sovereign power in return for the sovereign's provision of security for all within the state's border'.[14] With regards to international relations, however, no contract existed: 'Concerning the offices of one sovereign to another, which are comprehended in that law which is commonly called the law of nations, I need not say anything in this place, because the law of nations and the law of nature is the same thing.'[15]

Having established a new international order based on procedure and reciprocal restraint, which yielded new philosophical underpinnings crucial to further developments in a liberal direction, Kissinger goes on to explain how it facilitated a balance of power, that subsequently collapsed with the French Revolution and its resulting Napoleonic Wars, before being reclaimed at the Conference of Vienna in 1815, resulting in a relatively peaceful century until the Great War ended European dominance: 'Until the outbreak of World War I, England acted as the balancer of the equilibrium. It fought in European wars but with shifting alliances – not in pursuit of specific, purely national goals, but by identifying the national interest with the preservation of the balance of power.'[16]

Kissinger agrees with the view that a set of extremely complex circumstances precipitated the Great War, but his emphasis is more on the abandonment of Westphalian principles set up to prevent alliance diplomacy, than on the fledgling empires of Austria-Hungary, the Ottomans, and of course Russia. 'The last element of flexibility was lost', he says, 'when

[14] Ibid, p 31.
[15] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), p 233.
[16] Kissinger, *World Order*, p 32.

Britain abandoned its "splendid isolation" and joined the Entente Cordiale of France and Russia after 1904'.[17] He is also scathing of the Versailles treaty which was born out of World War I, but again his emphasis is on its break with Westphalia as consolidated by the Congress of Vienna. At Versailles the exhausted European leaders

> blotted from their minds nearly every lesson of previous attempts to forge an international order, especially of the Congress of Vienna. It was not a happy decision. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 refused to accept Germany back into the European order as the Congress of Vienna had included acceptance of a defeated France.[18]

At the conclusion of the next global conflict, so Kissinger submits, hegemony was passed to the United States on the account of her undeniable emerging might, and during the Cold War era which followed, the defence of a Western and liberal world order became an increasingly unequal affair: 'What the United States understood by alliance was not so much countries acting congruently to preserve equilibrium as America as the managing director of a joint enterprise.'[19]

1.5 Current Critiques of Liberal Globalism

The brief summary of Kissinger's main contention that nation state sovereignty attained by the Westphalia peace settlement, and further cultivated through the Congress of Vienna, is important because modern liberalism as was defined by Whig philosophers in the seventeenth century, and French idealists in the eighteenth, was moulded from an emerging claim to sovereignty. This sovereignty could be individual, as in personal liberty, national, as in political liberty, or indeed international, as in nation state liberty.[20] Thus Kissinger, and those who adhere to his brand of traditional analysis based in *realpolitik* and procedural historical models of explanation, have a point when they hold up the shift from broad dynastical alliances to national sovereignty as a decisive moment in the history of a liberal world order. Yet power plays between great nations and regions only tell part of the story,

[17] Ibid, p 79.
[18] Ibid, p 83.
[19] Ibid, p 89.
[20] See Chapter 2 for elaboration.

as this thesis will seek to evince, but first it is necessary to briefly examine some of the leading sources of criticism against liberalism and globalism as they have recently developed in the post-Cold War era.

1.5.1 The Revolutionary View

Some commentators have resorted to pronouncing the death of liberalism as they behold the chaotic globalisation of modernity. Patrick J Deneen, for example, concludes that the entire enterprise is close to demise as a result of its own success:

> Liberalism has failed because liberalism has succeeded. As it becomes fully itself, it generates endemic pathologies more rapidly and pervasively than it is able to produce Band-aids and veils to cover them. The result is the systemic rolling blackouts in electoral politics, governance, and economics, the loss of confidence and even belief in legitimacy among the citizenry, that accumulate not as separable and discrete problems to be solved within the liberal frame but as deeply interconnected crises of legitimacy and a portent of liberalism's end times.[21]

A most dramatic diagnosis indeed, and Deneen goes on to describe how 'discontent is growing among those who are told by their leaders that their policies will benefit them, even as liberalism remains an article of ardent faith among those who ought to be best positioned to comprehend its true nature'.[22] What is needed, he concludes, is a post-liberal world devoid of comprehensive ideology, with 'practices fostered in local settings, focused on the creation of new and viable cultures, economics grounded in virtuosity within households, and the creation of civic polis life. Not a better theory, but better practices'.[23] The solution which Deneen seems to call for is a modern form of Jefferson's agrarian communitarianism, but without an overarching liberal philosophy with universal application. He is apt at identifying the problem of modern social liberalism having become a globalist behemoth, in many cases arresting the very liberty, equality, and justice for which it was conceived, but

[21] Patrick J. Deneeen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), p 179.
[22] Ibid, p 180.
[23] Ibid, p 197.

provides no clarity as to what might replace the current Western system. Further, he warns his readers about the authoritarian reactions which might move into the vacuum, and likewise of a romantic return to pre-liberal society, yet his proposed community of cultured and self-sufficient households banding together in autonomous villages based on a common inheritance sounds remarkably romantic and utopian.

1.5.2 The Reformist View

Writing in 2017, just after the momentous events in Britain and America which came to define Anglophone populism, journalist Edward Luce offers a more searching probe into the future of liberalism:

> Can the West regain its optimism? If the answer is no – and most of the portents are skewing the wrong way – liberal democracy will follow. If the next few years resemble the last, it is questionable whether Western democracy can take the strain. People have lost faith that their systems can deliver. More and more are looking backwards to a golden age that can never be regained. When a culture stops looking to the future, it loses a vital force. The search for Eden always ends in tears.[24]

He also beckons his audience to 'imagine how things would look with a competent and sophisticated white nationalist in the White House', instead of the supposedly incompetent and unsophisticated President Trump.[25] Thus Luce, unlike Deneen, still harbours some hope for the future of liberalism, but also points to the coming possibility of a worsening situation if steps are not taken to rectify the situation. His analysis is brilliant at exposing the problems of confidence and remoteness which the western block is facing, but Luce is also lacking in providing comprehensive suggestions for the future. After paying accolade to Benjamin Franklin's maxim that 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance', he offers this guidance:

> Liberal elites, in particular, will have to resist the temptation to carry on with their comfortable lives and imagine they are doing their part by signing up to the

[24] Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*, p 203.
[25] Ibid, p 203.

> occasional Facebook protest. For Trump, if you are not against him you might as well be with him. Trump's opponents must also learn to separate the man from the people who vote for him. It would be lethal malpractice to continue writing off half of society as hidebound.[26]

This critique of the elites follows a tried and trusted model of democratic renewal in liberal America. The *Declaration of Independence* was itself a costly slap on Britain's imperial wrist, and from there Jefferson lambasted the autocrats, Jackson the Washington elites, Lincoln the southern slave masters, Teddy Roosevelt the vulgar tycoons, Wilson the trusts and the European warmongers, and FDR the outdated classical liberalists both at home and abroad. What will be critical is precisely how the current establishment reacts to the populist reaction.[27]

As the world has become smaller and more interconnected since the days of the Whig philosophers, the Founding Fathers, and FDR, it has also become more globalised. The international world order which emerged in the twentieth century is, consequently, vulnerable to populist reaction just as much as liberal nation states, but it is nevertheless the nation states that bear the brunt of its direct results. The effects upon liberalism in an international context, therefore, are usually felt indirectly. Examples must include the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, as well as President Trump's exit from the Paris Accord on Climate Change.

[26] Ibid, p 204.
[27] Analysis underscoring these claims can be found in Chapter 3.

2 Liberalism in the Anglosphere

This chapter will be concerned with establishing a sound definition of liberalism in the Anglosphere just before the two great wars of the twentieth century radically altered the political, economic, and indeed geographical landscape of the entire world. It has been worthwhile to spend some energy on this endeavour so that one might have a crystallised image of the philosophical currents which facilitated the subsequent emergence of a liberal global order devised by English-speaking statesmen such as Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Clement Attlee.

Liberalising developments in constitutional law and political legislation were gradual in extent and depth, having been only slowly implemented in England, Britain, the British Empire, the independent dominions and successor states including America, and finally across the entire world as a result of two comprehensive wars. The Whig period which commenced with the Restoration in England, gathered pace during the Glorious Revolution, and strongly influenced the Founding Fathers in America, was an era of immense optimism and belief in the inherent natural rights of man. It was a liberal project set against arbitrary despotism in the shape of absolutist monarchy, but at the same time it included elements of elitism, exclusivity, and exceptionalism within its own ranks. This would later result in schisms between Republican-Democrats, Federalists, and Democrats in the United States, as well as repeated Tory resurgence in Britain. Such schisms were important to the forward direction of the conversations over liberalism in both these countries, but they were nevertheless concerns of the landed classes, and of course largely closed off to women, people of colour, Catholics, and other religious minorities. Thus, after the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution, it would take another century before liberalism became of real political benefit to a popular mass of people, first through the route of suffrage for all male subjects and citizens, and then eventually female adults at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the concessions made to a small group of Barons by *Magna Carta* in 1215 until universal suffrage was adopted across Britain and America in 1928 and 1920, respectively, it had taken some 700 years of struggles and battles upon a winding road of liberal progress to reach the majority.[28] Even so until the Supreme Court

[28] *Magna Carta* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2016).

decision in *Harper (1966),* poll taxes in practice continued to exclude many poorer voters in the United States.[29]

In defining the philosophies and ideologies which are underpinning our modern global system, it is tempting to run through the works of each great thinker in turn, but space is alas not permitting of such a scheme. Professor Leonard T Hobhouse's summary of liberal philosophy, provides a useful theoretical framework for the rise of social liberalism that later came to define internationalism and global governance. His consolidation of liberal constitutionalism in the English-speaking world covers all the important historical developments, and link them cogently together into a modern social liberal theory which coincides with the governments of liberal leaders such as David Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson, and of course Franklin D Roosevelt.

2.1 Antecedents to Liberalism

Hobhouse, like many of his preceding mentors including John Stuart Mill, John Locke, Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, James Mill, Jeremy Bentham *et al*, is rooted in a Whig narrative of organic societal development. For him it is vitally important to understand the historic journey of any given society if one is to properly grasp the theoretic and practical realities of the present situation. In his book *Liberalism* (1911),[30] written at a time when the first *Parliament Act* limiting the control of the House of Lords over finance had just been put on the statute books, Hobhouse seeks to do just that, beginning with a brief overview of how societies were organised from pre-historic times until the fifteenth century.[31] He commences by asserting that at 'all times men have lived in societies, and ties of kinship and of simple neighbourhood underlie every form of social organization.'[32] From there he explains that tribes and clans eventually formed small groups of communes not directly bound together by kinship, but ruled absolutely in an authoritarian fashion based on alliances, strength and personal despotism. In classical antiquity the first seeds of an order

[29] Harper v Virginia State Bd. of Elections - 383 U.S. 663, 86 S. Ct. 1079, 16 L. Ed. 2d 169, 1966 U.S. LEXIS 2905.
[30] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*.
[31] An Act to make provision with respect to the powers of the House of Lords in relation to those of the House of Commons, and to limit the duration of Parliament - 1 & 2 Geo. 5 c. 13.
[32] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 9.

based on civil rights emerged: 'The city state of ancient Greece and Italy was a new type of social organization. It differed from the clan and the commune in several different ways.'[33] Namely, many clans and villages coming together, basing their society on civic right rather than kinship, in which the state and its servants were subject to the same law as everybody else, except those without citizenship such as slaves and serfs. The problem with these city states, quite apart from the very limited class of people who were defined as free citizens, was a tendency towards rampant internal factionalism as well as 'ill-success of the city organization in dealing with the problem of inter-state relations'.[34]

Following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476, Hobhouse argues that a chaotic patchwork of competing Kingdoms enduring much internal strife eventually consolidated into a feudal system with the Holy See at the top of the aristocratic and ecclesiastical pyramid. This was a step backwards to a more authoritarian model in which 'every man, in theory, had his master'.[35] And for many centuries Europe and the British Isles were bound together in a strict hierarchy of serfdom. As has already been touched upon, there of course were occasional rebellious tendencies during this long darkness, especially in the periphery of Northern Europe, but as a rule papal authority was absolute. The events surrounding *Magna Carta* is an illustration of this, where the August letter from Pope Innocent III in no uncertain terms branded the entire enterprise as 'not only shameful and demeaning but also illegal and unjust', before declaring it 'null, and void of all validity for ever'.[36]

From the fifteenth century onwards, when the Byzantine Empire had finally expired and Renaissance ideas seeped into England and France, the Middle Ages at last came to an end with a consolidation of these two territories into centralised modern Kingdoms. Hobhouse submits that although still authoritarian and arbitrary in their governance by absolutist monarchs, a material difference emerged as regards the status of the lower classes. 'There is one point gained as compared to earlier forms of society', he writes. 'The base of the pyramid is a class which at least enjoys personal freedom'.[37]

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[33] Ibid, p 10.
[34] Ibid, p 12.
[35] Ibid, p 13.
[36] Harry Rothwell, *English Historical Documents 1189-1327* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1975), pp 324-326.
[37] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 14.

2.2 The Whigs, Natural Law and Positivist Utilitarianism

When England moved away from the feudal organisation of society, and Henry VIII broke with papal rule through the *Acts of Supremacy*, a foundation for organic liberal growth had been erected, as Hobhouse argues:[38] 'The modern State accordingly starts from the basis of an authoritarian order, and the protest against that order, a protest religious, political, economic, social, and ethical, is the historic beginning of Liberalism.'[39] He goes on to analyse how the Whigs used natural law theories founded in ancient liberties such as had been codified in *Magna Carta* for liberal gains:

> To maintain the old order under changed circumstances may be, in fact, to initiate a revolution. It was so in the seventeenth century. Pym[40] and his followers could find justification for their contentions in our constitutional history, but to do so they had to go behind both the Stuarts and the Tudors; and to apply the principles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in 1640 was, in effect, to institute a revolution.[41]

Because governments 'claimed supernatural sanction and divine ordinance', he asserts, 'Liberal theory replied in effect that the rights of man rested on the Law of Nature, and those of government on human institution'.[42] For the Whig theorists and politicians 'it followed that the function of government was limited and definable. It was to maintain the natural rights of man as accurately as the conditions of society allowed, and to do naught beside.'[43] But Hobhouse's analysis goes further, because a defence of natural rights via negative checks on government and classes of persons within society can only be achieved if there is an overall restraint on individual behaviour. This was accomplished through an exchange, in which the subject or citizen 'gave up his natural rights and received in return

[38] An Acte restoring to the Crowne thauncyent Jurisdiction over the State Ecclesiasticall and Spirituall, and abolyshing all Forreine Power repugnaunt to the same - 1 Eliz 1 c 1.
[39] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 14.
[40] John Pym who was part of the group of five parliamentarians arrested in 1642, leading to the First English Civil War.
[41] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 31.
[42] Ibid, p 32.
[43] Ibid, p 33.

civil rights, something less complete, perhaps, but more effective as resting on the guarantee of the collective power'.[44]

So far so good, but Hobhouse also identifies some well-known problems pertaining to natural rights in connection with their origin. When liberal philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes in the British Isles, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the Continent, set forth their various social contract theories, they all based their argument in a rather floating foundation of supremacy. In England this rested largely on a notion of 'ancient rights and customs', which inherently had to be propped up by religious or metaphysical qualities in the lands or peoples themselves, whereby the monarch was bound by natural legal principles despite supposedly being divinely ordained. *In brevi*, the Sovereign had to obey charters such as *Magna Carta* and the *Bill of Rights*, because these documents merely affirmed a God-given natural order to which even royal blood was subordinate. On the other hand, Hobhouse is not convinced by positivists like Jeremy Bentham either, stating that:

> It is not true, as a certain school of jurisprudence held, that law is, as such, a command imposed by a superior upon an inferior, and backed by the sanctions of punishment. But though this is not true of law in general it is a roughly true description of law in that particular stage of society which we may conveniently describe as the Authoritarian.[45]

In response to this impasse of the origin of natural rights, Bentham and others developed utilitarianism, often positivist in persuasion it must be conceded, but correct in arguing that the source of liberty was secondary to its effects. Again Hobhouse turns to Bentham in defining the principle that an 'action is good which tends to promote the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number of those affected by it', and concluding that as 'with an action, so, of course, with an institution or a social system'.[46] Now, such a philosophical approach was in theory open to attack from natural law liberals, because it is not of necessity democratic. It may very well be that a benevolent dictator is more effective in achieving the greatest possible good for the largest possible mass of people, especially

[44] Ibid, p 34.
[45] Ibid, p 10.
[46] Ibid, p 38.

when appraising the quantitative element of that equation. Hobhouse even suggests that utilitarianism could be open to radical socialism with little affection for bourgeoise electoral systems. Furthermore, although concluding that under a system resting on principles devised by Bentham and James Mill the 'only way to secure fair consideration for the happiness of all is to allow to all an equal share of power', there is a further problem concerning majority rule.[47] This because the 'direct benefit' of any given majority is not necessarily commensurate with the long term 'good' of society as a whole, even though that same majority may hold this to be true.[48] Such an injunction would, *res ipsa loquitur*, be of equal significance in a system not being founded on democratic principles.

2.3 Classical Liberalism and Laissez-Faire

As Hobhouse arrives closer to his own time of writing, and moves his gaze to the free traders of the nineteenth century, he focuses on William Gladstone, Richard Cobden, the Manchester School, and of course the Anti-Corn Law League. Hobhouse is in perfect agreement with Mr Cobden and Mr Gladstone as regards their battle for liberalisation of trade through the removal of tariffs on imports, arguing the classical case for it in internationalist terms:

> Free commercial intercourse between nations would engender mutual knowledge, and knit the severed peoples by countless ties of business interests. Free Trade meant peace, and once taught by the example of Great Britain's prosperity, other nations would follow suit, and Free Trade would be universal.[49]

Important to the purposes of this thesis is also Cobden's view as regards national and colonial liberty, to which Hobhouse equally assents, summarising Cobden's position holistically in that 'personal freedom, colonial freedom, international freedom, were parts of one whole'.[50] These liberties were all predicated upon a hands-off approach to international affairs, as well as retrenchment and reduction in taxation at home. Yet Hobhouse inserted a

[47] Ibid, p 40.
[48] Ibid, p 41.
[49] Ibid, p 45.
[50] Ibid, p 45.

caveat which mirrors his further development of social liberalism on the back of the classical variety later in the book, and that caveat pertains to freedom of contract.

