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Constituting a Revolution:
Gouverneur Morris, John Quincy Adams, and the French Revolution's Imprint on American Identity

An honors thesis presented to the
Department of History,
University at Albany, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in History.

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Introduction

Paris experienced more than a change of seasons as the spring turned to summer in 1792. The French Revolution, once an experiment in moderate liberalism, had devolved into a bloodbath of political extremism. Leaders of the Jacobin Club simultaneously lauded the Revolution's virtue and decapitated its opposition. By the end of the summer, the Jacobins escalated from revolutionaries to regicides.

Gouverneur Morris, the American Minister Plenipotentiary to France, bore witness as the streets of Paris began to stain with blood. Morris had been skeptical of the Revolution since the outbreak, but the events of 1792 confirmed his disapproval. He most feared the populace, that is to say the violent peasants and artisans who worked with their hands. They often proved the most violent. "Thank God America has no populace," Morris wrote to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, "I hope the Education and Manners will long prevent that Evil."[1]

One can initially misread Morris's exclamation as panicked hyperbole. On its surface, it represented an observational fear. A more detailed examination, however, reveals that his comments illustrated a dichotomy between the American and French revolutionary experiences. Both nations experienced a political upheaval rooted in liberal tradition. One produced a thriving republican government, the other collapsed into a war-ravaged dictatorship.

Morris recognized that the French Revolution differed dramatically from the American War for Independence. He was not alone in doing so; John Quincy Adams explored these issues as well, while he served in the Netherlands and Prussia. In noticing the distinctions, these men clarified their answers to the questions: what is America? Who are Americans? This is the story of the conceptualization of American identity from the perspective of the Early Republic period's diplomatic corps. It explains how the French Revolution's legacy extended beyond Europe and permanently shaped the political identity of early Americans.

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[1] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 1 August 1792 , as cited in *Founders* Online http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-24-02-0255

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The French Revolution influenced the developing United States in a variety of capacities. Historians of the Early Republic period have addressed the French legacy in a number of different areas. These categories include political, cultural, and social terms. From the political perspective, the most useful studies include Gordon Wood's *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789 – 1815*, as well as Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick's *The Age of Federalism*.

In *Empire of Liberty,* Wood argued that America came into her own political being, that is removed from her revolutionary stage, with the establishment of political, cultural and economic institutions. He noted that American observations of France's experience refracted back into the partisan political discourse of the period. "The meaning of the French Revolution," Wood remarked, "now became entwined in the quarrel that Americans were having among themselves over the direction of their own revolution."[2] According to Wood, the French Revolution sharpened the lines between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in America. This interpretation served as the conventional wisdom regarding the French Revolution's influence on the Early American Republic. Although correct, this position only scratches the surface of the French legacy on American politics.

Elkins and McKitrick's *The Age of Federalism* explored the Early Republic period through the prism of the emergence of a federal political system, highlighting the relationship between national and state governments. Like Wood, Elkins and McKitrick push on the notion that the French Revolution shaped the partisan divide in the United States. The pair, however, explore this farther than Wood. They noted that "…[partisanship] seems to have consisted of efforts to manage public opinion not so much with references either to personalities, on the one hand, or on the other, to particular issues – that had been done before – but on a broad question

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[2] Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789 – 1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177.

of sentiment, back of which lurked the question of who should be the custodians of that sentiment."[3] This abstract comment speaks to the partisan tensions that coincided with the French Revolution. The sentiment referred to the question of what it means to be an American, the custodians were the partisans. In this sense, *The Age of Federalism* provided a most instructive starting point for this project.

In *American Politics in the Early Republic*, the historian James Sharp noted that the French Revolution "awakened democratic spirits" in America.[4] Sharp explained how Americans initially received the French Revolution warmly. They saw the events in France as a "reflecting pool" in which their values could shine. Once the revolution escalated, however, Sharp reinforced the aforementioned literature. "The violent turn the French Revolution took in the summer of 1792, " he wrote, "…aggravated the ideological polarity between the federal administration and the opposition."[5] This echoed the interpretations of Wood as well as Elkins and McKitrick. The value of Sharp's analysis resides in his nuance. He portrayed how the American reaction to the French Revolution was dynamic; it changed over time. The reflecting pool conceptualization also indicated that Americans measured themselves against foreign nations, a central premise of this thesis.

From a social context, the French Revolution inspired a number of civil associations, particularly in the New England region. Eugene Link's *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800* recounted this legacy. These associations consisted of individuals who fervently agitated on behalf of a more democratic America, a continuation of the American Revolution. Although Link aimed to explore the Democratic-Republican Societies outside of the context of the French Revolution, he does credit its role in inspiring the organizations.[6] From this perspective, one can

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[3] Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 355.
[4] James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 69.
[5] Ibid, 73.

see the overlap between political and social influences.

Simon Newman also explored the social effects of the French Revolution on the United States. In *Parades and Politics of the Street,* he noted how "…celebrations of the French Revolution engulfed the festive calendar of the early American republic, overwhelming the annual rites commemorating the anniversaries of Independence day and the president's birthday."[7] Newman noted that the French Revolution sparked a patriotic fervor in America. It led to a deeper understanding of notions of American democracy, and sparked public discourse on participation in the public sphere.[8] Newman's study, although limited in scope and detail, hinted at the important notion that the French experience seeped into the America's consciousness of identity. Although he did not explicitly address identity, Newman provided a springboard into the subject.

Lloyd Kramer's essay *The French Revolution and the Creation of American Political Culture* is perhaps the most well-rounded study of the French Revolution's imprint on the Early American Republic. Like the other scholars, Kramer noted that the turbulence of the French Revolution sharped the political divides in America. He also expanded on the importance of the Democratic-Republican Societies. Kramer's emphasis on the cultural impact of the French Revolution makes the essay so valuable. He paid special attention to the religious communities. According to Kramer, American clergy celebrated the early stages of the French Revolution as the ushering in of a divine period.[9] As the events in France spiraled out of control, however, the American Christian community began an anti-Enlightenment campaign. Kramer described this period's motif as "…avoid French infidels like the plague."[10] He went so far as to say that the

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[6] Eugene Perry Links*, Democratic Republican Societies, 1790 – 1800 (*New York: Octagon Books Incorporated, 1965), 20.
[7] Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 120.
[8] Ibid, 135.
[9] Lloyd S. Kramer "The French Revolution and the Creation of American Political Culture" in Joseph Klaits ed. *The Global Ramification of the French Revolution* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1989), 47.

French Revolution served as the precipitating event which started the Second Great Awakening. Although this assertion gives the French Revolution too much credit in influencing American culture, it highlights the essential current of the historiography. Historians have almost always agreed that the French Revolution played a significant role shaping the domestic political culture of the Early American Republic.

Despite this consensus, there still exists a vast gap in the literature. Although a number of scholars have hinted at the influence of the French Revolution in constructing an American identity, no one explicitly states it. In addition, no one places an emphasis on a legal-constitutional interpretation. Only Sharp mentioned it in passing. This proves to be an essential element in understanding how the French Revolution shaped American identity. In order to fully understand this imprint, one must turn to a constitutional analysis.

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Both the American and French Revolutions addressed the issue of sovereignty in a political society. They each provided answers to the question of who is sovereign in a modern state? Although they agreed that sovereignty resides in the people, they had enormously different approaches to this sentiment. Whereas the United States implemented a republican system of government with representatives for the public, the French took a more democratic approach. The United States codified her government with a detailed constitution, establishing specific political institutions. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen pontificated on natural law. American observers abroad who reflected on the French Revolution highlighted the importance of the legal constitution in American identity.

In order to highlight the emphasis placed on legal-constitutionalism during the Early Republican period, one should look to the Department of State's reaction to the French Revolution. Gouverneur Morris and John Quincy Adams serve as case studies for this thesis.

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[10] *Ibid*, 49.

Both Morris and Adams lived in Europe during the French Revolution, the former in France and the latter split time between the Netherlands and Prussia. While serving in Europe, the duo extensively wrote about their experiences. The duo's impressions of the French Revolution informed their understanding of American identity, especially in a legal and political context.

It must be stated that this project examines American identity from the perspective of wealthy political elites. Their experiences contribute to only a fraction of America's emerging identity. Their interpretations shape a specific worldview, one not shared by yeoman farmers, artisans, or other members of the populace. It also does not address the issue of slavery, a very important piece of the Early Republic's identity composition. This thesis presents one angle, that of Department of State's elite diplomats.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the historical climate. It explains key political terms and grounds them in context. Chapter 2 surveys Gouverneur Morris's experience in France. It traces his journal entries and correspondence which chronicled the entire revolution, highlighting his discontent. Key issues of the chapter include the relationship between elites and the populace as well as republicanism. John Quincy Adams is studied in Chapter 3. The chapter addresses his missions in the context of the French Revolution, an event of which he largely disapproved. Lastly, a conclusion presents their observations in the broader context of early American history.

Chapter 1. The Political and Diplomatic Culture of the Early Republic

The Early Republic period in American history marked a dramatic break from traditional political theory. The Age of Democratic Revolution swept away the vestiges of Old World political culture, replacing them with drastically different alternatives. In order to understand how American's saw the world and understood themselves, one must first fully appreciate the intellectual framework behind some of these political terms. This chapter explores the concepts of republicanism, virtue, liberty, and liberalism in the context of the Early Republic. These ideas represented more than historical construct, but a way of understanding one's place in the world. Before examining the diplomatic practices of the Early Republic, one must understand the thought processes of those Americans involved.

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Republicanism in America emerged as a response to British economic practices. By the mid-18th century, mercantilism had become the world's preeminent way of organizing an economy. The premise of a mercantile system revolved around the understanding that there was a finite amount of wealth, in other words gold, in the world. These resources provided for mercenaries in an age largely without national armies. If a nation could not find gold naturally, then she sought to establish a favorable balance of trade by exporting more than importing. Imperialism became a byproduct of mercantilist economies and the American Colonies served as slush fund for Great Britain. Historian Drew McCoy noted that "…Britain's political economy was indeed marked by this emphasis on production for export."[11] To the British, America existed purposefully for the manufacturing interest of the kingdom.

