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Lessons From History: How Republics Fall

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The American Republic is teetering on edge as powerful forces, driven by ambition, seek to destroy it. But in striving to preserve the Republic, we need not struggle in the dark: History is brimming with stories of republics that fell. These historical examples provide important lessons about how to avoid a similar fate.

In particular, we will look at three republics that ultimately devolved into monarchies and analyze the factors that contributed to this change. Doing so will reveal that there were certain key factors in common that are also present in modern American society, and which should serve as a warning for us.

The three historical republics we'll be looking at are the Roman Republic (which lasted from 509 B.C. to 27 B.C.), the Republic of Florence (1115 A.D. to 1569 A.D.), and the Dutch Republic (1579 to 1795).

Firstly, the fact that each of these initially sprung out of monarchism only to fall back into it after a few hundred years demonstrates the cyclical nature of politics and history. Liberty is fleeting; no matter how hard a nation fights to build free institutions, it can all implode back into tyranny within a short window of time. As Ronald Reagan famously said, liberty is never more than one generation away from extinction.

Now, the story of the Roman Republic is well known. Born out of the Roman Kingdom, the republic was, for its time, a revolutionary system of governance in that it featured popular representation and elections on several levels, although it was by no means a democracy, and there were several non-popular institutions in place, creating a complex system of checks and balances.

Eventually, the Republic was torn apart by one civil war after another as prominent patricians vied for power. This came to a head in the days of Julius Caesar, whose bid for power and subsequent assassination set the stage for the final civil war that culminated in the coronation of Caesar's nephew, Octavius, as the first emperor, Augustus.

The Republic of Florence is known as the epicenter of the Renaissance. Many of the great artists of the era, such as da Vinci and Michelangelo, spent considerable portions of their careers in the city.

The Florentine Republic was driven by its wealthy citizens, who organized into powerful guilds (including merchant traders, bankers, and judges). The chief legislative body of the city was a nine-man council known as the *signoria*. The signoria was headed by a man known as the *gonfaloniere*, who initially served only for two months at a time. The gonfaloniere was chosen by lottery and had to be a man of sound finances belonging to the seven most important guilds. The gonfaloniere, in turn, selected the members of the signoria.

Throughout the latter part of its existence, the city was dominated by the Medici family, who owned Europe's then-largest bank. Eventually, the Medici succeeded in replacing the gonfaloniere with a for-

life "Duke of the Republic," a hereditary post belonging to their family. And in 1569, any pretense to republicanism came to an end when Pope Pius V turned Florence and its territories into the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, with Cosimo Medici assuming the title of grand duke.

The Dutch Republic, officially called the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, and unofficially referred to in its day as the United Provinces, was a confederation of states in the low countries that banded together to break free from the rule of the Austrian Habsburg Dynasty, launching an 80-year war of independence in 1566 during the reign of the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

There are many parallels between the Dutch Republic and the United States. The United Provinces was a confederacy, as the United States originally was. The individual Dutch states were highly autonomous; their federal government primarily concerned itself with matters of foreign relations, leaving the provinces to govern their own affairs.

One interesting feature of the Dutch Republic was the role of the *stadtholder* (Dutch for "steward"). The stadtholder was originally a stewardship that oversaw the low countries on behalf of the Holy Roman Emperor; but during the Dutch revolt, the stadtholder, William I of Orange, joined the rebellion, becoming its leader (he is today seen as the Dutch George Washington).

William was a nobleman belonging to the House of Orange, and the head of that house is known to the present day as the Prince of Orange.

Throughout the Dutch Republic's existence, the stadtholder was the defacto head of state — he commanded the armed forces and settled internal affairs. The office of the stadtholder served as one source of inspiration for the American president, as James Madison took copious notes on the government of the United Provinces with him to the Constitutional Convention.

The stadtholdership was generally hereditary, being held by the Prince of Orange. There were always power struggles, with the prince's supporters, the orangists, wanting more power for the stadtholder, while the republicans wanted a stadtholderless confederacy in which the provinces had more power (Holland in particular preferred this arrangement, as its superior wealth allowed it to dominate Dutch politics during stadtholderless periods).

The provinces' politics went through many twists and turns, including civil war and getting conquered by Napoleon. In the end, in the 19th century, they became the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the House of Orange as monarchs. This had been preceded by the stadtholdership becoming a hereditary office.

While there are many factors that contribute to a republic's downfall — such as the welfare state, the citizenry's prioritization of security over liberty, the disarming of the people — the above historical examples share one common one trait that is not often discussed.

That is, the influence of and amalgamation of power in the aristocracy. In the above examples, the eventual monarchs all sprung from their respective country's nobility or patrician class: the House of Caesar, the House of Medici, the House of Orange.

By giving an inordinate amount of institutional power to the aristocracy, as these systems did, they made it inevitable that eventually, an ambitious aristocratic family would usurp complete control.

The United States is fortunate in that, unlike Rome or the Netherlands, there is no tradition of nobility here. Nevertheless, an aristocracy can still exist in a society even when it isn't formalized; it normally is the result of wealth, as in Florence — the wealthiest families who belonged to the right insider

organizations (the guilds) were the aristocracy who had say over the city's politics.

This is the same way that the so-called elites amass power in America today — by virtue of their wealth and their membership in insider groups such as the Council on Foreign Relations, Bilderberg, the Trilateral Commission, and even the Chamber of Commerce.

To prevent today's ambitious elites from destroying our Republic as the elites did in historical republics, we must limit the ability they have individually and through their insider groups to influence politics.

That means restricting the amount these billionaires can pour into elections, implementing hard caps for donations to candidates and parties and on independent expenditures (which is how globalists megadonors like George Soros spend most of their election money).

It also calls for greater education to persuade the leaders of institutions to not work with anyone who is tied to insider groups such as the CFR and Bilderberg, for such individuals infiltrate government, business, academia, and other institutions with the deliberate aim of implementing their elite masters' agenda.