The *laissez-faire* proponents subscribed to the view that liberty is best achieved through the removal of obstructions to free and fair intercourse between subjects or citizens, and between nation states internationally. As a result, their conception of a liberal society is, on the whole, negative in outlook, seeking to restrain government and members of society from interfering in the liberty of individuals within it. Hobhouse, along with other important scholars such as the two Mills in Britain and Rousseau in France, did agree with the free bargain as such, but questioned whether the material circumstances of industrial relations, for instance, or of negotiations between big empires and small dependencies, were free at all. In the matter of contract, he submits, 'true freedom postulates substantial equality between the parties'.[51] And this is where Hobhouse's social aspect of liberalism begins to make itself apparent in his writing. He has no quarrel with the initial natural rights doctrine of the Whigs in the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, nor with the *laissez-faire* classical liberals in the eighteenth, but by the 1900s the world had moved rapidly forward with the industrial revolution and with rampant imperial expansion. Thus society had been 'driven by the manifest teaching of experience that liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid result'.[52]

Added to the problems of equal opportunity surrounding freedom of contract, Hobhouse identifies a typically Marxist objection regarding concentration of wealth and power, namely that the monopolies accruing to those with the bargaining power and resources to pursue them create a state of inequality, thereby slowly eroding the remnants of support for liberalism amongst different classes of society. This forces adaption along socialist lines: 'Thus individualism, when it grapples with the facts, is driven no small distance along Socialist lines. Once again we have found that to maintain individual freedom and equality we have to extend the sphere of social control.'[53]

[51] Ibid, p 47.
[52] Ibid, p 48.
[53] Ibid, p 54.

2.4 Central Tenets of Social Liberalism

Having gone through the different phases of liberal expansion, Hobhouse is ready to elaborate upon his own vision of what liberalism must become in order to remain relevant. It was only 'logically and historically' sound that arbitrary government 'was one of the first objects of attack by the English Parliament in the seventeenth century, and this first liberty of the subject was vindicated by the Petition of Right, and again by the Habeas Corpus Act'.[54] Civil liberty and political liberty through popular sovereignty were, after all, the encapsulating elements of liberalism as defined by Hobhouse himself.[55] But as has been clear from his critique of earlier stages of liberal thought, freedom through restraint should only be the beginning of the matter. It is therefore important for Hobhouse to underscore his support for trade unions, which he describes as 'in the main a liberating movement, because combination was necessary to place the workman on something approaching terms of equality with the employer',[56] as well as the role of government in ensuring the well-being and education of children being 'quite as truly Liberal as Socialistic'.[57]

Closely linked to the nine elements, of which civil liberty and political liberty are the mainstays, is a prerequisite for free exchange of thought. In this area he particularly deferred to the utilitarian James Mill, whom late in life became somewhat of a convert to social liberalism. Although freedom of expression, assembly, and exchange of ideas are all *prima facie* political liberties which should be established and defended for every individual, in societal terms these are all subordinate to their function as litmus tests in ascertaining the best route forward in attaining the greatest good:

> The foundation of liberty on this side, then, is the conception of thought as a growth dependent on spiritual laws, flourishing in the movement of ideas as guided by experience, reflection and feeling, corrupted by the intrusion of material considerations, slain by the guillotine of finality.[58]

[54] Ibid, p 17.
[55] The other seven being: fiscal liberty; personal liberty; social liberty; economic liberty; domestic liberty; local, racial, and national liberty; international liberty. Ibid, pp 16-29.
[56] Ibid, p 24.
[57] Ibid, p 25.
[58] Ibid, p 60.

The most important function, therefore, of frank debate on the basis of free investigation and thought is *not* that subjects or citizens are allowed to set them forth, but rather that others are allowed to hear them and test their own positions accordingly. An argument which is as important today as it has ever been, and staunchly defended by great modern thinkers such as the late Christopher Hitchens.[59] This is simultaneously a convincing defence for popular government where the politicians must compete within a marketplace of ideas to get into power. Without such friction, so the argument goes, one will not have any certainty as to whether the course chosen by a majority is, in fact, the most beneficial. The liberal man, therefore, 'is always ready to put his own convictions to the proof, not because he doubts them, but because he believes in them'.[60]

When the rule of law, political liberty and a free exchange of ideas are all secured as fundamental cornerstones of society through either natural or posited means of legal enactments in a sufficiently representative Parliament, one can begin to establish a more organic version of progress. A fitting starting point in this regard, according to Hobhouse, is to dispense with artificial and theoretical limits between a free individual and a social being:

> We should frankly recognize that there is no side of a man's life which is unimportant to society, for whatever he is, does, or thinks, may affect his own well-being, which is and ought to be matter of common concern, and may also directly or indirectly affect the thought, action, and character of those with whom he comes in contact.[61]

Consequently an individual right 'cannot conflict with the common good, nor could any right exist apart from the common good'.[62] This mode of liberalism is one where the ideas of the Mills, of Bentham, of Thomas Hill Green, of Locke, and of Hobbes, are amalgamated into a new direction which Hobhouse calls organic or harmonious. If it is true that 'the foundation of liberty is the idea of growth'[63] – that is in human consciousness – so to it is imperative to

[59] "Transcript: Christopher Hitchens | Jan 07, 2007", TVO, accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.tvo.org/transcript/834033/christopher-hitchens.
[60] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 63.
[61] Ibid, p 65.
[62] Ibid, p 68.
[63] Ibid, p 66.

understand that true harmony in an organic society 'lies always beyond the reach of accomplished effort'.[64] Thus the journey becomes the true aim in this social conception, where the 'heart of Liberalism is the understanding that progress is not a matter of mechanical contrivance, but of the liberation of living spiritual energy'.[65]

Central to a view in which individuals and society organically and reciprocally strive in tandem for harmony and the common good, is a necessity for restraint. As has been asserted above there already was a negative checks-without-balances plank present in Whig as well as classical liberalism, but Hobhouse now insists upon expanding these checks from the government onto individuals. This must be so because 'compulsion is of value where outward conformity is of value, and this may be in any case where the non-conformity of one wrecks the purpose of others'.[66] In other words, 'the enforced restraint has its value in the action that it sets free', for instance where lack of regulation of one industrialist forces all his competitors down the same route, and the labourer has no means by which to enter into a free contract based in equality.[67]

But Hobhouse does not stop with the negative checks. He also wants the balances. Specifically, he argues the case for a right to work, to earn a living wage, to receive a proper education for all children, and for those in need to get free healthcare. These were controversial departures from the old liberalism indeed, because to critics they might seem to lead down the route of socialism, but Hobhouse insists upon his liberal credentials in enlarging State responsibilities. 'Similarly', he writes of the environment needed for development of personality, 'we may say now that the function of the State is to secure conditions upon which its citizens are able to win by their own efforts all that is necessary to a full civic efficiency'.[68] And, furthermore, that 'the "right to work" and the right to a "living wage" are just as valid as the rights of person or property. That is to say, they are integral conditions of a good social order'.[69] Even so the Professor ends his analysis of the State and

[64] Ibid, p 69.
[65] Ibid, p 73.
[66] Ibid, p 77.
[67] Ibid, p 77.
[68] Ibid, p 83.
[69] Ibid, pp 83-84.

the individual in a rather tantalising manner, by acknowledging that there should perhaps 'be a Liberal Socialism, as well as a Socialism that is illiberal'.[70]

2.5 Hobhouse the Internationalist

Hobhouse generously included a final analysis of the future of liberalism as he saw it in 1911, and this part of his book is of great value when summarising the ideas prevalent in the minds of those whom lead the charge for a League of Nations and a United Nations not many years thereafter. Hobhouse starts by asking whether liberalism is a spent force, caught in 'the grindstones' between militant imperialism and novel socialism.[71] He replies to his own question in the negative, after having brilliantly sifted through the main events in British politics from the days of Gladstone up until his own time. The illusion of permanent progress and superiority was shattered, so goes the argument, by the Boer Wars, in which 'sleeping' liberals were awakened to reclaim the 'Right' of liberal thought.[72] But an amalgamation had occurred, in which the Fabians, the socialists, the trade unions, and the liberals had, tacitly or otherwise, mutually acknowledged that they needed each other in order to take on the great conservative reaction stemming from a renewed sense of insecurity in the electorate. This insecurity, so Hobhouse argues, resulted in imperial fervour and re-armament, of Anglican doctrinaire ideology being forced into the schools and the national curriculum, and to a renewed call for protective tariffs against the outside world. Looking to the future, he then goes on to suggest what liberalism must become in order to marry the old Benthamite principles of retrenchment, peace and negative rights with a positive clamour for progressive gains both nationally and internationally. In this, cooperation with Labour is of utmost importance, because full freedom can only be achieved when basic needs are met, and when the 'social problem' is central to all other undertakings in society.[73]

On the international front Hobhouse goes very far indeed, as a democrat cannot be a democrat 'for his own country alone'.[74] He continues by advocating for a future world

[70] Ibid, p 87.
[71] Ibid, p 110.
[72] Ibid, p 113.
[73] Ibid, p 126.
[74] Ibid, p 120.

government, an 'International State' where the British Empire and its Imperial Council would function as 'a model, and that on no mean scale'.[75] Such an experiment would be based on self-determination coupled with a fragmentation of sovereignty, but with a central unity of purpose. He therefore argues that liberals should be enthusiastic about the British Empire, but steer it in a liberal direction of Home Rule and devolution, where the British liberal 'may hope to make his country the centre of a group of self-governing, democratic communities, one of which, moreover, serves as a natural link with the other great commonwealth of English-speaking people'.[76]

That reference to the American story brings the thesis onto matters of popular action and reaction across the pond. It is perhaps fitting, then, to conclude this discussion of social liberalism and its international implications with a timeless warning:

> The cause of democracy is bound up with that of internationalism. The relation is many-sided. It is national pride, resentment, or ambition one day that sweeps the public mind and diverts it from all interest in domestic progress. The next day the same function is performed no less adequately by a scare. The practice of playing on popular emotions has been reduced to a fine art which neither of the great parties is ashamed to deploy.[77]

[75] Ibid, p 122.
[76] Ibid, p 122.
[77] Ibid, p 121

3 Revolutions, Revolt and Recalcitrance in America

Hitherto this thesis has attempted to establish a rudimentary understanding of how the international liberal order has developed with not inconsiderable aide from British and US ideas. Furthermore, it has defined more closely what the liberal mind perceived to be of progressive value at the peak of international liberalism after two devastating world wars, through the analysis proffered by Professor Hobhouse. Time is ripe, then, for an attack upon the main crux of the issue at hand: what can past experience tell us about popular – or even populist – movements re-defining political certainties? And how is the liberal establishment to react when, for the first time, the populace seems to go against rather than with the grain of the liberal agenda? To investigate these issues there can be no better case study than the home of the first modern populist movement, and a country which herself was founded upon a liberal revolt against conservative forces. To properly understand why social liberalism conquered the United States, and through it world governance via her hegemonic influence after World War II, the phenomenon must be investigated through he lens of state building within America itself.

Professor Richard Hofstadter of Columbia University has contributed an interesting panorama view of the ebbs and flows of republican democracy in the US. In his mid-century book *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made it*, first published just after World War II and the creation of the United Nations, Hofstadter provides his readers with ample evidence of how this vast continental nation has managed to claim victory from the jaws of defeat time and time again.[78] It may seem slightly absurd to modern minds when in his introduction he claims that 'the two world wars, unstable booms, and the abysmal depression of our time have profoundly shaken national confidence in the future'.[79] But it should also serve as a reminder that the world has faced problems before as it does now, and will in all likelihood do again; yet 'if the future seems dark, the past by contrast looks rosier than ever; but it is used far less to locate and guide the present than to give reassurance'.[80] Such locating of the present is the endeavour of this main chapter. If there be guidance attached as well, none would be happier than its writer.

[78] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition.*
[79] Ibid, p v.
[80] Ibid, p v.

3.1 The Founding Fathers and their Conservative Revolution

America as an independent nation was an experiment where different philosophies came together in an attempt to make the most perfect union achievable. At the very core of the Revolution lay a quarrel over philosophical outlook, in Vernon L Parrington's words leading to 'divergent interpretations of the theory and practice of sovereignty, which may be sufficiently distinguished by the terms local home rule and imperial centralization.'[81] Although influenced by both British and Continental liberal ideas, the Founding Fathers had no illusions about democracy being a *shibboleth* in this regard:

> Nowhere in America or Europe - not even among the great liberated thinkers of the Enlightenment - did democratic ideas appear respectable to the cultivated classes. Whether the Fathers look to the cynically illuminated intellectuals of contemporary Europe or to their own Christian heritage the idea of original sin, they found quick confirmation of the notion that man is an unregenerate rebel who has to be controlled.[82]

Here Hofstadter mentions 'cultivated classes', and the Fathers were certainly not a band of ruffians at the gates of the Governor mansions. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, had his son William running colonial affairs in New Jersey until he was placed under house arrest as a result of the very revolution in which his father was an integral participant. More generally the new American liberalism which developed throughout the eighteenth century was not 'consciously democratic, or even republican', and there were 'few avowed democrats in the stolid mass of colonial provincialism'.[83] What the influential members of the landed and commercial elites were concerned with first and foremost, was liberty, and liberty was not synonymous with democracy. *Au contraire*, the 'Founding Fathers thought that the liberty with which they were most concerned was menaced by democracy. In their minds liberty was linked not to democracy but to property'.[84] This belief stemmed from an idea common to most liberal philosophies of the time, that those without property 'lack the necessary

[81] Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), p 180.
[82] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 5.
[83] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 180.
[84] Ibid, p 10.

stake' to offer thoughtful consideration to political life.[85] Here also lies a slightly uncomfortable truth, touched upon by Hobhouse in his analysis of natural rights liberal theory, about the main *raison d'être* behind the American Revolution. As he points out, the cry from the colonies was not 'no legislation without representation', but instead 'no taxation without representation', thereby aligning liberty with property and not with democracy as such.[86] In addition to this contributory justification for limitations upon popular rule, came a more negative appraisal of the corrupting power of the masses. James Madison can serve as an example concerning such fears, when he said about the men whom had overthrown the liberties of republics: they had 'begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people; commencing demagogues and ending tyrants'.[87] It was no doubt the continuous back and forth between republics and dictatorships in Ancient Rome which Madison had in mind.

The aim, therefore, was to preserve the liberty that they believed accrued to them as Britons under *Magna Carta Libertatum*[88] and the *English Bill of Rights (1689)*[89], along with supplementary parts of the British constitution. Their main problem in balancing their landed liberty against popular rule resulted from their breaking with King George III, because that left them bereft of an aristocracy. Thus a Parliament in which 'the commons' could be tempered by the 'the lords' was inconceivable without running into considerable philosophical misnomers. The Founding Fathers had to create a new source of sovereignty which was to function as the core of a completely novel republican form of government, inspired by ancient empires, yet somehow preserving their English natural law liberties at the same time. A constitution heavily referencing the latter and confirming established common law principles, whilst mechanically providing for a system of checks and balances with electoral colleges, indirect elections, state supremacy, supermajorities and all the rest, became the answer: (1) Federated government as a bulwark against popular uprisings and majority rule; (2) Representative government as a guarantee for refinement of thought; (3)

[85] Ibid, p 13.
[86] Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, p 18.
[87] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 12.
[88] *Magna Carta.*
[89] An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown - 1 William & Mary Sess 2 c 2.

Bi-cameral legislature giving both plebians and patricians a stake, checking each other, with an independent executive and independent judiciary as eternal restraints.[90]

3.1.1 Analysis: Charters Denied

The vastness of the American continent and its complex mosaic of social structures stretched into the Revolution from colonial times. Three distinct groups of people inhabited different parts of the lands, which were also in a continual state of flux and expansion, making centralised colonial rule extremely difficult to maintain, even at the best of times. First there was a 'middle and northern' group of mercantile cities dominated by 'wholesale importers and exporters – wealthy and conservative', but with a great majority comprising of small businesses, traders, and yeomen 'far more democratic than the leaders'. The second group was that of 'aristocratic planters' in the South, who were loyalists by temperament, but fiercely independent in economic affairs suffering 'no outside dictation in matters concerning their own parishes'. And the third included 'thousands of small freeholders, largely Scotch-Irish and German', who permeated the frontier mentality, and 'acknowledged no leadership, were unconsciously democratic in their ways, suspicious of the seacoast aristocracy, wedded to an agrarian philosophy'.[91] According to Parrington it was the latter section of frontiersmen who developed increasingly more assertive affections for democracy and republicanism, and who 'finally turned America against England.'[92] The historian Claude H Van Tyne describes how these sections of society gradually grinded against each other, until:

> Thus, in 1774, came the climax in the struggle between rich and poor, East and West, those with a vote those who were voteless, between privilege and the welfare of the common man. The two classes might work in harmony or might clash on the question of resistance to Great Britain, but they were pretty sure to be in opposition on the issue of individual rights.[93]

[90] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, pp 9-10.
[91] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 181.
[92] Ibid, p 182.
[93] Claude H. Van Tyne, *The Causes of the War of Independence* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin company, 1922), p 426.