Leading American intellectuals rejected the notion that America existed for the financial benefit of the British Crown. Members of this intellectual community, including Benjamin Franklin, believed that America's virtue rested in her agrarian nature. They heavily drew upon

[11] Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 53.

the ideals of primitive economies in republican Sparta. "The core of the republican vision in America," McCoy explained, "…[was] a society of independently, moderately prosperous, relatively self-sufficient producers who would succeed in staving off the dangers of an overly advanced, commercialized existence."[12]

In this context, republicanism in Colonial America had a deeply economic meaning. It represented the rejection of the British economic practices and Parliament, the political institution which enabled such mercantile activity. Instead of existing as the forced consumers of British products, Americans believed in the opportunity to become producers themselves. Yet, instead of competing with the European mercantile economies, American republicanism placed a premium on self-sufficiency. American production would serve Americans.

Early American republicanism also consisted of an intense sense of independence. This fits consistently with the desire for economic self-sufficiency. To the founding generation, independence derived from the ownership of private property. McCoy posits that "…American republicans valued property in land because it provided personal independence."[13] If a person owned land, then he would have immediate access to the resources necessary in an agrarian economy. He would not have to depend on another individual.

From a political perspective, republicanism also emphasized the role of the individual. In a republican government, elected representatives act on behalf of constituents. These elected officials stand in for the individual and participate according to the interests of such individuals. Equality among citizens marks another important feature of republicanism in the political sense. Theoretically, the representation covers all citizens equally. In addition, individuals have equal standing before the law. Hereditary privilege has no place in a republic. All citizens possess equal rights.

One can trace this understanding of republicanism to the political theories of John Locke.

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[12] Ibid, 66.
[13] Ibid, 68.

In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke explained the political significance of property. "The condition of human life," he wrote, "…necessarily introduces private possessions." [14] With property came the ability to carry out one's personal will. He could do what he desired on the grounds that he independently owned property. There are certain things, possessions, which belong to a person and cannot be taken away. This grapples with the very idea of independence on a personal level. When extrapolated to a macrocosm, one can see the importance of the independent state in republicanism.

Aside from the heavily economic interpretation, republicanism in Early American political culture had a more substantial moral quality to it. The idea of equality among citizens, individuals removed from a monarchical government, only scratched the surface of American republicanism. According to Gordon Wood, the early understandings of it "…added a moral dimension, a utopian depth, to the political separation from England – a depth that involved the very character of their society." [15] Republicanism meant more than just a way of organizing a government. It extended beyond a historical construct. Republicanism defined the very nature of existence, it shaped both thought and action. To live in the Early America meant to embrace a set of values which extended from the understanding of republicanism.

The republican morals which Americans celebrated can be traced back to the study of the classics. Education in the Early Republic relied heavily on studying ancient history and classical languages. This appreciation for antiquity naturally led to an affinity for republican political culture. Wood noted that Americans appreciated characteristics such as "…frugality, industry, temperance, and simplicity – the rustic traits of the sturdy yeoman."[16] This language reveals a strong conceptualization of individual morality. These traits also appear synonymous with Protestant ethics.

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[14] John Locke, *Political Writings,* 278.
[15] Gordon S. Wood*, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776 – 1787* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 47.
[16] Ibid, 52.

Perhaps most interesting in this reflection is the reference to 'rustic' and 'yeoman'. As mentioned earlier, republicanism in Early America had a distinct economic component. When blended with the sharp sense of morality, republicanism appeared possible only within an agrarian context. Leading American political intellectuals believed that the economy had to develop and commercialize just enough to remain self-sufficient, while holding off on complete industrialization. America's value remained in her ability to remain halfway between completely agrarian and commercialized. The overreach of the British mercantile economy resulted in a degradation of personal values, a population unfit for republican governments. America, in the thoughts of her intellectual framers, had a "…predominantly simple and agricultural social order" which provided the necessary context for the republican spirit. [17] The individual traits which compose republicanism can also be understand in another context, equally important to the understanding of Early American political and intellectual history: virtue.

***

When examining the political language of the 18th century, virtue almost always appears in the lexicon. While nearly omnipresent, the word often goes unclarified. Defining a term that represents a complex idea often proves difficult. This holds especially true considering that virtue in the Early Republic period had multiple meanings. Historian Andrew Trees made the distinction between public and private virtue.[18] An exploration of this dichotomy lends itself to a more robust understanding of early American political culture.

One can trace the roots of public virtue to classical antiquity, particularly Ancient Rome. In antiquity, a virtuous person put his personal best interest behind that of the state. The common, public good proved the most important priority to a person. Historian Susan Dunn explained that virtue derived from, and is consistent with, the Latin word *virtus*.[19] In Ancient

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[17] McCoy, 84.

[18] Andrew S. Trees, *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 78.

Rome, *virtus* defined a highly masculine warrior class. The exemplar of such *virtus* was the soldier who drove directly into combat, disregarding personal safety. According to Dunn, "…*virtus* signified manliness, virile energy, and courage."[20] In this sense, public virtue contained a fierce, physical characteristic. Given the impression left by the Revolutionary War, it is of little surprise that Americans embraced virtue as a core value. To those who participated in the American Revolution, the effects of the war did not disappear. They shed blood for this cause, sacrificing property and lives. The cost of victory resulted in a strong attachment to the ideological principles of the American Revolution.

Private virtue represents the other half of the dichotomy. Modern Americans would recognize this conceptualization. A product of Christian theology, the private understanding of virtue revolved around a sober sense of self-restraint. According to Trees, private virtue included "…domestic traits such as temperance, frugality, and hard work."[21] He explained that in adhering to such reservation in one's personal life, a person could then commit fully to the public good. In this sense, private virtue served as the precondition for its public counterpart.

Virtue diffused into other areas of political culture in the Early Republic. Many, including John Adams, believed that in order to maintain a republican form of government, the nation required a virtuous population. While doubtful at times of America's commitment to virtue, Adams had a certain optimism about it. "If ever any people merited honor and happiness that are her [America] inhabitants…they have the most habitual, radical sense of liberty, and the highest reverence for virtue."[22] Should a government represent the people, its people ought to behave virtuously, Adams and others thought. This indicated how the private set up public virtue. Personal behavior, according to Adams, translated into a reflection in the public life.

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[19] Susan Dunn, *Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light* (New York, NY: Faber and Faber, Inc., 1999), 113.
[20] Ibid, 113.
[21] Trees, 78.
[22] Ibid, 86.

Private virtue also stood for the rejection of certain immoralities. Legal scholar M.N.S. Sellers indicated that virtue in the Early Republic meant steadfastness in "…simple manners in face of the vices, interest, luxury, and corruption."[23] With this understanding in mind, one can see how significant of a role morality played in constructing political ideals. Not only should an individual adhere to such principles, but also actively refrain from particular behavioral impurities. This point proved especially poignant considering that Americans broke away from Great Britain because they considered her corrupt and impure. The history revealed that Americans believed that Great Britain had betrayed her own governing principles, and thus had to be deposed of.

Sellers's mention of manners addresses another pivotal piece of Early Republic political discourse. Manners and politeness played a crucial role in the day-to-day life of many Americans, particularly those involved in politics. During his formative years, George Washington transcribed, by hand, a text that enumerated the proper etiquette of a man in a polite society.[24] The 18th century could be seen as a product of the Enlightenment and the revival of antiquity. Manners and deference played an increasingly important role in both private and public affairs. Courtesy and etiquette, refined language and behavior, ordered the activity and established a social hierarchy. This did not just remain in Europe, but rather diffused into American society as well. Warren Roberts explained that "…members of the well-mannered American elite acquired the trappings of gentility: articles of clothing, furniture, interior décor, material objects that marked one as refined."[25] The significance of appearance marked the relationship between 'the trappings of gentility' and manners. Members of the social elite in the late 18th century found themselves preoccupied with how they presented themselves. In

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[23] M.N.S. Sellers, *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1994), 25.
[24] Warren Roberts, *A Place in History: Albany in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1825* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 5.
[25] Ibid, 5.

possessing fine items and behaving with polite manners, one could portray him or herself as a truly gentle person, distinct from the working populace.

The preoccupation with appearance lends itself to a classist hierarchy. Indeed, the polite society belonged to Americans with particular means. Its roots can be traced to an aristocratic European understanding of the world. The affluence, the civility and personal virtue almost seems incongruent to a nation which boasted itself on agrarian purity. Yet, the political intellectuals, the shapers of the political theory, were often property owners and wealthy, economically speaking. As one shall see, the two statesmen examined in this project were themselves men of significant means and resources.

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Liberty and liberalism stand as the final two ideals necessary to understand the political culture of the Early Republic. Although the concepts have similar usage, there are important nuances that distinguish them. An examination of both, however, provides valuable insight into the intellectual frameworks of the politically active 18th century persons. It bears noting, however, that property owning white males were those who participated in politics.

The history of liberty as a political construct can be traced back to classical antiquity. Sellers explained that American understandings of liberty drew upon their Roman counterparts. For example, the Roman understanding of liberty, or the Latin *libertas*, originated when the consulate deposed the king.[26] This reference to classical history indicates a distinctly political understanding of liberty. In this sense, liberty emerges when a state eliminates a despot and replaces it with a government that represents the population. With this concept in mind, one can see how liberty and republicanism are so closely interconnected.

The patriots of the American Revolution and the succeeding generation understood this conception of liberty quite intimately. In addition to the Romans, they also drew heavily from

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[26] Sellers, 83.

John Locke. According to Locke, "…the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule."[27] In his understanding of liberty, an individual can conduct personal affairs in any which pleases his disposition. No arbitrary authority can impede such freedom. Should a government fail to preserve these essential liberties, then the population can assert their 'right to resistance', an 'appeal to heaven', and dispose of the oppressive authority.[28] Locke's ideals proved immensely powerful in the revolutionary age and carried into the Early Republic. His writing shaped the understanding of a public liberty in an age of vast political reorganization.

