
Washington and Madison on Political Parties

Goal: At the conclusion of the lesson students will apply the ideas contained in Federalist Papers 10 and 51 to their own human nature, political parties and current events.

Essential Question: What makes the ideas expressed in Federalist #'s 10 and 51 timeless?

The Federalist No. 10

The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection (continued)

Daily Advertiser

Thursday, November 22, 1787

[James Madison]

Federalist Papers 10 and 51, written in 1787 accurately describe the tendency of humans to split into groups or “factions” of like-minded individuals. Madison wrote in Federalist #10 “Factions are sewn in the nature of man.” People have not changed in this regard since Madison wrote those words in 1787, in is an aspect of human nature. In 1791, the principle of allowing people to divide into factions was recognized and protected in the Association Clause of the First Amendment.

Madison wrote that when people split into groups, the result is often anti-democratic and people argue, fight and ultimately bring down the government; factions are destructive. Madison wrote that a society could do one of three things to deal with the destructive nature of factions: 1. Deal with it, accept it, and set the system up to force compromise or 2. Destroy liberty and make everyone think alike. Or 3. Bring in all the factions into one group so they will compromise and cancel each other's force.

Factions and their problems can be eliminated by taking away the cause, free thought.

“There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.”

Destroying liberty to control factions is worse than the problems caused by factions.

“It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.”

“Liberty is to faction what air is to fire...” Madison wrote that if you want liberty you'll have factions, just like the relationship off air to fire.

One of the principle reasons our government has worked is that it deals with the issues caused by factions, it does not try to eliminate them.

Madison basically said, “If you can’t beat them join them.” That is, use factions for the advantage. Bring in many factions and give them a voice. Madison called it the “Extended Republic.”

“The inference to which we are brought is, that the *causes* of faction cannot be removed, and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*.”

A democracy is one system of representation, by the people directly. Democracies however, motivate factions and cause the citizens directly involved in the government to harden their positions and factions.

A republic however, uses elections to attain representatives of the people, representing many factions, “to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens...”

“The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.
The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens...”

The extended republic causes factions to enlarge their views, to see the bigger picture, beyond the factions single interest.

So, Madison wrote that there are three ways to deal with factions, destroy liberty, make everyone think alike or enlarge the group and bring in all the factions. The third was Madison’s recommendation.

How are political parties factions?

How does political ideology cause differences of opinion?

How do differences of opinion cause factions?

What is the “extended republic?” How does it reduce the power of an individual faction?

Federalist #10
James Madison

AMONG the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction.

By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects.

There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. **Liberty is to faction what air is to fire**, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

The two great points of difference between a **democracy and a republic** are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors, and those who are debtors, fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a

manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government.

Federalist #51 – James Madison- 1787

"... Ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. **But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary.** If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."

George Washington, Farewell Address

19 Sept. 1796 *Writings 35:217--36*

... All obstructions to the execution of the Laws, all combinations and Associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, controul counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the Constituted authorities are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the Nation, the will of a party; often a small but artful and enterprizing minority of the Community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the Mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or Associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the Power of the People, and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your Government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles however specious the pretexts...

I have already intimated to you the danger of Parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on Geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party, generally...

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an Individual: and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of Party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.

The Founders' Constitution

Volume 1, Chapter 18, Document 29

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch18s29.html>

The University of Chicago Press

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745--1799.
Edited by John C. Fitzpatrick. 39 vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931--44.

George Washington, Farewell Address

Madison had new ideas about factions and government. Almost ten years after Madison wrote his words, George Washington was warning that factions would bring down U.S. government as well.

Washington warns that combinations of factions made up of ambitious persons will unite and destroy the, “the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.” They will at first meet the peoples’ opinion, “...may now and then answer popular ends...” but in time will become despotic as they drive for their own view and destroy the opposition.

Washington warns that in order for a society and government to be healthy it must have opposition. Factions and political parties destroy the opposition voice.

Washington warned that factions try and get “revenge” which ultimately leads to despotism and liberty is ruined as the strongest faction takes over.

Because factions/parties are so powerful and destructive to the voice of opposition (in spite of the First Amendment and free speech), the voice of the minority is reduced or stopped.

Read Washington’s Farewell Address and answer these questions:

1. Why is the voice of the minority important?
2. Why do majorities want to stop the voice of the minority?
3. What do you think Washington meant when he said that once rulers, majorities are capable of “...destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”
4. Washington warned against people joining parties. He said, “...mischief of the spirit of Party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.” Why is it in the people’s interest to discourage joining political parties?

James Madison, Parties

23 Jan. 1792 *Papers 14:197--98*

In every political society, parties are unavoidable. A difference of interests, real or supposed, is the most natural and fruitful source of them. The great object should be to combat the evil: 1. By establishing a political equality among all. 2. By withholding *unnecessary* opportunities from a few, to increase the inequality of property, by an immoderate, and especially an unmerited, accumulation of riches. 3. By the silent operation of laws, which, without violating the rights of property, reduce extreme wealth towards a state of mediocrity, and raise extreme indigence towards a state of comfort. 4. By abstaining from measures which operate differently on different interests, and particularly such as favor one interest at the expence of another. 5. By making one party a check on the other, so far as the existence of parties cannot be prevented, nor their views accommodated. If this is not the language of reason, it is that of republicanism.

In all political societies, different interests and parties arise out of the nature of things, and the great art of politicians lies in making them checks and balances to each other. Let us then increase these *natural distinctions* by favoring an inequality of property; and let us add to them *artificial distinctions*, by establishing *kings*, and *nobles*, and *plebeians*. We shall then have the more checks to oppose to each other: we shall then have the more scales and the more weights to perfect and maintain the equilibrium. This is as little the voice of reason, as it is that of republicanism.

From the expediency, in politics, of making natural parties, mutual checks on each other, to infer the propriety of creating artificial parties, in order to form them into mutual checks, is not less absurd than it would be in ethics, to say, that new vices ought to be promoted, where they would counteract each other, because this use may be made of existing vices.

The Founders' Constitution

Volume 1, Chapter 15, Document 50

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch15s50.html>

The University of Chicago Press

The Papers of James Madison. Edited by William T. Hutchinson et al. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962--77 (vols. 1--10); Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977--(vols. 11--).

James Madison on Political Parties Connected to Federalist #10

Madison repeated in 1792 when he wrote about political parties what he had said in Federalist #10. When he wrote "...In every political society, parties are unavoidable." He was saying the same thing as when he wrote in Federalist #10 "Factions are sewn in the nature of man."

He listed five reasons why parties are good. He wrote these words four years before Washington would warn against parties in the Farewell Address.

Madison based his support on parties on the idea that they give political equality to all by giving the access to the government.

He also stated, again, that parties or factions are unavoidable, so deal with it and have them act as a "...check on the other..."

He called political parties "...the language of reason, it is the that of republicanism.

He wrote that distinctions among people would always exist. Some richer or poorer, some intelligent or some ignorant, and parties reflect this "natural" distinctions rather than the "artificial" distinctions of kings and nobles.

Madison reemphasized his idea of the "extended republic" when he pointed out that parties are a natural check and balance on each other. Bring in all the factions, extend the republic, to control a faction from getting too powerful.

After reading Madison on parties, answer these questions:

1. What does Madison mean when he says that parties are unavoidable? How does this connect to the statement he made in Federalist #10 that, "Factions are sewn in the nature of man."
2. How can political parties act as check on each other?
3. How do parties provide access to the government and thereby make politics more equal?