Added to the internal struggles of American gentry, middle classes, and labourer, frontiersmen and small farmers, was a catastrophic colonial mismanagement instigated by domestic British wrestling over parliamentary sovereignty as it related to the King and his executive prerogatives. The Tory elements wanted to support the Crown through direct and unrepresented rule of all colonies, including the 'white' settlements in America and Oceania, something which further inflamed tensions between the centre and the Thirteen Colonies. 'If the Whig imperialists under the leadership of Pitt had been put in charge of imperial reconstruction', writes Parrington, 'the outcome very likely would have been peaceful'.[94] But the autocratic proponents in Britain instead pushed for central control rather than imperial devolution, prompting the 'yeomanry with its agrarian outlook and republican sympathies' to take down their 'squirrel rifle and fight King George'.[95] Such a dramatic turn in events had been precipitated by the internal schisms of the American colonies, but also without doubt by 'short-sighted imperialism', severely limiting options for legitimate resistance to policies which each section regarded as damaging to their particular locale:

> In every colony the party of incipient populism had been checked and thwarted by royal officials; and it was this mass of populistic discontent, seeing itself in danger of being totally crushed, and its interests ignored, that provided the rank and file of armed opposition to the King.[96]

Peace was therefore lost, and when representatives from all thirteen colonies in America assembled 'In Congress, July 4, 1776', they did so as a last resort.[97] The famous *Declaration of Independence* which includes all their reasons for arriving at such a drastic measure, in effect committing high treason against the British Crown, provides a long list of particular grievances summarily stated in defence of the indefensible. But still they remained vindicated in their own eyes by the fact that their rebellion was against arbitrary rule by a King in Parliament who had acted contrary to natural justice and liberty as ordained by Providence:

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[94] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 182.
[95] Ibid, p 184.
[96] Ibid, p 185.
[97] "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription", National Archives, accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript.

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.[98]

Thus, the United States of America was not established as the consequence of a radical revolution based on a wholesale dismissal of the prevailing order, which makes it markedly different from the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*.[99] Where the latter, to which Thomas Jefferson did make contributions, attempted to create a clean break with past absolutism, the American document purported to reclaim lost liberties flowing from the original British constitution. If the Founding Fathers were revolutionary, therefore, they were conservative revolutionaries in the sense that their ultimate goal was to defend God-given natural rights as English subjects in the colonies. The French posited new civil law; the Americans restated pre-existing common law. Put another way, they attempted to 'justify the colonial position by appeal to the British constitution, and when that failed by an appeal to the extra-legal doctrine of natural right'.[100] Since parliamentary sovereignty had been at the heart of the British constitution from the time of the Glorious Revolution, the lack of representation there provided the American revolutionaries with ample cause for irritation, which was further fueled by an emerging concept of 'virtual representation' by which sovereignty was conveniently circumvented through an organic view of the Briton and his Empire, regardless of where he resided.[101]

This is why the most important complaint of all the grievances listed in the *Declaration* is concerned with charters: 'For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws,

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[98] Ibid.
[99] "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen", Élysée, accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.elysee.fr/en/french-presidency/the-declaration-of-the-rights-of-man-and-of-the-citizen.
[100] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 186.
[101] Ibid, p 187.

and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:'[102] The 'Charters' to which the text refers, are those which were affirmed by Parliament, Queen Mary II, and William III of Orange after the Glorious Revolution in 1688-89, styled as the *English Bill of Rights*.[103] That Act rested upon centuries of constitutional law, going all the way back to *Magna Carta* and its antecedents. For the purposes of the present discussion it is important to point out that the entire *raison d'être* of the American Revolution rests upon these central observations: (1) That the representatives in Philadelphia declared independence because their natural rights as Britons had been abrogated, and that all petitions to rectify the situation had failed;[104] (2) That these natural rights flowed from certain charters developed over many centuries of English and British organic constitutional growth; (3) That the establishment of a new country separate from the British Crown did not suspend such natural liberties which flowed from the charters, since those liberties are eternally granted by Providence, and therefore of higher authority than even the King of England. The addition of a popular element in citing the 'consent of the governed' is an interesting development, which corresponds well with emerging contract theories in Britain and on the Continent. This is perhaps the most radical part of the Declaration, but of course intellectually necessary in order to justify the rebellion. It does leave open the possibility that future citizens may legitimately instigate revolutions of their own if any government should deny the charters or assume rule without consent. During the long period of debates leading to the Declaration being finally issued in 1776, emphasis seems to have shifted from a narrow legalistic argument over inherent British liberties, to a broader canvas covering more general considerations:

> It finally became clear to American leaders that if their cause were to make headway, appeal must be made to broader principles. Their case must rest on philosophical rather than on legal grounds. This suffices to explain the shift from constitutionalism to abstract rights, which marked the middle period of the debate.[105]

[102] National Archives, "Declaration of Independence".
[103] An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown - 1 William & Mary Sess 2 c 2.
[104] 'In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury.' National Archives, "Declaration of Independence".
[105] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 188.

It is interesting that this broadening of outlook landed the Americans back where the English Whigs had fought almost a century before, combining natural rights with new currents of philosophical thought and nativist peculiarities. John Locke was especially important to both rebellions, and in 1689 he thus became 'the apologist and defender of the settlement', before being utilised for similar critiques against 'arbitrary rule' and for principles of 'revolution in the doctrine of certain natural rights' in the American context.[106]

Quite apart from these crucial philosophical considerations, there can be no doubt that the project instigated by the Founding Fathers was a great leap forward as regards the development of a liberal continuum in world affairs. Measured against the standards of the day it was certainly more radical than the prevailing arrangements in Britain and the British Empire. But this was still a revolution of the elites against other elites rather than a rebellion instigated by widespread popular demand. The resulting Constitution was therefore a continuation or re-affirmation of existing class liberties as the Fathers interpreted them, but the institutions set up greatly facilitated further democratisation and differed fundamentally from those of an aristocratic post-feudal order as was the case in Europe. 'Out of this primary revolution were to come other revolutions', says Parrington, 'social and economic, made possible by the new republican freedom'.[107] Furthermore, a 'new middle-class America was to rise on the ruins of the colonial aristocracy',[108] and that class has been the backbone of the country ever since. Some of the crises which has occurred in modern times can, as a result, trace their origins to the shrinkage and restlessness of this stratum in society.

It also, arguably, set the scene for the kind of polarisation that has been evident in America to a bigger or lesser extent ever since, by crystallising different sections of society into different parts of the system. The judiciary and the executive were to be referees in a cob work of mutual frustration, but instead they have ironically ended up as pivots of factional adversity, precisely because the US Constitution is sovereign and innate, and there is very seldom any concurrent majority in Congress, in the White House, and in the several States.

[106] Ibid, p 190.
[107] Ibid, p 191.
[108] Ibid, p 192.

Consequently, the whole prospect is both recognisably liberal and quintessentially conservative all at the same time, with the checks and balances by necessity making the presidency and the Supreme Court main battlegrounds for directing the country. This difference in *modus operandi* to the parliamentary system in Britain is vitally important for further analysis of popular influence. In Parliament one has to command a majority in order to form a government, and therefore the aggregated masses define which agenda is foremost at any given moment through constituency elections. In the United States, on the other hand, forming a government is detached from Congress, which only has a confirmatory function in this regard. Traditionally at least, the United States electorate has therefore been more concerned with person than with party in voicing their views, often creating their own additional checks and balances by voting for different policies at the different levels of government. Consequent to all this is a tendency for big doctrinal changes to follow the presidential cycle rather than the general elections, which is also why Hofstadter focuses mainly on executive power throughout his monograph. After the Founding Fathers had secured their success in a conservative revolution for the preservation of ancient liberties, modified by more general liberal principles first defined by Lockian Whigs a century before, American society had been transformed:

> Americanism superseded colonialism, and with the new loyalty there developed a conception of federal sovereignty, overriding all local authorities, checking the movement of particularism, binding the separate commonwealths in a consolidating union.[109]

3.2 Jefferson and the Agrarian Democracy

No serious investigation of American political history can safely ignore the influence of Thomas Jefferson. Hofstadter is careful to get across the nuances of Jefferson, especially in lieu of the personality cult which has been created around the first Democrat-Republican president of the Union in later years. To this end he insists that the complexity of the man 'must be measured in whole, not in part, in action as well as thought'.[110] Although certainly

[109] Ibid, p 193.
[110] Hofstader, *The American Political Tradition*, p 24.

democratic by temperament, and an ardent defender of agrarian values and against those of the Hamiltonian federalists and their mercantilism, Jefferson was no physiocrat.[111] As it turned out he was not intransigent when it came to democracy either, especially if such notions are measured intellectually by the morphed standards of today, and if suffrage is the universal yardstick which should be applied to it. Even so there is a difference between core beliefs and pragmatic necessities which is not always appreciated. Jefferson needed to be pragmatic in Virginia before the revolution to avoid forcing through laws which 'the public mind would not bear', and he needed to be pragmatic whilst overseeing a rather fragile new enterprise as President even though he strongly disagreed with some of the more zealous federalist measures under his auspices.[112] Yet at heart, so Hofstadter asserts, he was minded to liberalise as much as possible within the republican framework to which he assented. Where 'Jefferson's Federalist opponents feared, above all, power lodged in the majority. Jefferson feared power lodged anywhere else'.[113]

The professor paints a picture of a man who started out to defend agrarian republicanism, and ended up as a reluctant caretaker of the entire Hamiltonian machinery at the end of his presidential term; a pacifist who wanted no entanglement with foreign wars, but in the end threw his support behind the expansionist fancies of James Madison in order to secure the Floridas and Canada for the landed interests; and finally of a President who left the franchise untouched after eight years at the helm, being a slave-owner (albeit benevolent) himself. His outlook, however, was democratically minded and thoroughly tied to the American farmer:

> The outstanding characteristic of Jefferson's democracy is its close organic relation to the agrarian order of his time. It seems hardly enough to say that he thought that a nation of farmers, educated, informed, and blessed with free institutions, was the best suited to a democratic republic, without adding that he did not think any *other* kind of society a good risk to maintain republican government.[114]

[111] Or at least he did not remain an exclusive physiocrat, due to his pragmatism. Parrington, *Main Currents of American Thought*, p 346.
[112] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 21.
[113] Ibid, p 26.
[114] Ibid, p 31.

Jefferson pleaded entrapment with regards to being forced into support for manufacture, speculation, banking, and urban interests. As Hofstadter puts it, he has much in common with 'that of modern social-democratic statesmen who, upon attaining power, find themselves the managers of a going concern that they fear to disrupt'.[115] His expansionism stemmed from an urge to balance out the federalist cities through cultivation of new lands, but there was also a racial element to it. About the Indians, for instance, he wrote to Adams in the summer of 1812 that possessing Canada 'secures our women and children forever from the tomahawk and scalping knife, by removing those who excite them'.[116]

3.2.1 Analysis: Defender of an American Republic

As is the case with all the early adopters of new ideas, Thomas Jefferson should be weighed against his own time period. In that respect he was clearly ahead on the popular scale by appealing to the equivalent of 'ordinary people' today, namely the small agrarian farmers comprising most of the American rural population. This obviously excluded the poorer classes in the cities, in addition to women and ethnic minorities, but was still a radical position to take for a Virginian aristocrat around year 1800. Privately Jefferson went even further, writing to a friend 'that he had always favored universal manhood suffrage', but such a notion remained theoretical.[117] In many ways this president was an early utilitarian who evinced 'humane concern for "the pursuit of happiness," for the development of the individual without regard to limitations of class', and genuinely favoured the republican system that he had helped erect in order to achieve such lofty ends.[118] For Jefferson and like-minded democrats ideals had to be tempered by an acceptance that man is inherently selfish and filled with turpitude, something which goes a long way in explaining his own cautionary approach to progress.

Being an enthusiastic partaker in the great debates surrounding the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson grew increasingly wary of Alexander Hamilton's Federalist drive for a centralised American State mirroring the British machinery of property, manufacture, and

[115] Ibid, p 34.
[116] Ibid, p 40.
[117] Ibid, p 30.
[118] Ibid, p 27.

finance. For a time Hamilton enjoyed the support of big swathes of enthusiastic capitalists after the Revolution, but Jefferson detected a shift in attitudes at the close of the eighteenth century. By then 'the tide was already on the turn', and 'the ideas let loose by the French Revolution were running swiftly through America, awakening a militant spirit in the democracy'.[119] Thus he positioned himself in order to consolidate 'English liberals of the seventeenth century and the French liberals of the eighteenth' into a nativist American 'philosophy of a new age and a new people', achieving a greater symbiosis through 'the instrumentality of political democracy'.[120] This symbiosis was palpable in the *Declaration* itself, where Jefferson persuaded his compatriots to exchange 'pursuit of happiness' for 'property', marking a 'complete break with the Whiggish doctrine of property rights that Locke had bequeathed to the English middle class'.[121] And so the plebian aristocrat managed to inject a touch of humanist idealism into a markedly materialistic and practical framework, which makes the American *Declaration* different from British and European liberal enterprises despite superimposing this new doctrine upon the foundations of old philosophy. 'That Jefferson was an idealist was singularly fortunate for America', says Parrington, and it is hard to disagree if one at all finds fusion between democracy and liberty refreshing.[122]

The newly independent United States were uniquely positioned to develop such an idealist version of liberalism, in Jefferson's view, because of its vastness and its resulting localism. But at the foundation of this 'political freedom' sat 'economic freedom', which is why it was important to develop *laissez-faire* doctrines of liberty alongside idealist conceptions of democracy.[123] Yet he had seen with his own eyes (in Europe) how purported free competition amongst capitalists could easily corrupt political liberty, and therefore his American *laissez-faire* concept had to be de-centralised and agrarian, ensuring that this new nation remained a 'land of free men', which was 'exploited neither by an aristocracy nor a plutocracy'.[124] More than a landed gentry, however, Jefferson feared the rise of the cities,

[119] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 342.
[120] Ibid, p 343.
[121] Ibid, p 344.
[122] Ibid, p 344.
[123] Ibid, p 346.
[124] Ibid, p 346.

bringing with them 'the creation of a proletariat' which could easily be exploited by demagoguery and capitalist autocrats. In many ways a prophetic description of the Gilded Age and its spoilsmen, just as his Federalist warnings seem vindicated by the passing of time. A good illustration of President Jefferson's fears surrounding the corrupting ways of urban expansion can be gleaned from his famous *Notes on Virginia*, in which he stated:

> Generally speaking the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to labor then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench or twirling a distaff (…) It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigor.[125]

Despite an early physiocratic bias based in French romanticism surrounding agrarian superiority to a mercantile economy, Jefferson was soon self-correcting on the back of the Napoleonic Wars, which had 'convinced him of the need of domestic manufacturers', but Parrington argues that this necessary adjustment did not alter his position on agrarian democracy being the best route to an American liberalism transcending the European problems with class warfare and gross materialism.[126] Therefore, when certain rural assemblies started to turn against majority rule in pursuit of special benefits for their own section of society, Jefferson remained tolerant of agrarianism and still hopeful about democracy, even to the extent of criticising a strong national State as a 'betrayal of popular rights.'[127] His was a project of classless liberty containing elements which should be familiar to both Marxists and libertarians in a modern context, in which American democrats had 'no negatives of Councils, Governors and Kings to restrain us from doing right', and that their code should always 'be corrected in all its parts with a single eye to reason and the good of those for whose government it was planned'.[128] The overarching danger towards such an

[125] Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, *Volume III*, ed. H. A. Washington (Washington: Taylor & Maury, 1853-54), p 269.
[126] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 348.
[127] Ibid, p 349.
[128] Thomas Jefferson, "Autobiography", in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, *Volume II*, ed. H. A. Washington (Washington: Taylor & Maury, 1853-54), p 57.

early organic view of liberalism came from combination and centralisation: 'It was idle to expect in America a nullification of the law, that where power sits within, corruption waits without.'[129]

If localism was one pillar of his merged English and French liberalism, majority rule was the other, even under conditions where the majority might undermine the cogency of its own administration. 'Jefferson was never greatly concerned about stable government', asserts Parrington, 'he was very much more concerned about responsive government – that it should faithfully serve the majority will'.[130] This is the area of his philosophy where the British utilitarian and pragmatist school of thought prevailed over French theoretic idealism, because to Jefferson 'men are more important than constitutions, and the public well-being is more sacred than statutes.'[131] Despite such a view he remained utterly opposed to implementation of a tradition of judicial review, quite ironic given how the Constitution has fuelled precisely such an approach in the United States. Initially he was set against it due to the conservative nature of English common law, which he saw as contemptible to democratic majority rule, especially since the concepts applied by judges *obiter dicta* acted as tentacles from 'centuries of absolutism' into the new Union and its American liberalism.[132] Later it was the Supreme Court which was foremost in his mind, asserting in connection with the expanding federal court that 'it is a misnomer to call a government republican, in which a branch of the supreme power is independent of the nation'.[133] About the limitations in suffrage based upon property Jefferson was equally scathing, and Parrington provides a succinct summary of his principled approach to the matter: 'If it were indeed true that the people were beasts, then the democratic government of the future would be a bestial government – and even that might be better than the old arrangement of masters and slaves.'[134]

[129] Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, p 351.
[130] Ibid, p 351.
[131] Ibid, p 352.
[132] Ibid, p 352.
[133] Ibid, p 353.
[134] Ibid, p 354.