A number of American colonists had read these political theories. They understood the abstract principles and could see how they presented themselves contemporarily. Most importantly, however, their ideas of liberty emerged from their experiences under British rule. To Americans, Great Britain violated her promises of liberty as established in the Glorious Revolution of 1680. Parliament had robbed America of her privileges through a serious of taxes and regulations which restricted the freedom of the American colonies.[29] With this in mind, one can see that the early understandings of liberty emerged from a direct experience. The corruption of the Glorious Revolution's principles resulted in a call for independence.

Much like virtue, liberty had a private and more personal side, a civil liberty so-to-speak. A person's individual liberty consisted of his right to pursue happiness through "private interests".[30] With a wide and heterogeneous population, it makes sense that the protection of civil liberty remained a distinct interest for Americans in the Early Republic. Like republicanism and virtue, however, critics questioned whether the population could be trusted with such individual liberty. The framers of the Early American Republic were no democrats. They desired

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[27] Locke, 272.
[28] Ibid, 384.
[29] Joseph F. Zimmerman, *Interstate Economic Relations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 2.
[30] Wood, 60.

to represent the public, but not empower them. The champions of liberty prevailed, however, asserting that when extended civil liberty, the population adds to the public good.[31]

Liberalism in the Early Republic differed dramatically from the current political usage of the term. In the 18th century, liberalism referred to what is now called ‘classical liberalism’. In its broadest sense, classical liberalism represented the political protection of an individual and his liberty. Early proponents of this ideology included Locke and the economist Adam Smith. This brand of politics marked a challenge to monarchical authority which privileged the rights of the royalty and heredity nobility at the expense of the population writ large. In a liberal political order, individuals are equal, with no person’s liberty prioritized over another.

Trademarks of classical liberalism included a written constitution, an articulation of rights, representative government, private enterprise and a free market economy. The merits of classical liberalism would be debated frequently during the next three centuries, however, at the time it proved remarkably effective. Classical liberalism not only represented a way to organize society, but also it marked identity. It became a way of understanding one’s place in the world. Like the other ideological components, liberalism defined the American experience in the Early Republic. It took on more than just a political life; it became a way of expressing one’s Americanism. Republicanism, virtue, liberty and liberalism extended beyond the political culture. These terms sank into the minds of American’s and shaped how they saw the world.

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Foreign policy in the Early Republic effectively consisted of diplomatic relations with Europe. Most importantly, it meant the connections with Western Europe, effectively ending geographically at Prussia. Commercial agreements which dated back to the colonial era signified the earliest foreign affairs with America. Although some traditions lend themselves towards interpreting America isolated from Europe, this undermines the extent of America’s

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[31] Ibid, 61.

actual global presence. She had a very impressive commercial network in the Early Republic period.

Politically speaking, it took until the Revolutionary War for the American diplomatic presence to expand politically. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1778 with France brought America her first European ally. France agreed to assist the American cause for independence both financially and with manpower.[32] That another imperial monarchy would assist liberation movement seemed perplexing on the surface level. When one considers the longstanding enmity between Great Britain and France, however, it makes sense. The French aid was not necessarily an endorsement of American independence, but the latest in a long line of assaults on the British.

This illustrated the most important diplomatic challenge America faced in the Early Republic period: securing recognition among monarchies. France proved an unusually simple outlier. She desperately needed a victory over England and resorted to an independence movement to secure one. Although a victory, it proved costly and set in motion the chain of events which would lead to the France's own revolution, the very nexus of this narrative.

Spain, on the other hand, provided an interesting case of passively endorsing the American Revolution without supporting an independent America. A historically strong monarchy with an enormous empire, Spain rejected the idea of colonies breaking away from the core. In this sense, she refused to diplomatically recognize the United States. On the other hand, having extensive land along the Mississippi River, Spain recognized the promising commercial relations with America.[33] Like France, she also took any opportunity to knock Great Britain down a few pegs. John Jay served as Minister to Spain, and attempted to broker a formal recognition treaty with Spain. Both sides failed to reach an agreement, and the Southern States who mistrusted Spain would likely have blocked ratification. To say that America had an uneasy

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[32] Daniel George Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic: The Law of Nations and the Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 69.
[33] Ibid, 79.

relationship with Spain would likely undersell the ambivalence.

Russia, on the contrary, outwardly expressed her displeasure with the United States. Catherine the Great quickly moved to maintain neutrality, however her actions proved disadvantageous to America. Russia explicitly refused to recognize the United States of America. Francis Dana, the Minister to Russia from 1780 to 1783, experienced firsthand Russia's disapproval of America's existence. During his three years in Saint Petersburg, he repeatedly attempted to gain entrance to the royal court, but was repeatedly denied. With the war still ongoing, Russia did not want to anger Great Britain by recognizing the United States.

Dana experienced immense frustration as Catherine the Great refused to grant him access. "Will it not be high time," he wrote to John Adams, "that an attempt shou'd then be made to find out the real dispositions of her Imperial Majesty towards the United States?"[34] As the months turned to years, he became increasingly frustrated that Russia would not diplomatically accept the United States. On several occasions, he contemplated abandoning the mission entirely. [35] No matter his best efforts, Dana found it impossible to secure diplomatic recognition of the United States from Russia.

Dana's case study proves instructive when considering the daily operations of the Department of State in the Early Republic period. The objective of these early diplomats revolved around commercial relations and formal recognition. The day-to-day experience included arriving at monarchical courts and convincing foreign services to approve of the nation's existence. Some states, such as the Netherlands, proved more effective than others. The essential point is that during such formative years, particularly under the Articles of Confederation, the American diplomatic corps prioritized the routine logistical functions of acquiring commercial networks and trade

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[34] Francis Dana to John Adams, December 17, 1781 in W.P. Cresson*, Francis Dana: A Puritan Diplomat at the Court of Catherine Great* (New York, NY: The Dial Press, 1930), 174.
[35] Ibid, 239.

partners as well as securing diplomatic recognition. This particular period required diligence and steadfast work. Deep intellectual reflection and commentary was a luxury that the early diplomats could not afford. That, however, changed with the Constitutional Convention and the clouds of revolution looming over France.

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The narrative of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 needs not be repeated here in detail. The Articles of Confederation had immense weaknesses and could not handle a crisis such as Shay's Rebellion. Delegates arrived in Philadelphia and quickly outlined plans to construct a new, more effective constitution. The finished product contained enumerated guidelines, providing detailed plans for political institutions. The Constitution of the United States of America, although controversial, became a point of pride for its supporters. It separated America from other nations. It represented a high point in the history of politics, a monumental achievement for classical liberalism.

The constitutional enthusiasm translated into a notion that Americans desired to spread their successes across the world. Their revolution and ideals, the concepts of republicanism and virtue and liberty, ought to be exported across the Old World.[36] This conceptualization of America as the exemplar emerged as a product of a successful constitutional convention. With a healthy understanding of her own functioning political institutions, the Department of State began to transition away from the timid asking for recognition to confidently exporting political ideals and norms. This began the process of understanding oneself nationally vis-à-vis other states.

The French Revolution, which broke out in 1789, provided the other impetus for this process. A variety of American diplomats experienced the Revolution firsthand in

[36] Wood, 60.

Europe. Two, in particular, wrote extensively about their experience and how it reflected back on to America. Gouverneur Morris and John Quincy Adams served in France and the Netherlands respectively. Whereas the earlier diplomats had to fret over recognition, by 1789 they had the privilege of pontificating on the events of the age.

Chapter 2. Gouverneur Morris and the French Revolution

Gouverneur Morris witnessed the entirety of the French Revolution. He arrived in Paris shortly before the convocation of the Estates-General and departed after the fall of Maximilien Robespierre. He recorded the trajectory of the political drama in his journals and letters. He viewed the revolution through the eyes of a wealthy American patriot. Accordingly, his critical interpretation of the events refracted back into his notion of American identity. His experience in France sharpened the implicit conceptions he had of what it means to be an American. Morris understood American identity in terms of economic status and political moderation, holding that the United States was a nation for the wealthy and aristocratic.

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Gouverneur Morris was born in Morrisania, New York on January 31, 1752. The second child of Lewis Morris and Sarah Gouverneur, he entered into a family that possessed a reputation fit for an aristocrat. Their estate in Morrisania, named after the family, ran for 1,900 acres and was lined with impressive elks. Properties had multiple stories and overlooked the Harlem River. The eminent Morris family owned remarkable property, patronized fine culture, and conducted their affairs with dignified manners. Their wealth resulted from the successful business management of Morris's great-grandfather in England. This impressive pedigree, as one historian notes, "…endowed [Gouverneur] Morris with cosmopolitan sensibilities even before he set foot in Europe."[37]

Although the details of his childhood remain unclear, Morris exceled in his studies. He performed exceptionally well in mathematics and the classics, demonstrating an impressive literacy in Latin.[38] He attended King's College in New York and read law. A prestigious

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[37] William Howard Adams, *Gouverneur Morris: An Independent Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 4 -5.

[38] Jared Sparks, *The Life of Gouverneur Morris: With Selections from His Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers; Detailing Events in the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and in the Political History of the United States, Volume 1*(Boston, MA: Waitt and Dow's Power Press, 1832), 5.

academy, King's College would evolve into Columbia University. Morris's formal education matched, if not exceeded, that of his contemporaries.

Morris began to entertain classically liberal political ideals, those rooted in constitutionalism, during his legal career. An ambitious young man, he concurrently pursued graduate studies and a legal clerkship. William Smith Jr., a reputable and conservative New York lawyer, supervised the apprenticeship. During this period Morris read widely, including the controversial publications of John Locke and other theorists. According to the historian William Adams, Morris's address to his graduating class included a praise for "…the love of liberty under a constitution."[39] His newfound political stance contrasted Smith's, who energetically approved of British policies. This disagreement would foreshadow the divide between Morris and his family during the American Revolution.

As shots rang out at Lexington and Concord, irreparably damaging the bonds between Great Britain and her colonies, so too did the Morris familial bonds dissolve. While the young, and ambitious lawyer rallied under the banner of independence, his family remained loyal to the Crown. At the Battle of Long Island in 1776, a significant extent of the Morris family assisted the British.[40] After all, their wealth came from business in Great Britain. Such a personal division did not interfere with Morris's politics. He was appointed to the Continental Congress and ardently advocated on behalf of the independent colonies.

