



Democracy Versus Liberty

It is truly disgusting for me to hear politicians, national and international talking heads and pseudo-academics praising the Middle East stirrings as democracy movements. We also hear democracy as the description of our own political system. Like the founders of our nation, I find democracy and majority rule a contemptible form of government.

You say, “Whoa, Williams, you really have to explain yourself this time!”

I’ll begin by quoting our founders on democracy. James Madison, in *Federalist Paper* No. 10, said that in a pure democracy, “there is nothing to check the inducement to sacrifice the weaker party or the obnoxious individual.” At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, Virginia Gov. Edmund Randolph said, “... that in tracing these evils to their origin every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy.” John Adams said, “Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Alexander Hamilton said, “We are now forming a Republican form of government. Real Liberty is not found in the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments. If we incline too much to democracy, we shall soon shoot into a monarchy, or some other form of dictatorship.”



The word “democracy” appears nowhere in the two most fundamental documents of our nation — the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Our Constitution’s Article IV, Section 4, guarantees “to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government.” If you don’t want to bother reading our founding documents, just ask yourself: Does our pledge of allegiance to the flag say to “the democracy for which it stands,” or to “the Republic for which it stands”? Or, did Julia Ward Howe make a mistake in titling her Civil War song “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”? Should she have titled it “The Battle Hymn of the Democracy”?

What’s the difference between republican and democratic forms of government? John Adams captured the essence when he said, “You have rights antecedent to all earthly governments; rights that cannot be



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repealed or restrained by human laws; rights derived from the Great Legislator of the Universe.” That means Congress does not grant us rights; their job is to protect our natural or God-given rights.

For example, the Constitution’s First Amendment doesn’t say Congress shall grant us freedom of speech, the press and religion. It says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press....”

Contrast the framers’ vision of a republic with that of a democracy. Webster defines a democracy as “government by the people; especially: rule of the majority.” In a democracy, the majority rules either directly or through its elected representatives. As in a monarchy, the law is whatever the government determines it to be. Laws do not represent reason. They represent force. The restraint is upon the individual instead of government. Unlike that envisioned under a republican form of government, rights are seen as privileges and permissions that are granted by government and can be rescinded by government.

To highlight the offensiveness to liberty that democracy and majority rule is, just ask yourself how many decisions in your life would you like to be made democratically. How about what car you drive, where you live, whom you marry, whether you have turkey or ham for Thanksgiving dinner? If those decisions were made through a democratic process, the average person would see it as tyranny and not personal liberty. Is it no less tyranny for the democratic process to determine whether you purchase health insurance or set aside money for retirement? Both for ourselves, and our fellow man around the globe, we should be advocating liberty, not the democracy that we’ve become where a roguish Congress does anything upon which they can muster a majority vote.

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