No aristocracy, plutocracy nor strong central government, a wide conception of voters, and absolute power to the majority set against legal and constitutional constraints. These were mainstays of the Jeffersonian ideology which has emerged as a distinct American liberalism to which countless presidents and legislators have since returned. He was 'our first great leader to erect a political philosophy native to the economics and experience of America, as he was the first to break consciously with the past',[135] so says Parrington, before adding that 'to preserve government in America from such degradation, to keep the natural resources open to all, were the prime desire and object of his life'.[136] Yet, because of the structure, social realities, and limited suffrage of society at the time in which President Jefferson promoted his democratic epitomes, one would have to be quite adventurous in order to detect an insistent public demand which forced the hand of government. But as the great wheel of liberalism turned during this period, so progress entailed, and where the Democrat-Republicans modified the Federalists, so to their actions prepared the way for the Democrats. In Jefferson's own words:

> But I know also, that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths disclosed, and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must change also, and keep pace with the times.[137]

3.3 Andrew Jackson and his Big Block of Cheese

President Jackson is an interesting case for several very good reasons. Firstly, he marked the break with 'election by caucus' which had dominated the political scene since the Federalist Party imploded in the 1820s, secondly this was the first time a campaign for the highest office in the land was designed with the general population as its target, and thirdly that campaign included elements which would most certainly have been branded as 'negative' or 'populist' by the standards of today. Andrew Jackson hailed from North Carolina where he inherited farmland from his parents, who had been victimised during the revolutionary war,

[135] Ibid, p 355.
[136] Ibid, p 356.
[137] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 43.

in which he also suffered both mental and physical wounds. After qualifying as a lawyer there - 'knowing little about jurisprudence but a great deal about making his own way' - opportunity took him to Tennessee, where he experienced both fortune and misfortune with the fluctuating inflationary and political environment surrounding an ongoing struggle over the Bank of the United States, freedom of incorporation, and freedom of charters.[138]

In many ways, so goes Hofstadter's argument, Jackson picked up the mantle from Jefferson in pursuing an agrarian uprising against the eastern seaboard and its 'paper money', but gravitated to the more radical Randolph-Macon wing of the movement, disillusioned with the infamous *Burr* trial, as well as Jefferson's pacifist outlook.[139] After becoming a war hero in the War of 1812 against the British, his was a natural rallying point for those whom were more comfortable with the democratic mindset of the frontier, fixed against a set and aristocratic elite in Philadelphia and New York. Although Jackson himself was actually somewhat of a hybrid between a frontiersman and a gentleman, and despite his own reluctance to pursue political high office, he entered the campaign in 1824 against John Quincy Adams, a former Secretary of State with the old paternalistic and transcendent attitude about how politics were to be properly conducted. When Adams brokered what was perceived to be a 'corrupt bargain' with Senate Leader Henry Clay in order to be installed as president, contrary to the result of the popular vote, the issues of democracy and *laissez-faire* crystallised in both Jackson and his cohort:[140]

> They directed popular resentment of closed political corporations against the caucus system, which they branded as a flagrant usurpation of the rights of the people, and spread the conviction that politics and administration must be taken from the hands of a social elite or a body of bureaucratic specialists and opened to mass participation.[141]

[138] Ibid, p 45.
[139] United States v Burr - 25 F. Cas. 30, 1807 U.S. App. LEXIS 492. The former Vice President to Jefferson, Aaron Burr, was accused with treason for attempting to incite the creation of an independent country in south-western US and parts of Mexico.
[140] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 53.
[141] Ibid, p 49.

This led to a ferocious fight-back in 1828, eventually landing him comfortably in the White House by the use of modern campaign techniques. Jackson's rhetoric towards the tariff, a key federal culprit, which he had made the central tenet of his first campaign, is a good example of political expediency. Although the issue would still be exploited in the West and the South where farmers resented eastern manufacturers, Jackson dropped it from his national campaign and instead 'a series of demagogic charges about Adams's alleged monarchist, aristocratic, and bureaucratic prejudices served the Jackson managers for issues'.[142]

Hofstadter makes a point of arguing against the commonly held opinion that Jackson and Franklin D Roosevelt are mirror images of each other. Where the first sought liberty for private initiative against monopolists and 'corrupt' political structures, the latter wanted to utilise state machinery in place of enterprise. 'While in the New Deal the democratic reformers were driven to challenge many assumptions of traditional American capitalism', he writes, 'in the Jacksonian period the democratic upsurge was closely linked to the ambitions of the small capitalist'.[143] If Jackson was a populist, he thus asserts, then his populace was that of the middle classes of all creeds against an expansionist federal government, rather than a left or right leaning demagoguery with the aim of revolutionary revolt against political opponents. His philosophy, like that of Jefferson, was 'to take the grip of government-granted privileges off the natural economic order'.[144]

3.3.1 Analysis: The First Populist

There is a famous episode from the great NBC series *West Wing*, in which the White House Chief of Staff Leo McGarry makes all his underlings take meetings with individuals and organisations that would not normally have the ear of the president. In order to fire up the troops he recites a story about Andrew Jackson having a big block of cheese in the foyer, which would be available to the poor and the hungry. Although the anecdote itself has been debunked as fictional, it serves as an illustration of the popular myth that has festered about Jackson being a champion of democracy who cared little for the elites and fought the good

[142] Ibid, p 54.
[143] Ibid, p 55.
[144] Ibid, p 61.

fight for ordinary citizens.[145] Hofstadter somewhat tempers this reading of Jackson in underscoring that the President's main battlefield was for free capitalism against the privileged classes. In other words, his *laissez-faire* philosophies, combined with a core belief in free trade, hard currency and no monopolies, were designed to equip farmers and wildcats in the West, alongside plantation owners in the South, with weaponry against Mid-Atlantic moneylenders and factory owners in the East. Yet the mythology has lingered on, and according to historian Daniel Feller, it has taken on different stripes depending largely on the politics of the interpreter:

> These two versions of Jackson reflect, and reinforce, two divergent takes on American history and character at large. One side uncritically celebrates the American past as exemplary, and charges those who fail to do so with being unpatriotic or worse. The other side, perhaps hypercritically, sees the American record as deeply flawed—not a litany of unblemished accomplishment but of thwarted aspirations, pernicious myths, and persistent injustices.[146]

Whatever one thinks of the President's policies, personality, or demeanour, Jackson was obviously a central figure with regards to the enlargement of democracy and the centrality of popular sentiments to politics. It was his relentless attack upon the comfortable circle of Washington insiders and their backroom deals which, in practice, ended the aristocratic monopoly on power in the United States. John M Sacher has tracked the presidential campaigns of 1824 and 1828 in order to illuminate how Jackson and his supporters re-invented elections and the American party system: 'In contrast to Clay's men, Jackson's supporters relied on the candidate's life rather than his policies to secure votes, stressing his status as an independent man and an outsider.' He goes on to describe how the *Wyoming Letters* produced by John Eaton 'did not stress Jackson's policy positions but instead stressed

[145] "The Real Story of the Huge Chunk of Cheese That Sat in the White House for a Year", Food & Wine, accessed 10 December 2020. https://www.foodandwine.com/news/real-story-huge-chunk-cheese-sat-white-house-year.
[146] Daniel Feller, "The Historical Presidency", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 0, No. 0, January 2021, 2. https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.uio.no/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/psq.12688.

his commitment to republicanism'.[147] Thus one might say that substance had become subservient to character, and that the voters were asked to put their faith in the man rather than his politics. In an era where hostilities with the British Empire were still warm, it made sense for the campaign to emphasise Jackson's credentials as a revolutionary and a war hero under these circumstances, branding Jackson as a man who 'had never been tainted by life in Europe or experienced corruption and intrigue in governmental office.'[148]

The Founding Fathers were now gone, and instead of allowing the mantle to pass on to their sons and protégés unopposed, the outsider stood for the masses against the establishment. In so doing President Jackson not only incorporated techniques of campaigning which could be pigeon-holed as 'negative', but more importantly he broke the paternalistic plutocracy at the very top and established the modern adversarial party system with which voters are familiar today. In response to Henry Clay securing the thirteen votes needed by John Quincy Adams to ascend to the presidency, the Jacksonian cohort famously 'complained that only this "corrupt bargain" had usurped the voters' will in making Adams president', and in so doing arguably called out the plutocracy which Jefferson had stringently sought to avoid decades earlier.[149] Although Sacher submits that 'no proof exists of an explicit agreement',[150] he also concedes that 'in politics, perception trumps reality', and this well publicised perception lingering on throughout history certainly proves him right.[151] President Jackson's loss in 1824 led to immediate preparations for a second contest four years later, which would turn out to be even more transformative. This time there was a clear choice between an 'emergent National Republican Party challenged by an opposition Democratic Party', which represented very different approaches to the forward path of the country.[152] According to Sacher this would be a 'struggle over republicanism – whether the government should actively protect and promote its citizens' liberty or whether the government itself represented a threat to this liberty', and the issues of tariffs, central banks, federal aid and

[147] John M. Sacher, "Chapter Fourteen: The Elections of 1824 and 1828 and the Birth of Modern Politics", in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, First Edition, ed. Sean Patrick Adams (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013), p 284.
[148] Ibid, p 284.
[149] Ibid, p 284.
[150] Ibid, p 284.
[151] Ibid, p 285.
[152] Ibid, p 287.

so on served as signposts for these different approaches.[153] The Jackson machinery were quite open about their aspirations for introducing democratic choice through the evolving party system. Later President Martin Van Buren, for instance, was adamant when arguing for a national political convention:

> In particular, in calling for a revival of the connection between "the planters of the South and the plain Republicans of the North," Van Buren posits parties as an "antidote for sectional prejudices," for without national parties, "Geographical divisions founded on local interests or, what is worse, prejudices between free & slave holding states will inevitably take their place." In arguing the benefits of a permanent two-party system, Van Buren paints a decidedly modern picture in sharp contrast to the prior view which considered an opposition party as a threat to republicanism.[154]

Even though modern historians tend to think of the 1828 election as the starting point of modern politics in America, the voting population of the day did still see elections as choices between different candidates rather than parties. According to Sacher they tended to 'refer to themselves as "friends of the administration" or "friends of Jackson."', instead of supporters of the Republicans or Democrats.[155]

The absolute key aspect of Jackson's ascent and tenure in the context of popular influence on politics, is that it for the first time served as an actual, tangible corrective on the government and the legislature. Of course, there were still big holes in the extent of suffrage, but as small capitalists, peasants, and plucky frontiersmen banded together in their support for Jackson, big business and intellectual elites had to listen and adjust. This was in no small part due to the emergence of modern means of communication, and 'Robert Remini asserts that "creation of a vast nation-wide newspaper system" was possibly the Democrats' most important contribution.'[156] Incidental to the new techniques and tactics employed towards the end of promoting one side over the other, the afore mentioned

[153] Ibid, p 287.
[154] Ibid, p 287.
[155] Ibid, p 288.
[156] Ibid, p 289.

negative aspect also made an entrance into mass communications: 'In connecting the 1828 campaign to modern politics, historians concur that the appearance of mudslinging is another one of its legacies. Daniel Walker Howe describes it as, "probably the dirtiest in American history"'.[157] Regardless of the why and the how, it remains a fact that the 1928 election reaped some 1.1 million votes compared with only 366,000 four years before, on a turnout of 57.6% as opposed to 27% in 1824.[158] Both Schrader and Hofstadter have their doubts about whether these numbers 'followed the General into the White House', but surely 'Jacksonian Democracy' must be ascertained as a watershed in any case, or else there would have been no debate concerning this myth or, indeed, truth.[159] Hofstadter may emphasise the importance of Van Buren and the newspapers, as well as the steady-as-she-goes approach that the President took when he was installed in the White House, still that break with the *status quo*, whatever one perceives the break to contain, is an interesting point in itself:

> So far as he can be said to have had a popular mandate, it was to be different from what the people imagined Adams had been and to give expression to their unformulated wishes and aspirations. This mandate Jackson was prepared to obey. Democrat and aristocrat, failure and success, debtor and creditor, he had had a varied and uneven history, which made it possible for him to see public questions from more than one perspective. He was a simple, emotional, and unreflective man with a strong sense of loyalty to personal friends and political supporters; he swung to the democratic camp when the democratic camp swung to him.[160]

3.4 Lincoln as the Cautious Emancipator[161]

Abraham Lincoln is, perhaps, the most lauded of all the great American statesmen. Due to his ascribed role as emancipator of the black race his star shines more brightly than that of Jefferson or Adams, or even Washington, especially under the penetrating gaze of modern

[157] Ibid, p 290.
[158] Ibid, p 292.
[159] Ibid, p 293.
[160] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 54.
[161] Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

identity politics. Although certainly an opponent of slavery, Hofstadter points out that Lincoln's foremost affinity was for the preservation of the Union, and that emancipation was almost incidental to this aim. With his lawyer-intellect he fought ferociously against any undercutting of constitutional sanction, he 'suppressed secession and refused to acknowledge that the right of revolution he had so boldly accepted belonged to the South. (…) The contradiction is not peculiar to Lincoln; Anglo-Saxon history is full of it'.[162] Thus the role that this president carved out for himself was not one of leading a social revolution, but rather of acting as a shrewd political steward in balancing the different Whig, Republican and Radical factions within his own party against each other. Influenced not only by a tempered moral and philosophical distaste for slavery, but also by traditional Anglican Protestant notions of duty, hard work and discipline, to be fairly rewarded through a system of popular sovereignty and social mobility, President Lincoln constantly refined his politics with strategic long-term aptness.

To understand how this president ultimately became a standard-bearer for renewed democratic urgency, as well as fairly radical principles on the slave issue, whilst simultaneously keeping the propertied elements in New York, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts content, Hofstadter focuses on Lincoln's background. He was born into poverty in Illinois, and had to resort to self-study in reaching his aim of becoming a lawyer, awaiting the real prize that politics offered. Thus he certainly was no stranger to adversity in life, which supposedly gave him the experience and backbone necessary for compassionate and emancipatory governance, if one is of the disposition to ascribe vital weight to psychology in these matters. Being somewhat of an outsider, just like Jackson before him, Lincoln was in any case able to play on his class, which throughout his early career 'enabled him to speak with sincerity for Jeffersonian principles while supporting Hamiltonian measures'.[163] In other words, here is another great communicator with sincerely held beliefs and political goals, who nevertheless understands the need for moderation and of biding one's time in order to achieve maximum effect. Lincoln was also keenly aware of this role as

[162] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 102.
[163] Ibid, p 99.

an exemplar of the self-made man, and 'he played the part with an intense and poignant consistency that gives his performance the quality of a high art'.[164]

President Lincoln started out as a Whig politician, adhering to the principles of Henry Clay on the economy, as well as a programme of modernising the country both in terms of infrastructure and governance. It was only natural that a frontiersman with moderately conservative leanings should gravitate to what used to be the National Republicans, as this 'was the party of internal improvements, stable currency, and conservative banking', and Lincoln was certainly living in a country 'that needed all three'.[165] During the time before the Civil War, however, the political situation became increasingly fluid resulting from stand-offs and crises, something which also altered the status of the parties. The Republicans garnered increasing support in the North, amalgamating old Whigs, No-Nothing-supporters, and Free Soilers into a broad coalition. This of course reaped the strength of diversity, but also the weakness of constant infighting without direction, and so the party was in dire need of a unifying force at the top. Lincoln was naturally drawn to the Republicans, but held on as a Whig for a time out of loyalty. Hofstadter describes how Lincoln 'fled' Springfield, Illinois to avoid attending the Republican convention in that city, just to spare embarrassment for his mentors. After failing to secure a senatorial nomination the following year, his friend and biographer William Herndon had this to say about Lincoln's resolve:

> "That man," says Herndon (whose adoration of Lincoln assures us we are listening to no hostile critic), "who thinks Lincoln calmly gathered his robes about him, waiting for the people to call him, has a very erroneous knowledge of Lincoln. He was always calculating and planning ahead. His ambition was a little engine that knew no rest."[166]

And so, inevitably, Lincoln finally repented and joined with the Republican steam train in 1856, which landed him in the Senate in 1858 as a result of his loyal attitude to both the Whigs and then to the Republican ticket after that. The Democrats were, by this time, engaging in an all-encompassing sectional battle within its own ranks, and their leaders now

[164] Ibid, p 93.
[165] Ibid, p 98.
[166] Ibid, p 97.

faced the impossible task of reconciling its Calhouns with its Jacksons. Thus the scene was set for a cautious yet steadfast Republican pivot for the presidency, and Lincoln would be their spearhead.

Although wedded to ideas about democracy closely connected with Thomas Jefferson, and belonging to a group of Western politicians for whom progress was the watchword of the day, Lincoln's cautionary – almost calculating – temperament is illuminated aptly by his moderate conservative attitudes towards suffrage. Here was a self-made man with the most extraordinary upwards social trajectory, yet still he was no radical on the question of the vote. In his 1836 campaign for the state legislature in Illinois, for example, he dared not include anyone but propertied whites when giving an interview on the subject, stating: 'I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes and bear arms (by no means excluding females).'[167] The inclusion of females may seem radical albeit theoretical, but as Hofstadter points out the Illinois Constitution of 1818 had allowed all white males over the age of twenty-one to vote, with no requirements as to taxable property or income. Thus in Lincoln one can sense an ambiguity where his better angels were shouted down by his demons for a very long time indeed.

Lincoln had thus failed in tempering his northern cohort. When he eventually became president in 1861 it was already too late, but before that he tried to develop a line of reasoning which could accommodate the radical elements and the conservatives alike, mostly by tailoring his messaging to any particular audience to which he was communicating. In a time where only a small percentage of speeches became national news, often weeks and months after the fact, this could have worked, but the wheel of history had gained a momentum of its own, and turning it back would prove too handsome a task even for a man like Lincoln. Nevertheless, he tried, but it was not until as late as 1854 that he provided a public stance on slavery:

[167] Ibid, p 100.

> He took pains in all his speeches to stress that he was not an abolitionist and at the same time to stand on the sole program of opposing the extension of slavery. On October 4, 1854, at the age of forty-five, Lincoln *for the first time in his life* denounced slavery in public. In his speech delivered in the Hall of Representatives at Springfield (and later repeated at Peoria) he declared that he hated the current zeal for the spread of slavery: "I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself."[168]

Before that he had always been 'moderately hostile', but 'quieted himself with the comfortable thought that it was destined very gradually to disappear'. What really changed his thinking about confronting the 'peculiar institutions', was the passing of the *Kansas-Nebraska Act*,[169] which made him openly challenge slavery 'based on justice tempered by expedience - or perhaps more accurately, expedience tempered by justice'.[170] Whilst lambasting the moral injustice of human bondage in Springfield, however, Lincoln did nothing to confront the only basis upon which the institution could logically exist in the first place, namely that people of colour were human beings, but second-rate ones not worthy of the same status as whites: 'What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially our equals. *My own feelings will not admit of this*, and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of whites will not.'[171] Perhaps this kind of racialism, which is here postulated in its original and proper sense, was enhanced in his public assertions for tactical reasons, but it is nevertheless clear that full and sincere racial equality was one step too far. As a political manoeuvre it at any rate was brilliant, since both 'negrophobes and abolitionists alike could understand this threat; if freedom should be broken down they might themselves have to compete with the labor of slaves in the then free states - or might even be reduced to bondage along with the blacks!'[172] Thus, as Hofstadter points out, the dual position taken up by Lincoln was about the only conceivable route to the preservation of unity in the North, and he goes on to attribute Lincoln's success in the 1860 campaign 'in

[168] Ibid, p 109.
[169] An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas (1954). This was an organic territorial Act which established Kansas and Nebraska, but also effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise, leading to a 'scramble for Kansas' in order to establish it as either pro- or anti-slavery.
[170] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 106-107.
[171] Ibid, p 110.
[172] Ibid, p 112.

no small part to his ability to bridge the gap, a performance that entitles him to place among the world's great political propagandists'.[173]

Where Southern Democrats like Calhoun had held out for compromise until the last – he died in 1850 – President Lincoln quickly realised that following *Kansas-Nebraska* and increased agitation on both sides, there had to ensue some kind of final resolution of the matter. From a mixture of personal liberal and Jeffersonian beliefs, and an acute awareness of the realities on the ground, he carefully built a moral as well as a political platform from which to most effectively direct this resolution. It began with his 1854 speech and ended with his 1860 campaign, but in-between came the famous House Divided Speech held at the Illinois Republican convention in 1858:

> I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the House to fall - but I do expect it to cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South. Have we no tendency to the latter condition?[174]

The clarity of this oft-quoted passage is abundant, but Hofstadter is to be commended for including the last sentence, which is important in understanding that Lincoln was not calling for immediate abolition, but rather for a stop-gap in further expansion, followed by organic decline.