During this period, as the patriots constructed a new government, Morris brought his views of economic and social status into the discussion. In a letter to Thomas Penn shortly before the American Revolution's outbreak, he articulated that he feared a government ruled by the masses. He wrote that, if the lower social classes have political authority, "… [W]e shall be under the worst of all possible dominions. We shall be under the domination of a riotous mob."[41]

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[39] Adams, 27.
[40] Ibid, 74.

This thought process guided Morris throughout his Revolutionary War experience. To Morris, the independent colonies ought to be governed by the wealthy, the well-educated, the elite stratum of society, quasi-aristocrats like himself. He believed the masses could not effectively participate in organized politics. To be an American citizen meant to be of strong social and economic standing. This train of thought would guide Morris throughout his political career, only to sharpen during his diplomatic experience.

Morris's tenure in the Continental Congress led to national recognition. In the years following the Revolutionary War, he signed the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. His distrust of the masses, however, resulted in his rejection of the Article of Confederation. He noted that the Articles did little to halt Shay's Rebellion. Accordingly, he played in instrumental role at the Constitutional Convention in1787. According to the historian William Adams, he played a lead role in a number of debates. He also sat on the Committee of Style and penned the famous "We the People" preamble.[42] Morris's contributions to the United States Constitution would inform his interpretations of the French Revolution. His impressions of France, and accordingly his understanding of America, coalesced around the constitutional order. To Morris, the Constitution established what it meant to be American.

This naturally begs the question: How did Morris end up in France during the revolution? In the years following the Constitution's ratification, Morris turned to private business. As a result, he traveled often and for one particular business arrangement he had to go to Paris. Morris arrived in France in January 1789. He hoped to resolve an impasse between American tobacco cultivators and French consumers. In addition, he looked to find private investors to buy American debt owed to France since the Revolutionary War.[43]

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[41] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Penn, May 10, 1774, in Grover Furr, "Class Conflicts Among Americans in the Revolutionary Period: Gouverneur Morris' Letter to Thomas Penn, 1774." Montclair University, February 3, 1998, accessed March 15, 2014, http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/spl/morristopenn.html
[42] Adams, 147.
[43] Ibid, 167 – 168.

The historical irony of Morris's venture warrants mentioning. The French King Louis XVI pledged economic and military support to the Continental Army following its victory at the Battle of Saratoga. France, a nation whose account books already overran with red ink, could not sustain the fiscal commitment. According to some historians, France's endorsement of the American Revolution contributed to her fiscal crisis and bankruptcy, and subsequently plunged her into revolution.[44]

As Morris set about his business, ominous clouds of political change rolled into France. The rising debt proved too substantial to ignore. Louis XVI recognized the need to address the situation and called for a meeting of the Estates-General, an antiquated political institution which had not convened since 1614. The convocation of the Estates-General precipitated the French Revolution, and the political whirlwind that followed. Morris witnessed the entire trajectory and analyzed it politically, socially, and economically.

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Morris believed that American identity consisted of an adherence to political moderation, in other words, a constitutional order. His experience during the French Revolution amplified this conception. As an ardent champion of constitutional order, Morris initially viewed the French developments optimistically. He interpreted the gathering of the Estates-General as an opportunity for the French monarchy to adopt a constitution which placed sovereignty in the people. France, he believed, would be made over in the image of the United States and usher in a wave of democratic revolution throughout the western world. The Estates-General would thus serve as a mechanism to export the spirit of constitutionality.[45] This indicates that, to Morris, to be an American not only meant to uphold constitutional values, but also to shine as an example to other states.

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[44] Warren Roberts, *A Place in History: Albany in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1825 (*Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010), 3.
[45] Adams, 188.

"Our new Constitution," Morris wrote to President George Washington, "has greatly raised our Reputation in Europe."[46] In Morris's eyes, the Constitution of the United States represented an apex of Western Civilization. It codified the republican values for which he fought in the Revolutionary War, the same ideals which he read in Locke and other theorists. According to Morris, American political identity derived from a written constitution. The prospects France adopting a written political document reinforced Morris's commitment to the one which he helped write.

Morris's attachment to the Constitution highlighted its importance in American identity. The United States Constitution outlined how America would protect a government for the people, by the people. It stood as an institutional roadmap for the political ideals set forth with the Declaration of Independence and other founding ideals. To Morris, a constitution solidified the grand ideas, it made tangible esoteric political thought. Through the United States Constitution, the promises of the American Revolution became reality. As France began to articulate similar ideas, he naturally saw a constitution as the schematic from which to work.

Jacques Necker, the Finance Minister to Louis XVI, addressed the convocation. A Swiss born economic reformist, Necker grew popular in France, especially among the educated members of the Third Estate.[47] His favorability, however, failed to shine through at the Estates-General. If he had a poignant message, it was lost on the crowd. His speech carried on inaudibly. Morris remarked that "He [Necker] tries to play the orator, but he plays it very ill."[48] From this point forward, Morris's impressions of the French Revolution grew increasingly critical. The optimism with which he viewed the initial movements disappears, almost at once. The weak voice of Necker serves as a fitting metaphor. After this portion, Morris did not resonate with the

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[46] Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, February 23, 1789 in *Documentary History Of The Constitution Of The United States Of America, 1787-1870* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011), 156.
[47] Crane Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution 1789 – 1799* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 3.
[48] Gouverneur Morris to William Carmichael, April 27, 1789 in Anne Cary Morris, *The Diary and Letts of Gouverneur Morris, Minister of the United States to France, Member of the Constitutional Convention* (New York, NY: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1888), 65.

Revolution's message. He becomes increasingly skeptical of the events that followed.

The corollary to Morris favored political moderation is that Morris distrusted mass politics. He approved of constitutional political change, but favored the maintenance of the social status-quo. As a man of significant wealth and landowning, the existing social order protected his material interests. Popular politics, however, threatened such stability. As the orderly reformation began to spiral into a bottom-up revolution, Morris's skepticism turned into outright disapproval. This rejection of French politics sharpened his understanding of what it meant to be an American along political lines.

Another way to understand Morris's appreciation of political moderation is through a willingness to compromise. As previously noted, he took great pride in the American Constitutional Convention. He rested his laurels on the way the framers compromised over contentious issues. The orderly American convention produced not only an effective governing document, but also an optimistic future. France, on the contrary, failed to meet Morris's standard. The case of the Tennis Court Oath sheds light on the way he frowned upon the French political climate.

The Tennis Court Oath marked the point of no return for both the French Revolution and Morris's opinion of it. Upon finding the assembly hall's doors locked on the morning of June 20th, the Third Estate deputies took refuge in a nearby tennis court. There they vowed to not disband until France adopted a constitution. Louis XVI demanded the occupants and its sympathizers to return to separate meetings on June 23. Much to the nobility's dismay, a number of clergymen and nobles aligned themselves with the Third Estate.[49] The King, quickly losing public opinion support, capitulated on June 27 and the National Assembly became a permanent institution.

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[49] Brinton, 5.

Morris's interpretation of the Tennis Court Oath reveals his preference for moderate political identities. Although he participated in his country's own revolution, Morris favored stability. After all, the American Revolution hardly changed the day-to-day operations of society.[50] The French Revolution, however, had dramatically different energy. It had the potential to not only replace the existing political system, but the social and economic orders as well.

"The existence of the monarchy," Morris wrote in his journal, "therefore depends on the moderation of the Assembly."[51] The operative word is moderation. In Morris's mind, the temperament of the National Assembly determined France's odds of success. In order to establish a constitutional monarchy, a contemporarily speaking liberal form of government, tempers must remain tame. He hoped that a politically moderate Assembly would yield an agreeable government, one much like the United States.

This event raises the issue of American identity from the political perspective. To Morris, a successful revolution required gradual change and moderate voices. The American Revolution was effective, according to Morris, on the grounds that its leaders held balanced convictions. They did not let emotions blind them from making prudent political decisions. Although ideological, Morris believed his colleagues were also pragmatic. If France desired a prosperous constitutional government, then she must have framers who restrained themselves from dramatic change. From Morris's point of view, American citizenship required moderation and abandoning emotional fervor. It meant to be a stoic and resolute example for the rest of the world to emulate. Morris found a constitution to be the mechanism for tempering such political flares.

The transition from absolute to limited monarchy proceeded tumultuously. Louis XVI

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[50] Howard Gillman, Mark Graber, and Keith Whittington, *American Constitutionalism Volume 1, Structures of Government* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.
[51] Governeur Morris, diary entry, June 27, 1789 in Morris, 106.

dismissed Jacques Necker on July 11, 1789. Rumors circulated indicating that the King had mobilized his army in preparation to disperse the National Assembly. These events resulted in an agitated population and public protest. This irritation led to the attack against the Bastille, a watershed event in the French Revolution. The calm and orderly meetings held at Versailles stood in dramatic contrast to the bloodshed in the streets of Paris.

Morris found himself inclined to support Louis XVI during the Paris Insurrection. “The French troops, as far as can be ascertained, would not serve against their countrymen,” he wrote. ”The foreign troops are not sufficiently numerous to make any serious impression.”[52] This understanding indicates that he saw the uprising as illegitimate. The Revolution, which hitherto had a moderate climate, could not devolve into chaos. A constitutional order, from Morris’s perspective, prevented such helter-skelter. The French had deviated from their cause and devolved into violence.

Morris would not come to terms with the prospect of a violent outbreak. America’s constituent assembly resolved disputes through dialogue and compromise. It provided mechanisms for solving disputes. France appeared to head down a different avenue. This tendency towards popular violence resulted in strengthening Morris’s idea that to be an American meant to participate in politics as outlined in the Constitution. Such chaos could not outbreak in the United States because political solutions to varying issues existed within the framework of the Constitution.

Morris experienced such political violence firsthand while returning from Thomas Jefferson’s residence on July 12, 1789. He witnessed skirmishes along the Parisian avenues, fallout from the Paris Insurrection. . Upon witnessing the affair, he delivered a forecast of the

[52] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, July 11, 1789 in Morris, 115.