Much could be said about the war effort itself, but it is neither the main concern of Hofstadter or of this thesis. Suffice to say that it was vital for the North to abstain from firing the first shot, lest the Unionists lose the moral high ground. Allowing Fort Sumpter to be effectively blockaded without retaliation, therefore, was a master stroke which must have been close to President Kennedy's mind in 1962. When the unarmed supply ships were denied access to the fort, and Major Robert Anderson refused an ultimatum to surrender it,

[173] Ibid, p 110.
[174] Ibid, p 114.

Confederate forces had little option but to engage, and thus the South had initiated hostilities against a *de jure* federal fortification. Achieving to paint the South as the aggressors, so Hofstadter argues, was of crucial importance indeed, since finding itself 'psychologically on the defensive, the North had to be strategically on the offensive. One of Lincoln's most striking achievements was his tactical and ideological resolution of this difficulty'.[175]

3.4.1 Analysis: Liberation in Practice

The slavery question which would come to completely dominate President Lincoln's tenure, was not in the fore of his mind when he started his political career in Illinois. There is some evidence to suggest that it was not of vital importance during the Civil War either. Hofstadter cites a letter to the abolitionist Horace Greeley, in which Lincoln wrote that '…if I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it'.[176] Yet it may be argued that Lincoln found the whole thing utterly contemptible, which it seems like he did on moral grounds, but that he nevertheless deemed the preservation of the Union the only hope for progress in this, as in any other question of the day. The President was a universalist as well as a realist, and therefore political fights had to be fought consecutively and prudently. First the country and its inherent liberties had to be saved, then these liberties were to be refreshed and expanded for white males, and only when the strength and breadth of its army had reached a necessary threshold, could the march of the patient Whig fan out into a more comprehensive formation. Thus it can be true, as Hofstadter asserts, that Lincoln was 'never much troubled about the Negro, he had always been most deeply interested in the fate of free republicanism and its bearing on upon the welfare of the common white man with whom he identified himself'.[177] But concurrently it can also be true that by insisting upon liberty for all Americans, and by delivering it incrementally whilst showing his willingness to fight a war over its universality, he did much to deserve his transcendent status as an emancipator:

[175] Ibid, p 119.
[176] Ibid, p 130.
[177] Ibid, p 116-117.

> But it is only the intensity and not the genuineness of his antislavery sentiments that can be doubted. His conservatism arose in part from a sound sense for the pace of historical change. He knew that formal freedom for the Negro, coming suddenly and without preparation, would not be real freedom, and in this respect he understood the slavery question better than most of the Radicals, just as they had understood better than he the revolutionary dynamics of the war.[178]

Such tensions between real prejudices, *realpolitik*, and pure liberal principles were not peculiar to President Lincoln. Jefferson himself had wrestled with some of the same problems, as had Jackson on the Democratic side in his own fashion, and so had even Calhoun when lifting his gaze beyond narrow sectional interests. Had Lincoln been in power at any other time than the Civil War-era, he might have been remembered as even more of a radical voice than he is, not least because of his relentless attack upon the Democratic Party for having 'abandoned Jeffersonian tradition by taking the position that one man's liberty was absolutely nothing when it conflicted with another man's property'.[179] To him, the point of the republic and its constitution was to ensure freedom through popular sovereignty: 'In Lincoln's eyes the Declaration of Independence thus becomes once again what it had been to Jefferson - not merely a formal theory of rights, but an instrument of democracy.'[180] This democratic creed was not only philosophical, institutional, or theoretical to the President. Popular government and abolition was but one plank of his philosophy, with economic freedom being the other. Since Calhoun had developed his theories about the labourers of the North some decades earlier, the industrial revolution had in many ways proved him right in his prediction that industrial strife would be a central issue of the future.[181] Lincoln, although as a moderately conservative Whig being for the small capitalist and the ambitious industrialist, also had some time for the emerging trade unionist movement. In a stump speech to striking shoemakers in New Haven during the 1860 campaign, for example, he stated that 'I like the system that lets a man quit when he wants to, and wish it might prevail

[178] Ibid, p 132.
[179] Ibid, p 101.
[180] Ibid, p 101.
[181] Ibid, p 86.

everywhere. One of the reasons why I am opposed to slavery is just here'.[182] As he had tried to bridge the gap between the radical and the bigot over the fate of blacks, he thus also seems to understand the reciprocal importance of the capitalist and the working class man. Here one senses a social liberalist position in its infancy.

Hofstadter's conclusion, as this thesis writer reads it, is that the victory of the Civil War, the resulting passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, and later the success of Reconstruction, are indeed something for which America owes Lincoln a great deal of gratitude. Not because he was that moral saint riding to the rescue on a bright white horse of principle as he is often portrayed. No, his acumen was his prudence and equilibrium, although lesser minds may mistake those virtues for hypocrisy and self-interest. Lincoln faced an existential crisis like no other American president, either before nor after, and given what history teaches about the circumstances under which he had to navigate, there is little cause for playing down his success. In wrestling with the perennial republican problem 'must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?', Hofstadter suggests that President Lincoln replied through leadership:[183] 'It was, of course, a war to preserve the Union; but the Union itself was a means to an end. The Union meant free popular government, "government of the people, by the people, for the people."'[184]

3.5 The Rough Rider as Middle Ground[185]

The first Roosevelt was exceptional at picking up the popular mood, and then mould it into policy without losing the support of either big business or the gentry. It was from the latter group the President hailed, but where others belonging to this class of comfortable gentlemen kept out of politics and its unsavoury and transactional dealings, Roosevelt chose to engage due to a heartfelt sense of belief in and duty to the Federal State. The President was home schooled as a child because of problems with illness, particularly asthma, but he later took a classic route via Harvard, and then into politics. By clever positioning he was

[182] Ibid, p 105.
[183] Ibid, p 124.
[184] Ibid, p 123.
[185] Henry F. Pringle, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, Inc., 1931).

eventually elected Governor of New York in 1898, before rapidly ascending to the Vice-Presidency, finally moving into the top job after William McKinley's assassination in 1902. More than anything this youngest holder of the Oval Office aimed to re-introduce optimism and frontier mentality, and therefore 'it was the heroic virtues that he wished to make central again in American life'.[186] His preferred road to renewed national virility involved aggressive expansion into Indian and foreign lands, an imperial ambition which was amply illustrated by his writings as a young man:

> Roosevelt's major historical work, *The Winning of the West,* which was written during his thirties, was an epic of racial conflict in which he described "the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste space" as "the most striking feature of the world's history." Only "a warped, perverse, and silly morality" would condemn the American conquest of the West.[187]

Hofstadter theorises that the colonel's position between Republican business interests, whom he despised because of their lack of honour and decency, and the progressives, whom he sympathised with as long as they refrained from using any tactics beyond the ballot box, was a perfect fit in energising the emerging middle classes in America at the turn of the century. Here was a refreshingly jovial member of the stilted gentry, who 'because he feared the great corporations as well as the organized workers and farmers', came to view himself 'as representing a golden mean'.[188] To stave off the populist and utopian left, Roosevelt was not afraid of employing very tough language in denouncing the capitalist classes, whilst simultaneously privately assuring their representatives that he was their man. Yet Hofstadter submits that such rhetoric, even when used at least in part as a tactic, have real world consequences in moving the equinox of debate, which is why Roosevelt's 'strong language had value in itself, not only because it shaped the public image of him as a fighting radical, but because it did contribute real weight to the sentiment for reform'.[189]

[186] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 206.
[187] Ibid, p 209.
[188] Ibid, p 217.
[189] Ibid, p 221.

There were many layers to this man psychologically, philosophically, and with regards to strategy and policy. At his simplest Roosevelt has been described as a juvenile thrill-seeker with romantic notions of conquest and battle in the extreme, but at his best he was a formidable political operative, cunningly pacifying the progressives by piecemeal reform, whilst simultaneously keeping the monetary interests in line by threatening far more radical action should they block his reforms. A case in point was the continuing saga over monopolists, and the instigation of anti-trust action thus 'seems to have been to him partly a means of satisfying the popular demand to see the government flail big business, but chiefly a threat to hold over business to compel it to accept regulation'.[190] In Roosevelt's perfect society these reforms would not have been needed, however, as liberal benevolence in its most classical form should have made them redundant. But he realised that the spoilsmen and tycoons, with the notable exception of Carnegie, lacked any such social dimension in their liberalism. Therefore reform was needed in order to quell the ambers of socialism that were simmering within the progressive movement. Quell them he did, but not by becoming a complete convert or giving in to demands which no conservative could have. His role was as a 'stabilizer of the *status quo'*,[191] by throwing at the establishment 'a hundred times more noise than accomplishment'.[192] Simultaneously the President managed, according to Hofstadter, a sublime feat of distraction towards the increasingly restless middle classes, utilising his penchant for heroic sacrifice and manifest destiny-style narration. This was exemplified by his enthusiastic and hands-on support for both western expansion into Indian territories, and the sacking of the Spaniards in Cuba, where he famously participated in person:

> The depression of the nineties found the American middle classes in an uneasy and fearful mood as they watched the trusts growing on one side and the labor and Populist movements massing on the other. For them, as for him, a fight served as a distraction; national self-assertion in the world theater gave them the sense that the nation had not lost its capacity for growth and change.[193]

[190] Ibid, p 222.
[191] Ibid, p 218.
[192] Ibid, p 224.
[193] Ibid, p 208.

3.5.1 Analysis: The Moral Case for Progressive Liberalism

Roosevelt accepted his political destiny, albeit whilst holding his nose, where others from his background retreated into academia and professional work. Although instinctively conservative, he ended up as one of the great catalysts for reform without revolution, arguably completing much of the progressive platform in order to kill it. Where men like William J Bryan laid the groundwork for change, Roosevelt actually implemented it through his Square Deal, partly as a tactic, and partly out of sympathy and mutual scorn for the tycoons and their combinations. This President started out as a very traditional member of the gentry, but he was not able to withstand the allure of contributing to the changing sentiments of the country. By the time he took the Governorship of New York, even the powerful bosses in that State understood that the Gilded Age free-for-all was in its death throws. Roosevelt, says Hofstadter, fancied himself as a moralist, 'and the real need in American public life, he told Lincoln Steffens, was "the *fundamental fight for morality*"'.[194] Taken together with his peculiar masculine personality moulded by childhood insecurities, he became 'the master therapist of the middle classes'.[195]

And a 'master therapist' was exactly what they needed. After a gruelling war, and then an unstable period of unprecedented growth alongside unbelievable greed and hardship, the country longed for just the right mixture of optimism and reform which Teddy Roosevelt offered to them. Emerging reformers had managed to tap into the grievances of the outsiders and the disenfranchised at the close of the century, but the Rough Rider had the conservative credentials and personal qualities needed to transform and unite the radical elements with middle class conservatives. He achieved this through a combination of rhetoric and action, disciplining the out-of-control capitalists in the process. All this was not devised as a grand strategy in some Harvard tearoom. As the great Wisconsin-progressive Robert M La Follette observed, Roosevelt 'is the ablest living interpreter of what I would call the superficial public sentiment of a given time, and he is spontaneous in his reactions to it'.[196] Thus what should be emphasised about his life and work in a context of popular

[194] Ibid, p 226.
[195] Ibid, p 228.
[196] Ibid, p 226.

liberalism, is not only his obvious political abilities in reading the public mind like some early version of Tony Blair or William Clinton, but also a very important capacity to follow through where he saw that society was lacking in balance. This he did as a nationalist conservative with progressive liberal leanings on the economy and social issues, which has often proved to be a winning strategy. When he saw that his protégé William H Taft retreated into a more conservative position, Roosevelt challenged him through a purely progressive ticket, which illustrates the political journey he had taken in his quest for morality and to beat down the socialist threat:

> Although he identified himself closely with the authority of the State and the defense of property, he saw the justice and necessity of making authority benevolent and improving the condition of the people through social legislation. But any display of independent power by the masses, especially in the form of a strike, set off a violent reflex.[197]

3.6 Woodrow Wilson and the Global Pivot[198]

Here was yet another 'son of a preacher-man', this time of Presbyterian denomination, finding his calling in politics rather than religion. According to the introduction by Hofstadter, President Wilson's Protestant credentials deeply affected and influenced him throughout his life and career, instilling in him a formidable work ethic as well as a habitual critical introspection severe enough to be lauded by even the most doctrinaire Cambodian Maoist. Capable of experiencing 'intense feelings of guilt, he projected his demand for unmitigated righteousness into public affairs, draining his intellectual capacity for tolerance'.[199] Although arriving on the political scene from a respectable background, much like his concurrent rival Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson gravitated towards the Democratic fold partly due to his Southern upbringing, and partly because his conservatism was coated in classic British liberal Whiggery, rather than the American plutocratic variety associated with the Republicans at this time. Having established himself as a successful and innovating Department Head at Princeton, he wholeheartedly leapt at the opportunity to move into politics, which was his

[197] Ibid, p 215.
[198] John Milton Cooper Jr, *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011).
[199] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 234.

ambition from the very beginning, practicing political speeches at his father's church as a young lad. Deemed an acceptable candidate both by the Boss of New Jersey, Jim Smith, and by the progressives as well as the conservatives within his own party, Wilson was elected Governor of New York in 1910, a position held by the older Roosevelt a decade before. Hofstadter argues that from this point onwards, his liberalism developed in much the same way as that of Theodore Roosevelt, perhaps in a less instinctive and more intellectual manner, and that 'the parallel between the brand of conservatism shown between Wilson before 1910 and by Theodore Roosevelt before 1902 is compelling'.[200] The difference between the two, Hofstadter continues, 'in their conservative and progressive phases alike, is the difference between fervour and hysteria'.[201]

Wilson began to mould an ideological basis from his Burkian starting point, in which progressive reform was a moral and political imperative if the United States was to return to a state of fair and free competition amongst equals. As a consequence, a doctrine of New Freedom was to be implemented after his election as President in 1912, under which trusts would have to be persecuted, the spoilsmen purged from politics, and the citizenry afforded basic re-distribution of resources and opportunity:

> Great men, Wilson would say, had departed from Capitol Hill. Public life in America had degenerated into a struggle of vulgar interests; Americans were abandoned, in politics as in personal relations, to moneymaking; democracy must be reclaimed from the spoilsmen.[202]

Wilson's aim was for the federal government to act as a disinterested party between 'plutocracy and the masses', and through progressive reform return the country to a Jeffersonian equilibrium of liberty and competition hitherto denied to it by special interests and big money.[203] At this the President, on the whole, proved astonishingly successful, and America *ante bellum* was, perhaps, at its most harmonious during this short interval, barring race relations. Wilson, like Roosevelt before him, turned more progressive as events forced

[200] Ibid, p 240.
[201] Ibid, p 241.
[202] Ibid, p 243.
[203] Ibid, p 245.

him to the middle ground, but still the goal always remained to retain and defend ancient liberal ideals: 'In this idea - that we must have a forward-looking return to the past- was the link between the old and the new Wilson.'[204] In his speeches during the 1911 election, where he was pitted against the conservative Republican Taft, and the progressive 'Republican' Roosevelt, the shift in the latter direction by the Democrats is tangible. Some of the language even has a socialist feel to it, such as arguing that '*the machinery of political control must be put in the hands of the people',* but it was always tempered by more conservative notions, for example by emphasising that the aim was to secure people's 'right to exercise a free and constant choice in the management of their own affairs'.[205] President Wilson even explicitly gave one of the reasons for his progressive turn in declaring: 'If I did not believe that to be progressive was to preserve the essentials of our institutions, I for one could not be a progressive.'[206] It was not against the old liberalism and propertied classes as such that Wilson lead his charge, but '*against the special interests*', by which he meant the trusts, the spoilsmen, and the banks.[207]

Then there were shots fired in Sarajevo, and the pacifist Wilson was drawn into an international firestorm from which he did not escape unscathed. The President was torn between a desire to save the civilised countries from tyranny, and an instinctive preference for neutrality: 'Wilson's Allied sympathies were as vital as his love of peace. He was a thorough Anglophile. He had learned his greatest lessons from English thinkers; yea had taken English statesmen as his models of aspiration and the British Constitution as his model of government.'[208] This lead to blatant disregard for any meaningful measure of impartiality towards the belligerents. 'England is fighting our fight', said Wilson in the presence of his personal secretary Joseph P Tumulty, 'I will not take any action to embarrass England when she is fighting for her life and the life of the world'.[209] The tilted neutrality of the United States ended in a rather clever tactical gamble on the part of the Prussians. They calculated that America would not be able to provide anything but pecuniary and material support for

[204] Ibid, p 249.
[205] Ibid, p 249.
[206] Ibid, p 252.
[207] Ibid, p 250.
[208] Ibid, p 257.
[209] Ibid, p 258.

the Allies, which the US was doing anyway despite her neutrality, and so re-commenced aggressive submarine warfare in the Atlantic. Thus more skirmishes like the one that sunk the Lusitania in 1916 ensued, and Wilson was painted into a corner, with no other choice left than to enter the war. Hofstadter is convincing when he argues the economic reasons for doing so, asserting that 'if Wilson's legal dialectics appeared singularly weak, it was because he was forced to find legal reasons for policies that were based not upon law but upon the balance of power and economic necessities'. Still it is clear that the Anglo-Saxon in Wilson would have been hard pressed to resist involvement in any case.[210]

American military support tipped the balance for the Allies, but a 'peace without victory' and with the US in pristine neutrality when the treaties were to be negotiated, was now lost.[211] What had been warned by Secretary of State Bryan before his resignation, was repeated openly to Congress by Wilson himself:

> Victory would mean peace forced upon the looser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last.[212]

This meant Versailles, and Wilson threw all his weight behind the idea of an international organisation in order to rectify what he correctly analysed as a disastrous settlement for future relations in Europe. American aims were nothing less than 'a world order based upon national self-determination, free trade, and a League of Nations to keep the peace'.[213] These were radical proposals indeed, especially from the vantage point of European nations which were used to free and unhindered colonial rule. 'What we seek', the American president further explained, 'is the reign of law, based upon the consent of the governed and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind'. [214] As has been pointed out by many historians, however, there was more puff than substance in Wilson's sweeping demands:

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[210] Ibid, p 262.
[211] Ibid, p 269.
[212] Ibid, p 264.
[213] Ibid, p 269.
[214] Ibid, p 269.

> Thorstein Veblen wrote in 1919 that the Covenant of the League "is a political document, an instrument of realpolitik, created in the image of nineteenth century imperialism. It has been set up by political statesmen, on political grounds, for political ends, and with political apparatus to be used with political effects … True to the political tradition, the Covenant provides for enforcing the peace by recourse to arms and commercial hostilities, but it contemplates no measures for avoiding war by avoiding the status quo out of which the great war arose."[215]

So where his New Freedom at home had addressed some of the root causes for instability and strife, namely the economic base (in Marxist terms), his attempt at re-aligning international affairs along democratic lines was too heavy on conservation and too light on democratisation. As one friend wrote him after the Covenant was signed, 'the League of Nations idea will not help your position, either now or in history, because, like all your other policies, it does not go to the root of the problem. Wars are caused by privilege'.[216] One could convincingly argue, as does Hofstadter, that the ingredients available to Wilson when concocting his grand scheme were not sufficient, and that nobody would have been able to in his position, but the President was measured against his own lofty yardstick, and came up short. The Fourteen Points of the Covenant were an attempt at establishing principles of self-determination, participation, voice and democratic liberties for all nations, big and small, but even though some of its ideals were implemented after the next great war when the UN Charter was drawn up, the self-flogging President Wilson died having failed to bring the United States into his League, mostly because of political grandstanding at home, and the League was his last line of defence:

> His plans had been hamstrung, his hopes abandoned one after another, until nothing but the League was left. The New Freedom, as he had predicted, had disappeared in the war, and a liberal democratic peace had gone by the board at Paris. The League

[215] Ibid, pp 270-271.
[216] Ibid, pp 272-273.

was now a question of moral salvation or annihilation, for everything he stood for hung in the balance.[217]

3.6.1 Analysis: American Liberalism in the World

Woodrow Wilson was a formidable political figure with an astute intellect and undeniable ambitions. Hailing from the South he understood the conservative mindset of rural America, but also appreciated that the country needed change in order to level up all sections. It was the North-East which profited from the booms after the Civil War, whilst farmers and businessmen elsewhere suffered the busts. Although he was a schoolmasterly character from a well to do background, a trait not uncommon amongst the idealist politicians of the time, Wilson's southern perspective landed him in the Democratic Party. Not since the days of Calhoun had the Democrats offered any serious philosophical contribution to national life, with the honest and capable conservative caretaker of Grover Cleveland as their only president apart from the special case of Andrew Johnson. Now, Bryan did begin to move the Democrats away from machine politics towards a more Jacksonian conservatism with added sprinkles of progressive modernity, but it was Wilson who finally took charge and threw off the old yoke of the Confederate. Only a southerner, it is submitted, could have done this and been as effective. Wilson's project began with an analysis of the *status quo* as he found it around 1910, and his verdict was not advantageous to the current crop of leaders: 'The truth is, we are all caught in a great economic system which is heartless.'[218]

It was a return to morality in politics that Wilson sought, and not a revolution of re-distribution or nationalisation. In this he was completely at one with his Republican opponent Roosevelt, but where the latter projected his masculinity onto the country in order to instil optimism and virility, the former sought to guide the people intellectually. Wilson could be tough when he needed to, however, as he demonstrated with his relentless pursuit of the trusts, as well as his steadfastness once America entered the Great War, but his insecurities were not alleviated by gunslinging or boxing. He instead sought affection from the public, 'but love he could not win, and there was something insubstantial about his

[217] Ibid, pp 275-276.
[218] Ibid, p 234.

relationship with the people, something forced; the fact that he strove so consciously to be a democrat is the best evidence that by instinct he was not'.[219] President Wilson thus sought morality and popularity, but was at heart a southern conservative who moved in the progressive direction by necessity, and as a consequence of political evolution.

Being 'neither an aggressive critic nor an intellectual innovator, he was essentially a spokesman of the past', says Hofstadter of Wilson's early period, and this was no doubt resulting from his theoretical appreciation for British philosophy paired with his own conservative instincts. 'No result of value can ever be reached…except through slow and gradual development, the careful adaptations and nice modifications of growth', he wrote in *The State*,[220] before continuing 'we deemed ourselves rank democrats, whereas we were in fact only progressive Englishmen'.[221] Wilson was a follower of the Manchester school of free traders which were the heroes of Hobhouse, and also constitutional essayist Walter Bagehot. What seems to have appealed to him in the British story, was a certain amount of self-conscious introspection combined with steady reliance on tradition and history even when great radical reforms were being implemented. For the same reasons he was highly critical of the French influence on the Founding Fathers. 'The history of England is a continuous thesis against revolutions', he proclaimed, with Hofstadter further observing: 'Jefferson's failure to understand these things, Wilson believed, was his chief defect'.[222] It is interesting to note how closely the President followed an organic reading of liberalism, something which may partly explain his swing from conservative tariff-campaigner to something approaching a social liberalist:

> We manifested one hundred years ago what Europe lost, namely, self-command, self-possession. Democracy in Europe, outside of closeted Switzerland, has acted always in rebellion, as a destructive force; it can scarcely be said to have had, even yet, any

[219] Ibid, p 236.
[220] Woodrow Wilson, *The state: elements of historical and practical politics : a sketch of institutional history and administration* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1894), p 639.
[221] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 238.
[222] Ibid, p 239.

> period of organic development…Democracy in America, on the other hand, and in the English colonies has had, almost from the first, a truly organic growth.[223]

Yet the New Deal, much like the Square Deal before it, stopped short of attacking the economic base of society, or the property rights associated with liberty for centuries. Instead Wilson returned to a theme which, as one can begin to make out, has been recurring for both conservatives and liberal leaders in America. He confirmed the Constitution and its underpinnings as resting upon sound principles of philosophy and law, but went instead on the attack against those whom he perceived to abrogate from the spirit of the republic in moral terms. And so his liberal plank became a crusade against the special interests which had grown into monstrosities during the Gilded Age:

> The contest is sometimes said to be between capital and labor, but that is too narrow and special a conception of it. It is, rather, between capital in all its larger accumulations and all other less concentrated, more dispersed, smaller, and more individual economic forces;[224]

Thus whilst Wilson certainly was no social democrat and stopped short of adding a truly social dimension to his liberalism as well, the progressive turns of his and Roosevelt's presidency did move American politics in a new direction. What was abundantly clear at the time, which corresponds largely with what Hobhouse observed across the Atlantic, was that *laissez-faire* had died at the turn of the century, if not in practice, at least in spirit. Although Herbert Hoover would give classical liberalism a final go, with disastrous consequences, Wilson had already shifted the language from pure individualism towards a society of individuals. He believed, as an example, that 'the nation must steer a middle course between the plutocracy and the masses. The government must be an impartial agency, mediating between extremes and representing the common interest'.[225] Evolution of doctrine was evident in action as well as words, with the most striking change being government's approach to big business. 'What has happened in America is that industry has

[223] Ibid, p 238-239.
[224] Ibid, p 244.
[225] Ibid, p 245.

ceased to be free because the laws do not prevent the strong from crushing the weak',[226] Wilson told his voters during the 1912 campaign, and later specifically criticised Roosevelt over the trust issue by adding that 'you can't find your way to social reform through the forces that have made social reform necessary'.[227] Hofstadter succinctly summarises the aims of the President's rainbow coalition:

> Essentially, the New Freedom was an attempt of the middle class, with agrarian and labor support, to arrest the exploitation of the community, the concentration of wealth, and the growing control of politics by insiders, and to restore, as far as possible, competitive opportunities in business.[228]

If Wilson's support and success at home was a testament to the changing times, events abroad were to catapult him and his country onto the international stage as a great power for the very first time. In domestic affairs the cautious reform approach had served him well, especially when tackling fundamental economic issues like the tariff and the trusts, but no such luxury can be afforded when war is upon you. He nevertheless attempted to take the route of neutrality, writing in an early war time letter that 'it would be a calamity to the world at large if we should be drawn actively into the conflict, and so deprived of all disinterested influence over the settlement'.[229] Wilson looked to the *post bellum* settlement already at its beginning, and aimed to position the United States as an aloof mediator which would be able to broker a novel system within the law of nations, where peace and delf-determination should be the sole assignments. Since the Napoleonic wars and the American Civil War, however, the United States had expanded into a much stronger position in the global league tables, and with greatness comes responsibility whether one accepts it or not. The British had policed the world through their doctrine of Splendid Isolation for a century at this point, but that had worked only from a position of overwhelming superpower strength, where the British Empire suffered no rival on the seas, and no threat from the Continent against the home nations. The change in circumstance forced Wilson to engage, in one form or another, and being an Anglophile there would be no doubt as to the direction of his

[226] Ibid, p 251.
[227] Ibid, p 253.
[228] Ibid, p 255.
[229] Ibid, p 257.

efforts. And so the case for supporting the Allies monetarily and by supplies was made philosophically, economically, and also strategically. Colonel Edward M House, for instance, wrote to Wilson about the German threat that it would force America to 'abandon the path which you are blazing as a standard for the future generations, with permanent peace as its goal and a new international ethical code as its guiding star, and build up a military machine of vast proportions'.[230] As the war progressed into stalemate, with the eastern front close to collapse, the President prepared his people for what seemed inevitable: 'There may at any moment come a time when I cannot preserve both the honor and the peace of the United States. Do not exact of me an impossible and contradictory thing.'[231]

But to lead his people into war was one thing, dealing with the consequences of that choice quite another. Apart from the obvious human suffering which followed Wilson was worried about the purity of the American psyche. 'Once lead this people into war', he told Frank Cobb of the *New York World*, 'and they'll forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance'. According to Hofstadter's addendum, the President 'thought the Constitution would not survive it; that free speech and the right of assembly would go. He said a nation couldn't put its strength into a war and keep its head level; it had never been done'.[232] For a man who had studied the British constitution and its history, including a war-ridden millennium of strife and conquest, such a view seems peculiar. It is a testament to the fragile state in which he thought the US experiment to be, but also an acknowledgment of the effect newly won power can have on a people. From what followed it seems that Americans were made from tougher stock than Wilson anticipated, even if the Cold War and its superpower jostling perhaps eventually wore down the optimistic idealism which he wanted to save. Some of what he feared in a strong and self-confident America came across to Tumulty in the car after he delivered his war message to Congress: 'My message today was a message of death for our young men. How strange it seems to applaud that.'[233] After victory against the Axis powers, President Wilson did what he could to promote his League of Nations without being able to sell it from the moral high ground. Even though his goals were lofty and his language radical, the League was essentially an effort to introduce a mechanism for Europe to resolve

[230] Ibid, p 257.
[231] Ibid, p 263, footnote 12.
[232] Ibid, p 266.
[233] Ibid, p 267.

their differences without dragging America into any more wars, whilst ensuring the survival and continuation of the British Empire as a long-term global ally, and preserving classical liberal ideals of free competition on the international stage. The peace accords in Versailles ruined the effectiveness of his plan, as Clemenceau in particular pushed for harsh terms, with Lloyd George privately supporting Wilson. Hofstadter summarises the failure very well indeed:

> Just as the New Freedom had been, under the idealistic form of a crusade for the rights and opportunities of the small man, an effort to restore the archaic conditions of nineteenth-century competition, so the treaty and the League Covenant were an attempt, in the language of democracy, peace and self-determination, to retain the competitive national state system of the nineteenth century without removing the admitted source of its rivalries and animosities. It had always been Wilson's aim to preserve the essentials of the *status quo* by reforming it; but failing essentially to reform, he was unable in the end to preserve.[234]

3.7 Hoover and the Last Hurrah of Laissez-Faire[235]

Hoover's presidency was, perhaps, one of the most unlucky and unhappy ones in all of American history. Having worked himself upwards from being orphaned to receiving an engineering degree at Stanford, without the formal prior education required, he then started out as a Nevada miner, before eventually rising to an administrative position where he toured the world on prospecting projects. As the Great War wreaked havoc in Europe, he was approached by the Wilson administration to manage the relief effort in Belgium, at which he was remarkably efficient and successful, providing food and shelter for '10 million people' whilst facing 'terrible obstruction by both Germany and the Allies'.[236] These efforts prompted an outpouring of praise from many across the Atlantic, eg. the famous British economist Sir John M Keynes:

[234] Ibid, p 272.
[235] David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).
[236] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 281.

> The ungrateful Governments of Europe owe much more to the statesmanship and insight of Mr. Hoover and his band of American workers than they have yet appreciated or will ever acknowledge. The American Relief Commission, and they only, saw the European position during those months in its true perspective and felt towards it as men should.[237]

So impressive were Hoover's handling of the relief effort that he was appointed as advisor to the peace conference, where he could act and comment without any bonds, political or otherwise. He was in complete agreement with Wilson on the case for leniency towards Germany, and justified this by arguing that if she was taken down for more than the surplus of a generation, it would 'kill the chances of democracy in Germany and "she will turn either to Communism or Reaction, and will thereby become either militarily or politically on the offensive"'.[238] Prophetic words indeed, but alas the public outrage in France and Britain made conditions extremely difficult for Wilson's team, prompting Hoover to explain many years later that 'I dealt with the gaunt realities which prowled about outside'.[239] Although genuinely altruistic in his overseas relief efforts, there were obviously strategic considerations at play as well, which the notes to Wilson at Paris illustrates. Both he and the wider political community in America and Britain became increasingly worried about anti-democratic sentiment running high in Europe after the war:

> My job was to nurture the frail plants of democracy in Europe against … anarchy or Communism. And Communism was the pit into which all governments were in danger of falling when frantic peoples were driven by the Horsemen of Famine and Pestilence.[240]

Returning to America as a lauded man abroad Hoover gravitated towards politics, announcing his affiliation with the Republican platform on the condition that some progressive moderation be applied to it. He was one of the capable and incorruptible members of the infamous Harding administration, further cementing his reputation as the

[237] Ibid, p 279.
[238] Ibid, p 285.
[239] Ibid, p 284.
[240] Ibid, p 285.

Department for Commerce expanded its remit. Had Hoover been president instead in 1920, Hofstadter laments, the country might have been 'spared the ghastly farce of the Harding administration', and the prospector might have 'left office in 1929 after two terms, one of the most admired chief executives in all American history!'[241] But this was not to be, and Hoover's acceptance speech in 1928 is worthy of Hofstadter's scathing comment:

> "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than any ever before in the history of any land … We shall soon with the help of God be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from this nation." He had become a wild-eyed Utopian capitalist.[242]

Then the Depression hit almost instantaneously. His response to this crisis was highly ideological, pristinely principled, and, according to Hofstadter as well as all empirical evidence, utterly inadequate if not harmful. This reaction was somewhat surprising, given the fact that Hoover had seemed to continue along the lines prepared by Roosevelt and Wilson before him. In his book *American Individualism* for example,[243] he unequivocally stated that '*we shall safeguard to every individual an equality of opportunity to take that position in the community to which his intelligence, character, ability, and ambition entitle him'.*[244] And furthermore, during his campaign against the legendary Al Smith of New York in 1928, he re-iterated that 'American individualism is no free-for-all, that it calls for "economic justice as well as political and social justice. It is no system of laissez faire"'.[245] Even so, the President insisted upon a program of precisely *laissez-faire* crisis management when the Depression hit, with only voluntary participation of labour, farmers and capital, in which production as well as wages should be maintained even though the market had vanished. In the summer of 1931, when massive wage cuts were imminent despite this voluntary scheme, Hoover explained that his government had 'steadily urged the maintenance of wages and salaries'.[246] No positive intervention was allowed, and thus the logic of economics

[241] Ibid, p 286.
[242] Ibid, p 291.
[243] Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1922-23).
[244] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 293.
[245] Ibid, p 294.
[246] Ibid, p 299.

put downward pressure on prices, salaries and investment simultaneously, leading to scarcity of liquidity, which in turn resulted in destitution amongst large swathes of working and lower middle class Americans. This further decreased purchasing power, and so the cycle repeated and intensified in a downward spiral. When the federal government at last had to act, the relief expert Hoover insisted upon commodity purchases rather than direct grants, leaving the tangible aid efforts to the states, local municipalities and the charitable sector.