Revolution: "…a civil war is among the events most probable. If the representatives…have formed a just estimate of their constituents, in ten days all France will be in a commotion. The little affray which I have witnessed will probably be magnified into a bloody battle before it reaches the frontiers." [53]

Morris feared that the radical political action would result in a civil war. The optimistic ideals would devolve into bloodshed. Whereas the American system produced a stable constitution, France risked self-destruction. In discussions of representation, he believed a major issue stemmed from the radical populations. Here his elitism shined brightly. This implied that France's citizens did not possess the restrained temperament necessary in politics. She needed a constitution, complete with political institutions, to direct the French public. Here Morris saw the important role of the constitution in the United States.

As the insurrection continued, Morris wrote that he believed that, "in effect, the little city of Paris is in as great a tumult as any could wish."[54] The word "tumult" has a negative connotation. Morris did not appreciate the extreme action being taken by the French partisans. He found the French revolutionaries destructive and ineffective. Also, by describing Paris as "the little city", Morris seems to undermine the significance of the state. He detracts from the city's importance, further implying that the events of Philadelphia were distinctly better.

When discussing the French constitution, the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen, Morris assaulted its legitimacy. He believed it overreached and did not properly suit its constituents. In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, a French-born hero of the American Revolution, Morris explained that he is "convinced that the proposed constitution cannot serve for the government of this country; that the National Assembly, late the object of enthusiastic

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[53] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, July 12, 1789 in Morris, 121-122.
[54] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, July 13, 1789 in Morris, 123.

attachment, will soon be treated with disrespect; that under such circumstances the freedom and happiness of France must depend on the wisdom, integrity, and firmness of His Majesty's councils."[55] He found that the drafted French constitution lacked specific detail. It recycled Jean-Jacque Rousseau's natural law ideas without providing for specific institutions. The strength of the United States Constitution resided in its detailed outlines of the varying institutions.

Morris casted a vote of no confidence in the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. He found the French constitution the product of passing enthusiasm. Certainly it reflected the popular sentiment of the era, however, that did not necessarily translate to efficacy. The French constitution highlighted the democratic impulses of Rousseau's notion of a general will. On the contrary, the American counterpart established an ordered and institutionalized republic. In a sense, this commentary further reveals that Morris's implicit perception that French political maneuvers failed to meet the high standards set by the United States.

Morris believed that the American constitution represented a symbol of political achievement. He spoke as an experienced prognosticator. His previous success put him in a position to critique others. It is also worth noting that Morris's writing possessed a paternalistic tone. He viewed the French as children, swayed by emotions, unable to construct a constitution on their own. The young French government lacked the maturity to respect the virtues of law, unlike the Americans.

Morris again expounded upon the necessity of prudence in political operations. He employed adjectives such as "wisdom" and "integrity" to describe the appropriate course of action in constitutional development. These comments represent a critique of the rashness with

[55] Gouverneur Morris to Marquis de Lafayette, October 16, 1789 in Morris, 192-193.

which the French moved. He asserted that they lacked the necessary virtues to refashion a political organization. This assessment extended beyond the framers of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. It also represented a criticism of the French society writ large. Morris stopped just short of labeling the population foolish or ignorant. Nonetheless, one could interpret the tone of Morris's journal as disdainful.

For Morris, the French Revolution had erred toward radical impulses since the Tennis Court Oath. By 1792, what J.F. Bosher called 'the liberal interlude' had effectively ended.[56] The radical revolution embraced paranoiac extremism under the Jacobins, a turn which severely frightened Morris. At stake was the very meaning of liberalism. For Morris, this meant constitutionalism, moderation, and order. To the French, democracy and popular mass politics.

In early June he met with the effectively powerless French king. "He [Louis XVI] thinks there is no danger to the Constitution at present," Morris wrote, "... I think he cannot believe one-half of what he says."[57] At this point, Morris forfeited his faith in what he believed as the legitimate government. This bankruptcy of confidence extends beyond the sovereign. Morris recognized the Bourbon monarch as France writ large. A loss of faith in Louis XVI translated into a vote of no confidence in the French people.

Morris's disapproval of the king's incompetency did not have time to fully develop. The Jacobin regime moved from radical to regicidal on January 21, 1793. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, Morris relayed the news of the execution. He spared no details, including the way the Jacobins "were in such haste as to let fall the axe before his neck was properly placed, so that he was mangled."[58] Not only did Morris reject the regicide as a political disaster, he

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[56] J.F. Bosher, *The French Revolution* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 189.
[57] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, June 3, 1793 in Morris, 536.

believed that the French citizens did as well. “I have seen grief,” he wrote, “such as for the untimely death of a beloved parent.”[59] This language reveals more than the mourning of a monarch’s death. Morris compared Louis XVI to a parent, and accordingly presented the French population as children. In doing so, Morris implicitly noted that France could not sustain herself following Louis XVI’s death. His repeated use of this imagery indicated that Morris did not think of highly as the French public’s leadership. The connotation of children in this context relates to inferior or incompetent. Morris thought that the French lacked maturity and needed assistance in political development.

Morris’s critique of the French Revolution weighed most prominently in the pre-Robespierre era. He did, however, lambast the Jacobin regime in a letter to George Washington during the administration’s bloody apex. “Terror is the order of the day,” Morris remarked.[60] He also believed that his prediction of a republican collapse came to fruition. He noted that “…the present government is evidently a despotism both in principle and practice.”[61] Since the Revolution’s outbreak, Morris distrusted the optimism. He did not believe that the French course of action could effectively solve an economic crisis. The democratic euphoria had collapsed into a bloodbath of terror. In Morris’s mind, his skepticism proved prudent. He concluded that France’s volatile nature, her inclination to err on the side of radical instead of moderate, destroyed her hopes at a liberal government. Whereas America, with her stoicism and reservation, prospered, France suffered under the tyranny of radicalism.

Throughout the course of the French Revolution, from the Estates-General to the Reign

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[58] Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson , January 25, 1793 in Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney “The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition” University of Virginia , accessed March 19, 2014 http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN-01-25-02-0101
[59] Ibid
[60] Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, October 18, 1793, in “Gouverneur Morris Letters”, accessed on March 19, 2014 http://www.familytales.org/dbDisplay.php?id=ltr_gom4679
[61] Ibid

of Terror, Morris advocated discretion and moderation. He believed that France's political extremism contrasted with the patterns of the America counterpart. France's revolution collapsed into a murderous regime because her citizens lacked impulse control. These impressions of France resulted in Morris reaffirming his belief that American identity consisted of an element of political moderation.

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Morris also stressed that wealth and social status composed American identity. He contended that good American citizens were effectively wealthy and polite. As the French Revolution lost control and fell into the hands of the Third Estate, Morris further understood American identity from a class perspective. His aristocratic background planted the seeds for this interpretation. The French Revolution cultivated it.

Morris's political and emotional convictions raise a sort of cognitive dissonance. On one hand, he held republican values in high esteem. These are often associated with a rejection of superficiality and an embrace of masculinity. On the contrary, the Morris family identified as quasi-aristocratic. Despite being estranged from his loyalist relatives, his upbringing still left an irrevocable impression. He sentimentally enjoyed pomp and tradition. His reaction to the opening of the Estates-General on May 5, 1789 highlights this duality.

Morris presented Louis XVI positively, almost hagiographically. He described the monarch's remarks positively: "He makes a short speech, very proper, and well spoken or rather read. The tone and manner have all the *fierté* which can be expected or desired from the blood of the Bourbons. He is interrupted in the reading by acclamations so warm and of such lively affection that the tears start from my eyes in spite of myself."[62]

This passage emphasizes the importance of social status to Morris. In spite of his liberal

[62] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, May 5, 1789 in Morris, 75.

convictions, he finds Louis XVI admirable. He appreciated the rich heritage of the Bourbon dynasty. He appreciated the aristocratic pedigree of the king. He could relate to the "very proper" aspect considering that he was raised in a dignified household. Language such as "desired from the blood of the Bourbons" speaks directly to this positive view of aristocracy. This implied that something about the bloodline, the genetic composition, made the family more competent in public affairs. The fact that Morris met this speech with such emotion, with tears in his eyes, indicates that it affected his very core. Such an emotionally charge event must have influenced his political understanding of America. If he thought so highly of a Bourbon monarch, than the must have felt similarly when considering American identity.

Quick to employ dramatic language, Morris appeared at a loss for words when relaying details about the Bastille's raid. "I presume that this day's transactions," he wrote, "will induce a conviction that all is not perfectly quiet."[63] From this point forward, Morris effectively abandoned his optimism in the Revolution's success. He understood that the elite reformers, with whom he identified, no longer directed the political currents. The erratic, spontaneous, and noticeably violent populace emerged as a key actor, wielding political power at the lampposts.

When the populace forced Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette back to Paris, Morris sympathized with the royal family. In his private journals he wrote "…oh virtue! Thou art valuable, even in this world. What an unfortunate prince! The victim of his weakness, and in the hands of those who are not to be relied on even for pity… The troubles of this country are begun, but as to the end, it is not easy to foresee it."[64] Although he recognized that Louis XVI had fatal leadership flaws, Morris disapproved of the way the revolutionaries treated their legitimate

[63] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, July 14, 1789 in Morris, 125.
[64] Gouverneur Morris, diary entry, October 6, 1789 in Morris, 176.

monarch. He absorbed the events as a "dreadful lesson", recognizing that anyone could come under the assault of the volatile Parisians.

Implicitly, this passage concerns class and manners. Morris's quasi-aristocratic background naturally led him to empathize with other members of similar social circles. They shared customs and ritual, spoke a refined French, and valued manners. They belonged to a polite society. To Morris, American society ought to contain citizens with similar heritages. Membership in the nation, according to Morris, was predicated upon a significant economic standing and polite manners.

On the contrary, the populace who incited the tumult were largely peasants and impoverished artisans. They had little to no formal education. They did not partake in sophisticated culture, instead opting for often crude entertainment. Morris not only feared the populace, rightly assuming his social standing put him in political danger, he also loathed them. He viewed them as inferior, almost childlike. He could not grasp that the men without notable pedigrees could effectively grapple with the issues of the age. After all, when Americans gathered in Philadelphia two years earlier, the ensemble consisted of unusually intelligent gentlemen. To what did Morris attribute this tumultuousness to? A lack of political institutions and rights as prescribed by a constitution.