When investigating the reasons for Hoover's recalcitrance in sticking to the old formula of retrenchment, Hofstadter comes up with two main explanations. Firstly, he contends that the novelty and suddenness of the 1929 collapse 'left the inheritors of the old tradition without a matured and intelligible body of ideas to draw upon and without the flexibility or morale to conceive new ones'.[247] Since this was the first truly global financial earthquake in which the complexity of the modern world and its interconnectivity fanned the ambers, the leaders could only theorise how to rectify the situation. This was also before attempts were made in London and elsewhere to erect some kind of international framework for economic governance, and so all the capitalist nations and empires had to fend off global financial effects with local remedies. Something which leads on to the second explanation identified by Hofstadter. President Hoover refused to acknowledge that this crisis was homegrown. He did concede that 'the origins of this depression lie to some extent within our own borders through a speculative period', but qualified hic concession by referencing the World War as the main culprit, concluding that 'the major forces of depression now lie outside of the United States'.[248] In other words, all he or anyone else in America could do, was to manage the fallout of the downturn as best they might domestically, whilst waiting for the foreign root causes to be mended. Taken together lack of remedial experience and lack of understanding as to root causes, made sticking to old doctrine seem the prudent route. So instead of swift and decisive government intervention, Hoover embarked on a programme of personal negotiations with labour, farmers, and industry, combined with a projection of outward confidence which only made him look like an ostrich which had buried its head several feet into the sand. This he did by famously commenting shortly after the collapse,

[247] Ibid, p 295.
[248] Ibid, p 295.

inter alia, that 'the fundamental business of the country , that is, the production and distribution of commodities, is on a sound and prosperous basis', all whilst the banks were being overrun and men laid off by the millions.[249] Privately the President held a 'dark view of the nature and probable duration of the crisis', but he sacrificed his reputation all the same in the service of '"confidence" economics'.[250] To make matters even worse, Hoover not only denied the instigation of positive economic intervention, but withheld emergency relief from the federal government on ideological grounds:

> The moment responsibilities of any community, particularly in economic and social questions, are shifted from any part of the nation to Washington, then that community has subjected itself to a remote bureaucracy … It has lost a large part of its voice in the control of its own destiny.[251]

One need not be an astute student of politics or history to predict the President's fate when the time came for re-election in 1932. But even after Mr Roosevelt and the Democrats had ousted him in a landslide, Hoover continued to defend his record as a bulwark against the slippery slope of socialism, whilst warning against American involvement in the brooding fascist hotspots overseas. He also linked the two scourges together in an omnipotent theory of dominos. Speaking at Republican conventions in the thirties, for instance, he warned that 'the New Deal would of necessity destroy economic freedom, the basis of all other freedoms, and that tampering with "Socialist methods" would only bring a middle-class reaction toward fascism'.[252] And in relation to an isolationist strategy in confronting the Axis powers, he concluded that the idea of collective security was 'dead',[253] and that 'America's proper task in this crisis was to arm itself for defense of the Western Hemisphere. In the meantime we might give cautious help to nations that were "fighting for their freedom"'.[254] Despite such caution against military entanglements, Hoover remained wedded to the Wilsonian idea of international détente through treaty, and in 1942 he joined with American

[249] Ibid, p 296.
[250] Ibid, p 297.
[251] Ibid, p 303.
[252] Ibid, p 304.
[253] Ibid, p 305.
[254] Ibid, p 306.

diplomat Hugh Gibson in proposing fifty points for a post-war settlement. The main goal, so they submitted, was an arrangement where the 'long view should be to *restore international trade to free enterprise'.*[255] But to facilitate this one needed a referee and clear rules of engagement, which prompted a more involved approach internationally than Hoover ever supported within his own country:

> Freedom of the seas, removal (in some measure) of economic barriers among nations, the creation of some sort of League, open diplomacy, a "fair" adjustment of colonial claims, disarmament, a sanely merciful settlement, no annexations or indemnities - all these principles are shared by the historic Fourteen Points of 1918 and the fifty proposals of 1942.[256]

3.7.1 Analysis: The Wisdom of the Populace

President Hoover, once acclaimed as the saviour of millions across the Atlantic, and as one of the best bureaucrats America has ever fostered, is today remembered as the hands-off friend of big business at a time when entire sections of his own population starved in the streets. He came to the presidency with a simple test for 'the rightfulness' of his decisions being 'whether we have sustained and advanced … prosperity'.[257] At this, it can be no quarrel, he utterly failed. But he did not fail due to any deficiency in faculties or capacity, Hoover only elected to follow the tried and tested recipes of liberal orthodoxy provided to him by the Founding Fathers and their successors, meaning no government subsidies, very limited public welfare, a pegged currency without recourse to devaluation, and absolute opposition to economic stimulus via government procurement. It was circumstance combined with a stringent lack of flexibility which destroyed any prospect for greatness or re-election, because 'in the language of Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln these ideas had been fresh and invigorating; in the language of Herbert Hoover they seemed stale and oppressive'.[258] Professor Hofstadter seems to have some sympathy with the unlucky timing of Hoover's presidency, and asserts that his administration marked the final nail in the coffin

[255] Ibid, p 307.
[256] Ibid, p 308.
[257] Ibid, p 279.
[258] Ibid, p 282.

for the classic economic liberalists in America, as Mr Roosevelt drove home his borderline social democratic New Deal reforms:

> The victim of his faith in in the power of capitalism to survive and prosper without gigantic governmental props, Hoover was the last presidential spokesman of the hallowed doctrines of laissez-faire liberalism, and his departure from Washington marked the decline of a great tradition.[259]

Thus an era which commenced with Andrew Jackson and his (then) populist revolt against elitist special interests for free markets, culminated in another populist revolt against economic special interests for government intervention. On the international scene Hoover mirrored Wilson, so says Hofstadter, but added a base of economic freedom as an absolute prerequisite. He also preferred a non-interventionist policy towards dictatorships and totalitarianism, advocating that time would work to the advantage of the free world, and that these fascist and Marxist states would eventually collapse in on themselves - in hindsight not completely without merit. The best thing Americans could do, meanwhile, was to 'hold fast to their traditional liberties and "revitalize" democracy at home'.[260] His *laissez-faire* credentials were maintained by an ardent opposition to all forms of 'managed economy', which he saw as a furnace for fascist and Marxist reactions.

Hoover was a president whom started out as one of the most popular figures of his time, and ended up in a political ditch, chewed out by the cruel mistress of time. What he attempted was to 'go back, back to the rosier world of 1913 - and even beyond that, for the men of 1913 themselves turned to the mid-nineteenth century for their governing principles'.[261] His was a clear warning of what can happen when politicians and their systems misjudge the balance between leadership and doctrinaire fanaticism without heeding both popular demand and empirical evidence. But the most important lesson from his presidency in the context of this thesis, was indeed his demise as office-holder. When the people appraised his strategy against the Great Depression, and saw that it was not good, to coin a

[259] Ibid, p 282.
[260] Ibid, p 305.
[261] Ibid, p 308.

phrase, they were free and able to choose a man with a different strategy which better fitted their economic realities. If that had not been the case, if some system or machinery had locked them into place with shackles of law, then Hoover might have gotten his reaction. This was the lesson that did not register with European overlords in Greece during the 2008 crisis, giving them the Golden Dawn Party as a prize: 'That the New Deal might presage an American fascism, as Hoover insisted, was at least a possibility - one that conventional liberals generally refused to admit; but that Hooverism had brought a reaction toward the New Deal was a historical certainty.'[262]

3.8 FDR and the Anglo-American Liberal Empire[263]

Due to the circumstances of his illness, his presidential terms, and his death in office, FDR's post-humous mythology cult will forever loom over any American politician with liberal aspirations. Like both Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt, this reformer arrived on the political scene from a well-to-do background in which every opportunity was afforded him in his rise to prominence. And like his predecessors Franklin D Roosevelt made the most of his fortunate circumstances by accessing and utilising an undeniable political and rhetorical talent to the utmost. Having trodden the familiar path from Harvard, and then on to Colombia Law School, young Roosevelt soon attracted a following within the Hudson Valley Democratic Party, and was elected as a legislator in New York on a Democratic wave in 1910. When Wilson appointed him to his Cabinet in 1913, he gained executive and national experience as a Navy man during the Great War, which earned him a nomination for running mate to James Cox in 1920. After their defeat against Harding, Roosevelt's illness emerged, and according to Hofstadter this prompted a certain degree of change as well as an increase of determination in the young politician, polishing away some of the upper-class arrogance and supercilious attitude, whilst strengthening his resolve. He emerged as a conciliatory force in the Democratic Party, bringing together different wings of the organisation, especially rural protestants of the Wilsonian variety and more radical elements in the East. This won him the Governorship of New York, where he successfully stroke a balance between labour and capital as the older Roosevelt managed before.

[262] Ibid, p 309.
[263] Jean Edward Smith, *FDR* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2008).

When the crash occurred in 1929 one could begin to make out the remarkable skills Roosevelt developed in perceiving the mood and direction of the country, as well as his preferred tactics of 'weaving together' opposing and often contradictory views and policies. As Professor Hofstadter observes 'he had little regard for abstract principle but a sharp intuitive knowledge of popular feeling', which he used to direct his undeniable political skills to great effect.[264] During the 1932 campaign Roosevelt ran alongside John N Garner of Texas, and made many promises to many different interests, not least the conservative farmers and businessmen whom were angling for some kind of initiative on the supply-side of the economy. This led to problems of consistency, and some liberal commentators were not impressed by their candidate being all things to all men:

> All Roosevelt's promises - to restore purchasing power and mass employment and relieve the needy and aid the farmer and raise agricultural prices and balance the budget and lower the tariff and continue protection - added up to a very discouraging performance to those who hoped for a coherent liberal program. *The New Republic* called the campaign "an obscene spectacle" on both sides.[265]

When coming to the presidency, Roosevelt immediately brought forward relief and reforms in what has become known as the first New Deal. Focusing on output and demand, he quickly adopted some of the very policies advocated by Hoover and criticised by himself concerning scarcity, but remained at arm's length from labour despite seemingly radical novelties like the NRA being introduced. The cautious approach to state intervention in this period chimes well with Roosevelt's more conservative early instincts. At a Fourth of July speech in Tammany Hall, for example, he boasted about a 'new doctrine' which aimed for 'complete separation of business and government'. As Hofstadter dryly puts it, this was a rather 'ironic message for the future architect of the New Deal'.[266] But one must not be overly judgmental in critiquing the relative tardiness of immediate progress during the initial phase of Roosevelt's administration. Even though it is true, as the Professor submits, that this President was no grand strategist, it seems also to be inevitable that he felt inclined to

[264] Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p 312.
[265] Ibid, p 325.
[266] Ibid, p 321.

steady the ship through actually implementing what Hoover should have, before initiating his experimental phase:

> The first New Deal, the New Deal of 1933-4, was conceived mainly for recovery. Reform elements and humane measures of immediate relief were subsidiary to the organized and subsidized scarcity advocated by the Chamber of Commerce, the Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Grange, and incarnated in the NRA and AAA.[267]

When the Supreme Court had 'torn up his entire program for labor and industry' in 1935, the President then shifted to the left.[268] By Hofstadter's assertion this came about from a combination of expediency, anger against his own chums in the upper classes, and a genuine concern for purchasing power amongst the more destitute elements of American society. It surely also helped that 'labor seemed on the verge of withdrawing political support', that the surge for populist leader Huey Long 'showed the dissatisfaction of a large part of the electorate', and that 'no sign of a really decisive turn toward business recovery had yet come'.[269] Thus, as the second New Deal ushered in collective bargaining for unions, social security, increased expenditure in welfare and poverty relief, permanent government procurement programmes along Keynesian lines, and a full-on war against trusts and monopolies, 'Roosevelt's alliance with the left had not been planned; it had not even grown; it had erupted'.[270] This was the point in time at which Roosevelt was nearest any social democratic or socialist reconstruction of the economy, although his aims were essentially identical to Teddy Roosevelt and Wilson in that his progressive reforms would save and perfect capitalism. Even so *laissez-faire* had now been thoroughly laid to rest, which was a novelty, and FDR was by far the more progressive of the three reforming musketeers, in that his 'argument carried to the brink of socialism', even though 'it was not socialism that he was proposing'.[271] After four years of a political social liberalist programme in action for the first time in America, Roosevelt decided to step back from the precipice. The economy was now in good working order, not least because of increased output towards the Allies, but

[267] Ibid, p 328.
[268] Ibid, p 333.
[269] Ibid, p 333.
[270] Ibid, p 333.
[271] Ibid, p 337.

more importantly an obstructionist Supreme Court as well as conservative elements within his own party made it risky to remain exposed. Thus he proclaimed to Congress: 'We have now passed the period of internal conflict in the launching of our program of social reform', and continued, 'our full energies may now be released to invigorate the processes of recovery in order to preserve our reforms'.[272]

When the war arrived FDR, like Wilson before him, chartered an isolationist course for the benefit of his voters at home, whilst quietly preparing to aid the Allies when the time came. On the domestic front he therefore provided carefully crafted messages, such as the one he delivered as hostilities commenced in Europe: 'I hope the United States will keep out … Every effort of our government will be directed toward that end'.[273] Yet as early as 1937 he had begun to condition his people for the coming storm, 'when he proposed to "quarantine" aggressor nations and asserted that "there is no escape" for the United States from international anarchy and instability "through isolation or neutrality"'.[274] Like Wilson during the Great War it was clear to all where the sympathies of his administration lay, and in one of his most famous speeches he 'described the United States as "the great arsenal of democracy," and stated that "no dictator, no combination of dictators," could weaken American determination to aid Britain'.[275] Even with all the cunning devices that Roosevelt and Churchill combined managed to introduce, support for involvement in yet another European nightmare was hanging by a thread. What Brigadier General Beauregard did for Lincoln at Fort Sumter, however, Admiral Nagumo did for Roosevelt, when his Japanese carrier group assaulted Pearl Harbor without warning. The United States was now firmly in the war, with overwhelming support on the home front, and could finally mobilise her enormous productive resources openly in favour of the British Empire. Churchill remained the senior partner for some time, evidenced for instance by his generals (prudently, as it turned out) getting their way by committing forces to the North Africa campaign, but when D-Day finally arrived it was with new leadership at the helm of the Western alliance. After two centuries Britain gave way, as the New World came to the rescue of the Old.

[272] Ibid, pp 337-338.
[273] Ibid, pp 340-341.
[274] Ibid, p 340.
[275] Ibid, p 341.

Having first wanted a full demobilisation of all but the victors after the defeat of the Axis, Roosevelt soon favoured the UN Charter, but had his misgivings about its effectiveness:

> That Roosevelt ever had deep faith in the United Nations as an agency of world peace is doubtful. His original and spontaneous reaction was to seek for peace and stability not through a general concert of all the nations but rather through a four-power establishment of the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and China, which was to police the world. Cordell Hull reports that in the spring of 1943 Roosevelt wanted all other nations, including France, to be disarmed.[276]

At any rate he wanted to quell all 'unilateral action' in future, and therefore needed an international legal foundation in order to ensure this. But as the two global wars had illustrated, America was now in a position of relative strength, which meant that she would have to take the lead in any future conflict. He thus sought to combine multilateralism with a strong mandate for action, lest the United States and Britain be forced to contravene their own organisation when and if military responses were required, and the United Nations should therefore have 'the power to act quickly and decisively to keep the peace by force, if necessary'.[277] Apart from such an increased mandate and quasi-governmental structures like the Security Council designed to uphold it, Roosevelt kept with Wilson's view of a world populated by independent units cooperating within a compulsory framework. This he hoped to achieve via 'a people's peace' based upon 'independence and self-determination'.[278] Incidental to such a view was the thorny issue of European colonies. Roosevelt was deeply committed to the Special Relationship forged with Britain during the war, and so had to thread carefully, but nevertheless believed it 'would be necessary to loosen the bonds of the British, French, and Dutch empires; he believed that the British and French were informally leagued together to sustain each other's colonial possessions'.[279] Of course America also had more selfish reasons for breaking up the *status quo ante*, not least in oil rich territories such as the Middle East and Persia. Interestingly the President played with other ideas familiar from Hobhouse and his vision for the British Empire, but died in office before any of these

[276] Ibid, p 342.
[277] Ibid, p 342.
[278] Ibid, p 342.
[279] Ibid, p 344.

could be developed further: 'Roosevelt appears to have believed that the ruthless imperialism of the older colonial powers might be replaced by a liberal and benevolent American penetration that would be of advantage both to the natives and to American commerce.'[280]

3.8.1 Analysis: Global Social Liberalism

The main theme of Hofstadter's commentary on the Roosevelt years is one of flexibility and confidence in personal custodianship, but with progressive and internationalist reflexes in its foundation. 'At the heart of the New Deal', he asserts, 'there was not a philosophy but a temperament. The essence of this temperament was Roosevelt's confidence that even when he was operating in unfamiliar territory he could do no wrong, commit no serious mistakes'.[281] The professor is not taken to the Roosevelt myth, where everything done by the benevolent cult leader was supposedly carefully master-minded from the 1910s through to the President's death, but recommends to his readers that one should appreciate FDR's policies as piecemeal expediencies which nevertheless had direction in the most general sense: 'The New Deal will never be understood by anyone who looks for a single thread of policy, a far-reaching, far-seeing plan. It was a series of improvisations, many adopted very suddenly, many contradictory. Such unity as it had was in political strategy, not economics'.[282] This President brilliantly read his electorate - 'he became an individual sounding-board for the grievances and remedies of the nation' - and then developed and appropriated policies and tactics as he went along.[283] Such a *modus operandi* could only have been possible in an era where the public longed for experimentation, and was more forgiving if something did not work, which made the 1930s and FDR a perfect match for each other. All this is not to say that Roosevelt lacked conviction or morals, only that he did not care much for details and principled ideologies, but rather for empirical politics in a deep and wide progressive pond of ideas.

[280] Ibid, p 345.
[281] Ibid, p 311.
[282] Ibid, p 327.
[283] Ibid, pp 323-324.