In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette , Morris remarked that "…the extreme licentiousness of your people will render it indispensable to increase the royal authority."[65] The theme of manners reappears in this correspondence He described the French revolutionaries as 'licentious', crude and malevolent. The language reflects an implicit classist tone. Morris reviled the populace. He truly believed that their economic status reflected a sort of immorality.

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[65] Gouverneur Morris to Marquis de Lafayette, October 16, 1789 in Morris, 192-193.

The lack of manners translated into repugnance for Morris. If the French populace could not behave appropriately in everyday life, how could they participate in a civilized government?

Morris attempted to distance himself from the downward spiraling revolution. When writing to Lafayette he referred to the demonstrators as "your people." This makes a clear distinction between the American and French behavior. Not only did Morris disapprove of the way the French carried out their political operation, but he also seemed embarrassed to associate with them.

Morris continued his classist criticism of the French Revolution with an assault on the National Convention's leadership. He described Robespierre in classist language. "He is far from rich," he wrote to Washington, " and still farther from appearing so."[66] To Morris, economic status represented a demarcation line. He understood wealth as a litmus test for political success as well as citizenship. He did not speak of Robespierre's role in the Terror, nor of his paranoia. He first addressed his wealth, or lack thereof. The first impression that Morris took from Robespierre rated to economic status.

. Morris judged France through an economic paradigm. He loathed the way peasants crowded Parisian streets and adjacent *faubourgs*. In his mind, the economically disadvantaged could not be competent citizens. Morris believed that Americans possessed the wealth necessary to facilitate a functioning republic. Wealth played an integral role in Morris's understanding of a political society.

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Morris explicitly commented about American identity in terms of constitutionalism. He Also emphasized economic status and political discretion. His experiences in the French

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[66] Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, April 18, 1794 in "Founders Online", accessed on March 19, 2014 http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-15-02-0480

Revolution refracted back into his understanding of what it meant to be an American, particularly from a legal-constitutional perspective. Frightened by the extreme twists and turns of the revolution, Morris's understanding of identity dramatically sharpened. This emphasis of constitutionalism will be picked up, although in a more docile tone, by John Quincy Adams.

Chapter 3. John Quincy Adams and Europe

John Quincy Adams has been likened to the godfather of the Department of State. An omnipresent figure in American diplomatic history, Adams's career spanned two centuries. During the Early Republic period, his experiences in Europe assisted him in grappling with the question: What does it mean to be an American? His travels throughout the European continent, both as a young adult and as a diplomat, led him to an interesting conclusion, largely through contrasting European and American political norms. To Adams, America stood for republicanism and the preservation of individual liberties, with a strong emphasis on moral character.

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John Quincy Adams was born on July 11, 1767. The eldest son of John and Abigail Adams, John Quincy seemed destined to play an influential role in American politics. The Adams family had a longstanding presence in Massachusetts, particularly in the Town of Braintree. Abigail took the lead in the raising John Quincy when her husband took a leadership role in the American Revolution.[67] The mother and son pair witnessed the dramatic Battle of Bunker Hill. One could reasonably infer that this bloody conflict left a lasting impression on the young boy. Not only did John Quincy come of age in a politically charged atmosphere, with revolutionary ideals in the air, he also grew up in a very politically active household.

His educational background proved impressive. He quickly learned Latin and read the classics, like other boys of his age. He especially enjoyed studying ancient history. According to the historian Lynn Parsons, Abigail Adams taught her son French while the two spent time together.[68] His impressive command of the French language, which he refined at universities in Paris, would greatly assist him in his diplomatic career. He then traveled with his father across Europe, from London to Paris and to Amsterdam. The political scientist George

[67] Lynn Hudson Parsons, *John Quincy Adams* (Madison, WI: Madison House Publishers, 1998), 9-10.
[68] Ibid, 9.

Lipsky noted that, during this period, Adams received a “broad and cosmopolitan” education.[69] Upon his return to the United States, he enrolled in Harvard College, his father’s alma mater, to study law.

Few individuals have been as qualified to conduct diplomatic missions as Adams. He began his career in foreign affairs at a remarkably young age. At 14, he accompanied Francis Dana on his mission to Saint Petersburg. Adams served as Dana’s secretary. He also traveled extensively to the Holy Roman Empire, Denmark, and the Netherlands during the mid-to-late 1780s. Adams gained admittance to the Massachusetts bar association in 1790, but he did not practice law for a significant amount of time.[70] He abandoned his legal career in 1794, upon being appointed Minister to the Netherlands by President George Washington. He spent three years at The Hague before being reassigned as Minister to Prussia in 1797. The experiences that Adams had in his early European travels, as well as his formal diplomatic missions, both shaped the way in which he understood notions of American identity.

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Adams’s familiarity with Europe allowed him to compare the United States to the Old World. His early experiences abroad introduced him to the European political atmosphere. From his educational experience to diplomatic secretarial roles, he witnessed firsthand the way in which the governmental orders of Europe operated. These impressions, etched into memory during his formative years, resulted in the shaping of his understanding of American identity. He was obsessed with the differences between republicanism and monarchism, and in the way nations conceptualized individual liberty. Adams believed that education developed a moral element to American identity. During these early years, he understood America as a republic which strived to protect civil and political liberties through its political institutions.

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[69] George Lipsky, *John Quincy Adams: His Theory and Ideas* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1950), 3.
[70] Ibid, 10.

The United States Constitution established these institutions. It also guaranteed rights and privileges to citizens.

Adams's time in Europe sharpened his conception that republicanism defined America. In writing about his early experiences, he fluctuated between emphasis. On some occasions he jovially recalled his travels, on others he had a more frustrated tone. Yet, regardless of the message always came back to the concept that republicanism and liberty defined America vis-à-vis the monarchies of Europe. This contrasted with Morris who had a near universal disdain for European affairs in this period.

Adams initially had a vitriolic view of European society. He deplored their political and social customs. His diplomatic experiences sharpened this conviction. In a letter to Elizabeth Cranch, his cousin, Adams wrote: "I have in that space of time, visited almost all the Nations of Europe; and the further I go, the more I love and cherish the place of my Birth. I know of no punishment, that would give me more Pain, than to be condemned to pass my Life in Europe."

Adams illustrated his contempt with Europe by comparing her to a punishment. The way he employed the verb "condemned" evoked images of a prison sentence. It led one to think that if a person committed an egregious offense, he or she would serve a punish in Europe. He so disapproved of European society that it pained him. He despised how the governments of Europe placed sovereignty in the monarch. Adams believed in popular sovereignty; a government by the people and for the people protected individual liberties. He wretched at the thought of European political society and its liberty crushing monarchies.

Of all the nations of Europe, Great Britain pained him the least. He wrote to Cranch, "I think I should prefer England. Because I think it has preserved its Liberty the best, and because, in many things, the manners and Customs there, are the least unlike, those of our Country, of any Part of Europe." To Adams, the entire issue revolved around constitutionalism. England had a handful of institutions which protected individual liberties. These included the Magna Carta and

the English Common Law. The United States developed her political culture from Great Britain. Accordingly, she prioritized the role of a constitution as a safeguard for popular sovereignty.

This half-hearted approval of English political culture clarified his disapproval with the rest of Europe. If he felt comfortable in England because of her efforts to preserve liberty, then one can extrapolate that he disdained other European nations because they suffocated individual liberty at the expense of a monarch. Continental Europe, in Adams's mind, served as a bastion for political oppression. The Old World, the vestiges of absolutism, the bulwarks of monarchical order, struck fear into Adams as he conducted his diplomatic missions.

Yet, this experience, which he would compare to a punishment, also clarified his thinking of America. Adams's travels in Europe intensified his national love and commitment to America. The contrasting political systems and values increased his appreciation of American political culture. He became increasingly grateful of the emphasis that the Constitution of the United States of America placed on individual political liberties. To Adams, American identity consisted of the protection of political liberty writ large, unlike the European nations to which he previously ministered. This fits in with Morris's understanding that American identity emerged from a constitution which defended individual rights and liberties.

By 1785, Adams had seen enough of Europe. His diplomatic missions left him weary and disheartened. Confiding in his mother, Adams wrote: "My preferring to return home, has surprised a number of my young acquaintance here; much more than it would probably, if they had seen as much of Europe as I have."[71] He had seen a variety of European states during his assignments, and in turn observed a number of monarchical governments. He witnessed the twilight of the Age of Absolutism, the rule of monarchs clutching their remaining sovereignty. He disapproved of how these political organizations failed to protect the liberty of their citizens.

The importance of this comment, however, does not rest in terms of weariness or

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[71] John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, August 31, 1785 as cited in http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?mode=p&id=AFC06p319#319

overwork. Naturally Adams did not write to emphasize that he had seen enough of the landmarks or aesthetics. He had seen enough of the political disconnect, the vast difference between American and European governmental orders. He observed a number of monarchies which stifled individual liberties. The liberal political system posited by John Locke had largely been limited to Great Britain. The majority of his experiences placed him in absolutist environments. One can thus reasonably infer that Adams longed to return home, amongst personal reasons, to reside in a nation that prided itself on its republican composition.

In an interesting departure from Morris, Adams occasionally wrote of his European experiences without hostility. In fact, he noted that his time abroad developed his republican sentiment. "I feared that by having received so large a share of my education in Europe," he wrote to his mother, " [that] my attachment, to a republican government, would not be sufficient, for pleasing my Countrymen; but I find on the contrary, that I am the best republican here."[72]

This observation supposes that Adams initially found European conditions to not favor a republican spirit. In fact, on multiple occasions he articulated the vices of monarchism and its widespread popularity. He upheld that "…the most civilized Nations extant are governed by despotic Monarchs."[73] To Adams, the absolutist nature of monarchies inhibited the individual liberties which he held in such high esteem.

What did Adams make of the fact that he received a European education? The remark made to Abigail Adams also contrasted educational values between European and Americans. Adams feared that his cosmopolitan education detracted from his ability to effectively participate in a republic. This implies that Adams's understanding of republicanism is not something innate. Instead it is a learned sentiment, developed in particular conditions, namely a constitutional government. [74]

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[72] John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, December 30, 1786 as cited in http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?mode=p&id=AFC07p418#418
[73] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, October 2, 1786 http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=ADMS-03-02-02-0001-0009-0002

Despite these fears, Adams found himself more than capable of participating in a republic. He remarked that his republican spirit exceeded that of his compatriots. This observation leads one to infer that the monarchical system of Europe sharpened Adams's attachment to republicanism. His experience in Europe made an impression which sharpened his political convictions.

Adams continued his comparisons of Europe and America in terms of opportunity. He described the United States a place " …where every man has an opportunity of displaying the talents he possesses; and where the education of the People, is so much more attended to, than in any part of Europe, or perhaps of the world."   The way Adams describes opportunity as "displaying" skills or talents lends itself to an economic interpretation. The free market, which Adams endorsed, operates according to individuals showcasing their natural skills or human resources.

The ability to market oneself according to talent and profession distinguished America from the Old World. By the late 18th century, Europe still had the vestiges of the feudalism. France, in particular, had such stratified classes that she would eventually plummet into revolution. European states inherited traditional economies, that is to say an economic system where an individual takes on the occupation of his father. This resulted in extremely limited upward mobility. Guilds dominated professional work and the feudal hierarchy crippled individual opportunities. The political economy of the United States was rather active in the Early Republic. Adams contented that, in America, one would not be limited to the same work of their forefathers. Instead, Americans could demonstrate their individual talents, pursuing employment opportunities that suit their particular skillset. Adams thus distinguished America from Europe. His experience in the variety of European countries informed his understanding of American identity in terms of a free market economy.

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[74] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, September 26, 1786
http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=ADMS-03-02-02-0001-0008-0026

Adams also highlighted the importance of education in America. He lauded America's educational network. He boldly and directly asserted that the American educational experience outperformed its European counterparts. Scholars have examined, at great lengths, the nature and characteristics of American pedagogy in the Early Republic. According to B. Edward McClellan, "…[the founders] placed special emphasis on the teaching of 'virtue', which they defined roughly as the willingness to set aside purely selfish motives and work for the larger good of society."

The evidence thus shows that Adams valued an education which placed a premium on moral instruction. This understanding provides significant insight into his conceptualization of American identity in two categories. First, it addresses the inherent importance of education. To Adams, American citizens received quality educations. A robust and morally instructive education served as a benchmark of developing American ideal. It also implicitly speaks to the importance of morals and manners in American society. Like Morris, Adams's perception of "good Americans" had a moral component. Manners played an important role in identification during the Early Republic. His experiences with Europe brought this understanding to the forefront.

Adams's high praise for liberty did not sail constantly. It hit turbulent patches, valleys to balance out the peaks. By early 1788 he reached an impressively low point in his republican confidence. He waxed existentially in his diaries. "In the political world, what is Liberty, what is patriotism, what is power and grandeur?," he questioned, "—nothing."[75] This crisis of political faith seems incongruent with his core values. Whereas some critics could argue that this sentiment detracts from an argument fixed on liberty, the amount of evidence to the contrary is far too substantial. The number of times that Adams speaks of liberty in high esteem greatly outweigh this passing remark. It is far more likely that he wrote this in a period of existential

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[75] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, January 4, 1788
http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=ADMS-03-02-02-0003-0001-0004

emotions, something not deliberate or calculated like his other writings. After several stressful years of diplomatic missions, a bout of negativity could be expected. That said, this piece could hardly discredit Adam's appreciation of political liberty. It truly served as the focal point of nearly all of his thinking.

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The later years sharpened the convictions that Adams already had. His experiences in the Netherlands and Prussia, as well as his criticisms of the French Revolution, drove home the points he articulated in the 1780s. He once again considered identity in terms of republicanism and liberty, and of morals and education. The older Adams still had the same convictions as before. His second tour through Europe strengthened them.

Adams received notification of his appointment as Resident Minister to the Netherlands on June 3, 1793. He found this news "…very unexpected, and indeed surprising."[76] Yet, given his experience with European affairs, one could believe that this did not come off as much as a surprise as Adams indicated. He departed for Europe on September 17th and expressed that he felt "…the pain of separation from my friends and country…I did not, but I could have, turned my eyes and wept."[77] Such an emotional reaction extends beyond the expected homesickness. The way he addressed missing his country resembles the thoughts of his early experiences in Europe. He recalled the monarchies, the absence of individual liberties, and the traditional societies. One can glean a sense of foreboding in these writings. On that ship in the middle of September, he recognized that he approached a familiar yet unwelcome territory.

Adams arrived at The Hague on December 30, 1793. His tenure began inauspiciously, as the French Revolutionary spirit spread throughout the Netherlands. "The three-colored cockade began to make its appearance in the streets," he wrote, " they were noisy through the night."[78]

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[76] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, June 3, 1793 as cited in Charles Francis Adams ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams vol. 1* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 31.
[77] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, September 17, 1793, in Adams, 39.

Adams presented the revolutionary fervor negatively. He found the patriots rather obnoxious and blamed them for the tumult in the neighborhoods.[79] He had little patience for the remnants and supporters of the French Revolution. They did not make a good first impression for the Netherlands.

Adams generally disapproved of the French Revolution. He, much like Morris, originally enjoyed the constitutional spirit of its early days. He approved how France moved towards a political solution in a representative fashion. He especially enjoyed the proclamations of a constituent assembly with the intention of drafting a constitution. Yet, as the revolution devolved into popular chaos, Adams retracted his support. In fact, he became a vocal critic of the events unfolding in Paris.

In 1791, he penned a series of essays under the pseudonym *Publicola*. These articles lambasted the French Revolution and its supporters, although in slightly more reserved terms than Morris. He asserted that the popular control of the revolution destroyed any mechanism that could protect liberties. “What possible security,” Adams questioned, “can any citizen have for the protection of his unalienable rights?” [80] These unalienable rights, which Adams believed to be endowed by God and codified in political institutions, proved especially important. This reiterated the emphasis he placed on individual liberties and constitutional safeguards. In France, the revolutionaries extinguished any such protections. Arbitrary rights and liberties were the order of the day. On the contrary, America had a written constitution which expressed its protection of civil liberties. American identity, inthe mind of John Quincy Adams, meant upholding the constitutional values of preserving particular political rights and liberties.

Lynn Parsons also noted that the *Publicola* essays highlighted the distinction between American and European historical backgrounds. [81] The United States emerged from a unique

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[78] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, January 18, 1794 in Adams, 58.
[79]Ibid.
[80] As cited in Parsons, 43.

colonial position, a territory without feudal heritage. This political culture enabled the successful growth and maintenance of a healthy republic. Europe, on the contrary, still had visible signs of medieval economics, feudalism grounded in private reciprocal relationships. Peasants and serfs still existed throughout most of Europe. The stratified feudal system remained in a variety of nations, a lingering vestige of the middle ages.

This impression, in Adams's train of thought, prevented European nations from fully developing a republican government. If individuals had a longstanding tradition of inequality, both economically and socially, how could they adjust to a system of government which emphatically proclaims the equality of citizens? How could they respect institutions? Adams's experience in Europe, his observations of the feudal history, led him to strengthen his beliefs that American identity revolved around an axis of republicanism.

Adams's discontent with the spirit of the French Revolution continued through his mission in the Netherlands. Near the end of January 1794, Adams dined with several representatives of the French government, *citoyen Ministre*. The French officials spoke at length of themselves, boasting their ideology loudly and gracelessly. Throughout the evening they referred to President Washington as General Washington, which Adams recognized as consistent with the population writ large.[82] He found the way in which the French partisans refused to address Washington as president disrespectful, a gesture lacking manners. It bears repeating that Adams placed a premium on manners and moral characters. He believed that good Americans had sound, polite manners. Such manners morals were a certain social quality that distinguished Americans from Europeans. In this sense, Adams's experienced proved similar to Morris's.

Adams summarily characterized the partisans, noting that "…the national character appeared in nothing more conspicuous than in the manner which they spoke."[83] The language

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[81] Ibid, 43.
[82] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, January 22, 1794 in Adams, 61.

and delivery of the French irritated Adams. He found them too boisterous and proud. Adams projected this experience and critique on to the European population writ large.

This frustration also speaks to the political disconnect between America and Europe. Republicanism has a longstanding association with stoic masculinity, a quiet and virtuous political ideal. Good republicans let their actions speak for themselves. One of the selling points of republicanism rested on its solemn virtuosity. Accordingly, Adams found that American identity emerged from this republicanism, ergo good Americans ought to maintain a stoic disposition. On the contrary, Adams found that Europeans tended to behave extravagantly. Their strong and exuberant personalities could be traced to their political histories, a reflection of a nation's government. The ornate extravagance required to maintain an absolute monarchy, the pomp and circumstance of court, resulted in a population that emulated its leadership. As Morris witnessed this behavior, it furthered his impression that American identity existed on a different plane from Europe. He believed that Americans, by virtues of their government, behaved in a distinct fashion unlike that of their European counterparts.

Adams's experience with Europeans during the French Revolutionary period was not entirely negative. In fact, he appreciated certain characteristics of European political culture. For example, during the French Revolutionary wars, the partisans rallied around a patriotic anthem, *La Marseillaise*. This song represented a distinct battle cry, an exuberant proclamation of patriotism. Adams found this song rather admirable. "If ever a people had occasion to combine the sensations of harmony with the spirit of patriotism," he wrote, "they [the French] had it during that time."[84] Despite the numerous criticisms of the European boisterous spirit, he Adams did enjoy the anthem.