Apart from his illness, his three terms, and his sudden demise, Roosevelt will surely be remembered for his radical economic policies at home, and his leadership of America as the new hegemonic superpower abroad. What he understood which had eluded Hoover was the fact that the country could no longer be a puritan capitalist outpost without regard for the gravity of economic and social change. There simply was no frontier left, and the Gilded Age had rapidly and dangerously brought the economy out of balance, with huge surpluses of production threatening to overwhelm a domestic market which seriously lacked purchasing power. All the twentieth century leaders had sought to defend *laissez-faire* capitalism by directing this abundance of production into the global market, but a huge export surplus cannot last forever without a fight-back in a reality of competing nations and empires. Thus something had to give, either production decrease or demand increase was needed. Instead Hoover propped up supply whilst demand plummeted, and when Roosevelt came to power conditions were therefore, in all their horridness, perfect for a grand social liberal experiment:

> In cold terms, American capitalism had come of age, the great era of individualism, expansion, and opportunity was dead. Further, the drying up of "natural" economic forces required that the government step in and guide the creation of a new economic order.[284]

The same goes, in many ways, for the situation abroad, where an equally horrible world war tossed all the pieces into the air for FDR to reassemble on the board after his own liking. And his own liking was much the same as Wilson and Hoover before him, but this time no one would or could stand in the way of America and their world organisation, not after she had come to Europe's rescue twice in thirty years. Additionally, Roosevelt presided over a country which had grown immensely powerful in a very short span of time, unequivocally being the senior partner of Britain, and brandishing moral capital which Stalin must have feared more than any military foe. Even though the ailing President would never live to see his social liberal project spill out onto the global stage, there can be no doubt that his New Deal, and his insistence upon the end of unilateralism, played a decisive role in the shaping

[284] Ibid, p 326.

of that brave new world. Hofstadter insists that 'Roosevelt is bound to be the dominant figure in the mythology of any resurgent American liberalism', which is almost a truism today, but together with Wilson, Gladstone, and Churchill, he must also be the dominant figure in the mythology of liberal empire-building.[285]

3.9 Liberalism and the American Journey

This chapter has drawn out the central lessons from the evolution of liberalism and popular sovereignty in the United States. The aim has been to show how particular philosophies have gradually moved the centre of politics in a social direction, approaching the organic or harmonious society which was mooted by Hobhouse and other liberal thinkers in the first part of the twentieth century, before the Americans and the British finally applied the great sum of theory and experience to the international situation as they found it in 1945. Additionally, it has been the goal to illustrate how the best leaders of a liberal order like that of the US perceive the wishes and demands of the population in their contribution to national life, and also why this link between voters and politicians is crucial to the American liberal idea. Any attempt to analyse history in such broad terms is naturally prone to controversy and debate, but that should be welcomed. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the conclusions of the preceding pages, it seems self-evident to this writer that there must be some sort of continuum from one generation of leaders and thinkers to the next, because neither politics nor philosophy exists in a vacuum of amnesia in which the past is silent. Furthermore, this continuum must be influenced by a constant dialogue between the governed and governing classes in order to maintain liberal legitimacy. If the leaders become remote and aloof without heeding the reactions of the population in some way, the liberal State encounters troubled waters.

3.9.1 From the Old to the New World

When the Founding Fathers made their choice and broke with the Crown, their reasons and determinations were manifold, but they all acted as British subjects in rebellion against a particular constitutional settlement with particular strengths and weaknesses. Although

[285] Ibid, p 347.

certainly influenced by the idealism of French liberalism, this thesis has submitted that the American Revolution was *prima facie* a last resort instigated by desperate men who had in vain sought to petition their government in order to enjoy the same freedoms as their fellow Britons across the seas. It was therefore the abrogation of the charters, meaning mainly *Magna Carta* and *The English Bill of Rights* plus auxiliary aspects of the British constitution, which was the main driver of the revolutionary effort. Consequently, the new American liberalism in the *Declaration of Independence* was modelled upon English Whig concepts of negative liberties, but with elements of French theory as well as a republican machinery. Sovereignty moved from the monarch and his Parliament, to the American people and the US Constitution.

3.9.2 Jefferson's Tilt to Popular Rule

The Whig model for a liberal society did not entail immediate and expansive modes of popular rule. It was, in fact, more concerned with the rule of law and rights of property and personality than with democracy. Thomas Jefferson was an important figure amongst the Founding Fathers due to his drive for an agrarian democratic yeomanry acting as the focus of an American liberal order which included both British and French elements. He insisted upon majority rule and decentralised government, and thus opposed the Hamiltonian urging of a Federal State modelled upon the British machinery of absolute power at the centre. Many of the most important tenets of republicanism still vital today, were first introduced by Jefferson. His was a liberal populism without popular demand, but which established the philosophies upon which later evolution has been based.

3.9.3 Jackson's Mass Democracy

Although there is some debate concerning the actual causality of Andrew Jackson's career upon the rapid expansion of democratic government, it is beyond doubt that he did contribute immensely to the shift from closed systems of gentlemanly backroom deals to mass campaigning for popular issues. After the 'corrupt bargain' struck between President Quincy Adams and Secretary Clay led to a strong reaction amongst western and southern Democrats against the seaboard elites, Jackson's successful comeback in 1828 ushered in modern positive and negative campaigning, and saw a significant rise in turnout. His was a

liberal populism which for the first time found an audience, and thus awoke the great power of the masses against the elites.

3.9.4 Lincoln's Universalism

The events of the Civil War and of the abolitionist movement are obviously at the forefront when Abraham Lincoln is the subject of investigation. His own rationale for his rhetoric and actions are more nuanced than many would like to believe, however, in that the well-being of the Republic, and the preservation and expansion of its freedoms, was more important than any particular issue, even emancipation. Yet the President was morally outraged by the 'peculiar institution', but being a universalist his contempt was coated in principled liberalism rather than identity politics for the rights of one specific group. This was also the key to his success, for without the establishment of a plausible link between black bondage in the South, and white anxieties in the North, it is doubtful whether he could have mobilised against secession at all. His was a liberal populism for the universal freedom of all men, showcasing the vital interdependency between individual and society, thereby initiating a move towards organic liberalism.

3.9.5 Teddy Roosevelt's Break with Laissez-Faire

Ever since the American republic was established at the close of the eighteenth century, minimal government intervention, especially at the federal level, had been sacrosanct to all its liberalising leaders. The older Roosevelt was the first to understand that if one had a goal of preserving the liberal philosophy of the Founding Fathers, the time had come to instigate a more comprehensive view of State responsibilities. He took the grievances of the rising urban working class and merged them with the apprehensions of Middle America in order to protect the core liberal project from authoritarian Marxist and fascist attacks at its vulnerable underbelly. His was a liberal populism which demonstrated how a new organic understanding of common good could benefit most sections of society, at the expense of the utopian and plutocratic extremes.

3.9.6 Wilson and the Emerging Internationalism

If Roosevelt shook up established orthodoxy domestically, Woodrow Wilson was forced to do the same on a global scale. By carefully developing his New Freedom in opposition to the trusts and big business combinations, he sought to re-affirm Jeffersonian equality of opportunity through Jacksonian democratic legitimacy, and was generally successful in stabilising the economy. Wilson was driven by a combination of genteel morality and steadfast adherence to British liberal doctrine, but like Roosevelt he also identified the role for government in facilitating true liberalism by alleviating social disparities. When the Great War threatened to overthrow British supremacy in world affairs, the President saw this as an extended threat towards liberal civilisation, and therefore engaged America outside its own hemisphere for the first time. At the close of hostilities he aimed to export the American liberal model to the world, and although the League of Nations ultimately failed, it was nevertheless a bold first step laying the foundations of a comprehensive liberal and social global order twenty years later. His was a liberal populism of principled philosophy coupled with idealist morality, which moved the American idea into the international arena.

3.9.7 Hoover as an Organic Lesson

The story thus far has shown that the core of any liberal enterprise must be principles married with movement. From the Founding Fathers onwards the strength of the American Republic depended on great flexibility of thought and action for the preservation of a project which was continually under threat from one direction or the other. Herbert Hoover is proof that even the ablest of men must strike a balance between foundational philosophical concepts and organic change, for that is the life blood of liberalism. Instead he remained completely shackled by his most conservative instincts when the Depression hit America, and suffered greatly for it. Not as greatly as did his miserable people, however, which serves as a further lesson that liberal societies can survive the most horrific hardships, as long as the consensual contract it has forged with its inhabitants allows for reaction and renewal. His was a liberal populism of the past applied to the present without modicum or flexibility, showcasing the need for constant development in order to preserve liberty for the future.

3.9.8 FDR the Empiricist

Hoover's recalcitrance gifted Franklin Roosevelt with an overwhelming mandate for experimentation. This was a perfect match, since his temperament was one of empirical trial and error, but rooted in broad liberal principles which ensured just enough restraint to secure the equilibrium between renewal and tradition. Like Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt before, he thus started out as a moderately conservative liberal, but moved towards progressive social liberalism when external and internal threats so demanded. On the international front he stood with the old Allies to defeat fascism, and in the process American hegemony took the mantle from the British Empire as guarantor of liberalism internationally. Although sceptical towards Wilsonian morality based on prior experience, FDR finally endorsed the establishment of a new global governance made in the image of American and British social liberalism, culminating with the UN Charter. His was a liberal populism which identified and alleviated missing pieces of social equality within the American model, and eventually took this model to the global theatre of world governance.

4 Conclusions: Global Liberalism and its Future

In analysing how liberalism developed in the American context through the distillation of several important statesmen and philosophical traditions, this thesis has sought to build on the theoretical framework of Hobhouse and his liberal peers and show how the Anglo-American liberal tradition influenced the prevalent thinking of global leaders such as Woodrow Wilson and FDR. It has, furthermore, attempted to explain how the only way in which liberal governance can survive and thrive, is by continuous development. In America this development has always been tied to state building, furthering the English conception of natural rights in combination with Jeffersonian ideas about de-centralisation and republicanism based in French idealist theories. From the advent of the nineteenth century onwards, each political leader has added his own interpretation of the founding principles to the vast depository of the Republic, and it is this evolutionary dialectic which makes up one part of the organic liberalism which Hobhouse promoted in his writings. The other part, equally vital to any liberal project aspiring to prevail against less savoury modes of government, is the participatory principle in which society and individual move together towards a more harmonious future. This is why the lesson of President Hoover is of such importance in understanding the delicate functioning of the liberal tradition, and that for two distinct reasons. Firstly, his failure in developing doctrine and ideology to alleviate modern challenges proved just how organic and flexible liberal philosophy needs to be if it shall remain relevant. And secondly, the alternative course taken by the American public in ousting Hoover and providing FDR with a broad mandate for experimentation shows the importance of a democratic outlet in situations where leadership fails and policies need to be revised. The critical journey which liberalism has taken in the English-speaking world, has moved both theory, philosophy, and policy in the same general direction, and that organic interdependence has been the golden thread which this thesis has sought to investigate. In the following, each of its research questions will be summarised in turn.

4.1 How has liberalism developed and why did it take a social turn?

The broad church of philosophical thought that has been labelled as liberalist or liberal, encompasses many different traditions across time and space, but in the modern context it is usually understood as a British and French joint enterprise. Anglosphere liberalism was traced by Hobhouse back to the *Great Charter* of 1215 and its more primitive antecedents, where it was 're-discovered' by Whig philosophers and reformers in seventeenth century England. Through the Glorious Revolution these elements of English progressives prevailed, and so their *Bill of Rights* was enacted in 1688-89. This document has become an important source within the unwritten British constitution, granting natural rights against and independently of the Crown. When colonial settlers in the Thirteen Colonies began to petition King George III due to harsh Tory impositions from the centre in London, they based their arguments upon these natural freedoms emanating from the charters. This is also the reason why the *Declaration of Independence* set forth by the Founding Fathers in 1776 argued that the denial of charters – even after petition – justified a break with the Crown. Thomas Jefferson modified the legalistic natural law tenets of the *Declaration* and the *Constitution* with ideas from the French school of idealism, *inter alia* substituting 'property' for 'the pursuit of happiness' in the former, and advocating for a republican mode of government in the latter.

At the beginning liberty and democracy were seen as vital checks on each other, but over time liberalism and its theories evolved into a more comprehensive and positivist ideology on both sides of the Atlantic. This happened in the form of a series of actions and reactions closely following political realities, but in America philosophical developments were always rooted in the Jeffersonian combination between English and French concepts, in which majority rule, de-centralised agrarian government, and a continuous expansion of the democratic plank were foremost. When the American Civil War had been won by Abraham Lincoln, and liberty in theory had reached all creeds of the population, an expansionist *laissez-faire* version of industrial revolution and free trade eventually led to a moral and economic backlash against the spoilsmen of the Gilded Age. This is where the social turn began, but it was only completed when the Great Depression forced a reaction against negative liberalism without positive measures for organic symbiosis of individual and

society, through which true freedom could be achieved by introducing Hobhouse's arguments for equality of opportunity.

4.2 What role for popular sovereignty and populism?

The twists and turns taken by liberalism throughout its evolution was only possible through experimentation, and that experimentation only occurred through pressure from below. This has become more prevalent as the franchise has been expanded, but its origins can be traced all the way back to the Barons at Runnymeade, even if that franchise only consisted of a handful of aristocrats. Likewise, when the American Revolution occurred it was a popular, if not a populist, revolt against distant elites which put the wheels in motion, and when Andrew Jackson fought the stilted plutocracy in Washington to break the caucus system, his was a campaign by an outsider against the centre. For the first time both parties became conscious about the latent power of the increasing number of yeomen voters in that election, opening up the field for more radical forces later in the century. The Civil War was a tangible testament to the great consequences populist activists could unleash upon the political classes, and its resolution only consolidated the piecemeal progression of organic liberalism in the Republic. When economic booms, busts, and eventually a devastating depression hit America, her citizens were able to direct their malcontent towards the political leaders responsible for greed and speculation via the ballot. And thus threats from fascist and Marxist alternatives were staved off as the popular will rejected an outdated version of liberalism for a new social variety. When the United States emerged on the global stage during two world wars, which would transform the country into a new hegemon of Western leadership, the social liberal ideals influenced the thinking of Wilson and FDR as they insisted upon a new global world order of self-determination and national sovereignty for all nations, resulting at long last in a world organisation with the backing needed to become a permanent fixture of international relations.

4.3 Why is liberalism under pressure today?

In the introduction to this thesis Patrick Deneen and Edward Luce provided fresh critiques of the liberal world order as epitomised by globalism. Where the latter of these offered some hope for steadying the liberal ship into calmer waters by heeding the large protests against its omnipotence, the former had already started the search for something with which to replace this ancient philosophy. Who, then, is the wiser commentator of the two? What is abundantly clear is that liberalism is in trouble globally. From a position of continuous expansion and evolution, even being successfully defended from authoritarianism in two consecutive world wars, and winning the Cold War of ideology for America and her allies, the rivals of liberal hegemony are again on manoeuvres, in Russia and in China. Liberalism has been under mortal threat before only to re-emerge as an even stronger adversary, but this time popular discontent with the very system itself has festered in its heartlands of Britain and the United States.

When Hobhouse argued for an 'International State' chiselled from a benevolent and liberal version of the British Empire, he did so whilst appreciating that liberalism must have a utilitarian purpose as well as a coherent and principled philosophical framework. And accordingly, a social liberalism is of no use if it ends up being prohibiting rather than liberating – its aim is to provide equal opportunity for all to reach their full potential in their 'pursuit of happiness'. In a liberal system like the American Republic, where different interests and classes have been carefully balanced against each other in order to limit the scope for arbitrary and illiberal rule to take hold, history has shown that the best guidance for its leaders has always remained the moderating or accentuating mass of the people. This is also true of the liberal world order which Kissinger and others attribute to the Westphalia peace and its emphasis on national sovereignty; it works well when the mechanisms and treaties set up by prudent men restrict the zeal of war mongering nationalists, but if subjects and citizens feel trapped and powerless, if there is no recourse for changing sentiment in such a system - if elections and debate in national contexts always run into a wall of domestic legalism or international globalism – then one will reap reactions which can take very dangerous forms indeed. The elites have been the friend of liberalism when they have understood popular uprisings as correctives upon their own liberal projects, and modified

them accordingly. The balancing act of being populist without becoming an autocratic demagogue is what should concern modern leaders, for populism in itself is not a weakness but a strength. Thomas Jefferson was a populist without an audience of the masses, and yet his liberal American philosophy has survived as a *Polaris* of good republican governance ever since.

Liberalism, in conclusion, is first and foremost an organic beast with manifold conceptions and many varieties, but with a central theme of freedom, equality, and justice at its heart. It has been the aim of this writer to investigate the foundations of the current liberal world order, and to determine how and why it came to dominate. Only through careful analysis of the past, it is submitted, is it possible to glean the answers sought by Deneen, Luce, and many others of how this ancient ideology is to face modern problems in the same successful manner which it has managed so many times prior. The flexibility and constant evolution of liberalism is also its greatest weakness, because it will always seek to perfect its delivery, even when the route forward might be harmful to its own existence. As Hobhouse theorised this penchant for reaching as far as is possible towards human betterment is a virtue, but it is predicated upon one important aspect of its philosophy which it can never shed. That aspect, of course, is the democratic arm of liberalism, in which participation and voice serve as directives upon a vast machinery of legal and political functioning, without which it will surely falter into a benevolent paternalism which spells its certain demise, at least as a vehicle for true liberty. The global hegemony of this system is relatively recent, and the liberal world order brought into being in 1945 even more recent still, which is the reason one must look to successful domestic examples in the countries which dictated the new arrangements in the first place. This is why American experimentation with British and French theory has been the object of the thesis in forming a coherent view of the current and future world order those nations bequeathed to the world. For globalism has rapidly expanded into the void of colonialism over the last seventy years, diluting any stark difference between the national and the international spheres. Yet since the international liberal framework went up at the close of WWII, a victory for the Anglo-American alliance, liberalism has gradually lost its popular appeal, and now the world is in an era of reaction against it. If those who cherish liberalism are to beat that reaction and prevent authoritarian

relapse, the only route is through a return to a philosophy in which the individual is at its centre nationally, and the nation state internationally.

Much like the naiveté of nuclear unilateralists, a communitarian and nativist reply to the faceless coercion of globalism attempts to put the genie back into the bottle. The answer surely lies in a disentanglement of the global liberal order – a return to the social liberalism of Hobhouse, Wilson and FDR – but it must still be recognisably liberal and coherent, lest better organised authoritarian competitors pounce on the opportunity.

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