"I am extremely fond of music," he remarked, yet America lacked the musical popular endorsement of patriotism. "I consoled myself with the idea of being an American, and therefore

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[83] Ibid, 62.
[84] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, March 25, 1795, in Adams, 99.

not susceptible of great musical powers," he continued, "though I must do my countrymen the justice to say that few of them are so very dull as this."[85] This observation represented a departure from Adams's customary interpretation. He once again recognized that good Americans held themselves with reservation, a product of the stoic republicanism. At the same time, he accepted that this temperament was, to a degree, boring. Quite ordinarily, Adams witnessed behaviors in Europe and compared them to America. Rather out of the ordinary, however, this time he found the European actions to be more favorable than the American counterpart. He suggested that American identity, complete with its republican spirit, ought to embrace a festive patriotism like that of the French anthem. Through this, one can see how the upheaval in France led Adams to consider America's place in the world.

Over the course of the next two years, Adams concluded his mission in the Netherlands. In the meantime, he traveled to Great Britain, Portugal, and Spain. By 1797, his father had assumed the presidency, and sought to employ his son's diplomatic talents in Central Europe. On May 20, 1797, President John Adams appointed his son as Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to the King of Prussia.[86] This mission carried significant political weight as Prussia emerged as a national power.

Adams arrived in Prussia during a period of national uncertainty. The King of Prussia, Frederick William II, stood at death's doorstep. The entire state seemed in disarray and confusion. As Adams explored the nation, he noted that a military officer at Berlin stopped to interrogate him. He described the man as a "…dapper lieutenant, who did not know, until one of his private solders explained to him, who the United States of America were."[87] Adams found this rather surprising, that a man with a leadership position in the Prussian military did not know of the existence of the United States. When applied to the Prussian society writ large, Adams

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[85] Ibid, 99.
[86] Adams, 193.
[87] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, November 7, 1797 in Adams, 203.

once again had a contrasting image of the European state with America. Whereas Americans, with their complete moral education, had a grasp on the unfolding events of the world, members of the Prussian military did not know the United States of America existed. This dramatic difference refracted back onto Adams's thinking that good Americans had a knowledge of world affairs and were rather intelligent. Once again the significance of education in building an identity came into play.

A few days later, on November 16, King Frederick William II passed away. Prussia immediately plunged into mourning. His wife, the queen consort Frederika Louisa was especially troubled. Adams visited court the next day to pay his respects. He remarked how the queen's entire discussion consisted of a "…lamentation at the death of the late King."[88] He also noticed how disorganized the court had been arranged. The Prussian population, appeared to be a disjointed mob, an ensemble of chaos and confusion. "The people assembled in a promiscuous order ," he wrote, "…[and] went up in succession not very regular."[89] The disorder among the visitors displeased Adams. He preferred the orderly and polite fashions of America. The way he employs the word "promiscuous" conjures up a sort of moral imagery. To Adams, the Prussians seemed as morally student as the rest of Europe. In contrast, he frequently spoke of how America took pride in her moral education. Adams once again illustrated a way in which he conceived of being an American in terms of morality. His impressions of the Prussians reiterated an already existent belief.

Adams spent the rest of the mission building a relationship between the Kingdom of Prussia and the United States of America. It proved very successful and concluded with an amicable accord between the two states. Adams, however, grew weary of Prussia and once again desired to return to America. At the close of his first year in Berlin, he expressed that "…this kind of life, so contrary to that which my inclination would dictate, is unavoidable. The

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[88] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, November 17, 1797 in Adams, 213.
[89] Ibid, in Adams, 213.

year has not in any respect been a profitable one to me.” [90] Despite his success, Adams sounds withdrawn. “This kind of life”, the diplomatic life, had taken a toll on him. His experiences in a variety of European states, with their kingdoms and monarchies, seemed so counterintuitive to the champion of republicanism. He concluded the year on political terms. This remark captured his feelings of Europe writ large, an unsatisfactory place from which he could take no profit.

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John Quincy Adams’s experiences in Europe provided for an opportunity to reflect on the nature of identity in America. He repeatedly remarked on the drastic differences in the political institutions. He outwardly spoke of the contrast, unlike his mentor Francis Dana. Yet at the same time he revealed that he could learn things from the European societies, unlike Gouverneur Morris. Yet, holistically, Adams found Europe to be so different from America that it better informed him of what it meant to be a citizen of the United States. To Adams, being American had strong connections to republicanism, the preservation of liberty, moral character, and education.

[90] John Quincy Adams, diary entry, December 31, 1797 in Adams, 225.

Conclusion

The conceptualization of identity in the Early American Republic assuredly proves difficult to articulate. Such a young nation grappled with questions relating to its existence. What is America? Who are Americans? What characteristics define the nation? All of these questions played into the intellectual and political composition of the Early Republic. Given the vast demographic composition of the United States, even during her early periods, it makes sense that notions of identity differed per each group. Nonetheless, the influence of the French Revolution on America extended into nearly all of the definitions.

The experiences of Gouverneur Morris and John Quincy Adams illustrated the fundamental baselines of American identity as shaped by the French Revolution. Both men served in Europe during the revolution. They witnessed the events firsthand. Their impressions of the French Revolution led them to think deeply on the meaning of the new American nation. France's introspection spread to the Americans serving abroad. The revolution, as James Sharp noted, served as a reflecting pool from which Americans saw a clear image of themselves.

Both Morris and Adams found that the foundations of American identity rested upon a constitutional legal order. Both the American and French Revolutions emerged as an attempt to articulate sovereignty. They each asserted that governments exist to serve the people, not monarchs. Despite similar premises, the outcomes differed dramatically. This divergence resulted from the distinct approaches that each nation followed. The United States ratified a thorough constitution which provided the framework for the republic's operations. The Constitution of the United States established specific political institutions which safeguarded popular sovereignty. On the contrary, the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen contained esoteric affirmations of natural law. It employed Rousseau's conception of a general will and in turn vested effectively direct power in the French people. Both Morris and Adams witnessed the outcome of the French republican experiment. Although nuances distinguish

their interpretations, both disapproved of France's lack of popular control, which accordingly sharpened their understanding of America. All of their observations flowed from the fundamental premise that the French lost control of their own revolution.

Morris sharply criticized the French in a number of different areas. He feared the populace as they swept across the *faubourgs*, looted monasteries and bakeries, and hanged former elites on lampposts. He loathed the poor manners of the lower class. Specifically, he despised how their opinions and ideas were articulated in the public discourse. He found it crude and uncivilized. In a sense, he tacitly supported the monarchy, as a better alternative to the radical French Revolution's bloodshed.

With that impression of the situation in France, Morris articulated his understanding of America. To Morris, the United States was certainly no democracy. The republican system existed to prevent the mass politics that plagued France. In order to establish a society which protected liberty, Morris deemed necessary a safeguard against the public. He also understood a certain economic criteria within the American nation. He believed in a civilized society, free from public unrest, depended upon the leadership of elites, rather than the general population. To Morris, the public writ large could not satisfactorily govern themselves.

In fairness, no single factor determined Morris's thoughts. Credit must be attributed to his quasi-aristocratic background and powerful political position in the United States. After all, Morris had a great deal of personal interests at stake. The French Revolution threatened to upheave his successes. Above all else, however, the commitment to constitutional values drove Morris's interpretation of the French Revolution. He participated in the Constitutional Convention and drafted the famous 'We the People' preamble. He believed that the institutions established in the United States Constitution proved effective in establishing a thriving civil society. Morris's experiences in the French Revolution reinforced his conceptualization that a constitutional legal order defined American identity.

Although not as vitriolic as Morris, John Quincy Adams made it clear that he disapproved of the French Revolution. He found the revolutionaries and their supporters obnoxious and rather annoying. He blamed them for inciting a tumult across Europe, including the Netherlands where he resided. Adams especially disdained the leveling nature of the French Revolution. This sentiment, he found, incredibly dangerous. He distrusted those who refused to show deference to their superiors. To Adams, the French Revolution began as a positive experiment in republicanism. Instead, it collapsed as a conflagration of immoral tumultuousness.

Adams's position on the French Revolution led him to think through what he believed America to mean. In his mind, the United States stood as a beacon for opportunity. America was a place to achieve what had previously been prohibited. He also understood the United States as the defender of liberty, a home which protected one's individual rights and privileges. Whereas France relentlessly suppressed liberties under the Jacobin regime, the United States largely upheld them.

Like Morris, a number of forces shaped the perceptions of John Quincy Adams. His family, who played such a prominent role in the American Revolution and founding the nation, almost certainly left an impression. His education in Europe while traveling with Francis Dana played a significant role as well. Yet, his unwavering commitment to the constitutional principles shined through most prominently. On a number of occasions, Adams spoke of the importance of the United States Constitution . He believed it to be an exemplar, a model which would inspire other nations. To Adams, the events of the French Revolution resulted in a clearer understanding of America in terms of constitutional values.

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The legal-constitutional notion of identity brought forth by Morris and Adams must be understood as the ground rules of identity. It established a baseline from which American identity would further develop. It earned the national scope from the broad language employed

when discussing the United States Constitution and America vis-à-vis the French Revolution. It is essential, however, to understand that Morris and Adams did not explicitly articulate what membership in the American nation meant. Rather, they noted that American identity revolved around an axis shaped by the Constitution.

Historians of national identity have noted that a fully fleshed-out and developed American identity did not emerge until after the Civil War. According to Cecilia O'Leary, "…the formation of a national ideology is never a decisive act but a process that unfolds over time."[91] The legal-constitutional model which Adams and Morris embraced did not establish a definitive American national identity, but rather laid the foundation upon which further conceptualizations would grow. After all, the sectionalist identities in antebellum American remained attached to particular geographic regions. Certainly a constitutional national framework existed, but the defining loyalties belonged to states and sections.

Others scholars have dated the emergence of a concrete national identity after the Civil War. Some consider the "Second American Revolution", that is to say the era of the Reconstruction Amendments as the emergence of an American identity. Others, like Gary Gerstle, date it to 1890.[92] In addition to political constructs, these historians also considered elements such as race and ethnicity. The most explicit definitions of American identity came into focus in the aftermath of the Civil War.

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Historians of American identity have traditionally began their stories with Reconstruction. As noted, this provides a clearest starting point. Yet, as the case studies of Morris and Adams illustrate, the seeds of a national identity had already been planted. The conceptualization of America as a nation developed, in part, from a revolution in France.

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[91] Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 14.
[92] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15.

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