

Man, Right, And Government: The Nature Of The State In The Thought Of Jefferson, Madison, And Hamilton

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Abstract: This article analyzes the views of the Founding Fathers of the United States — Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton — on human rights. It compares their theoretical concepts and practical efforts, with a focus on their attitudes toward the Bill of Rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of the press, religious liberty, and property rights. The article also examines their contributions to the evolution of constitutional law, the structure of government, and modern democratic ideals.

Keywords: Human rights, U.S. Founding Fathers, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Bill of Rights, freedom of the press, religious freedom, constitutional law.

Introduction: The issue of ensuring human rights and freedoms has historically been one of the most pressing topics in the development of human society. In particular, the views of the Founding Fathers of the United States on human rights served as an important theoretical foundation for the formation of modern democratic states.

One of the most significant aspects of the U.S. independence movement, in contrast to other national liberation struggles, is that the country was not only fighting to break free from the rule of a monarch, but also aimed to establish a government dedicated to the protection of human rights and freedoms. During the Revolutionary War, the United States led a historic struggle to defend human rights and liberties. These battles were not fought for land or material interests, but to safeguard the inalienable rights endowed to every person by nature and God. Located across the ocean, the United States became one of the first nations to make the protection of human rights a central goal of its state policy. The country's Founding Fathers were the first to practically implement the theory that governments must be established to protect and guarantee human rights. This represented an extraordinary innovation for its time, as it introduced a political system that placed human dignity and natural rights above all other values, marking a new stage in world history. This historical experience later influenced Europe and

other regions, inspiring freedom movements fighting for human dignity.

The advanced ideas and profound political views of the U.S. Founding Fathers laid the theoretical groundwork for making the protection of human rights a central function of governance. Their approach—focused on safeguarding individual freedoms and civil rights—played a critical role in the successful formation of the U.S. political system. Thanks to their wise decisions and progressive thinking, it became possible to establish a democratic republic as early as the 18th century.

After gaining independence, the educated and enlightened class of the United States played an active role in the process of building a new nation. They drafted essential legal documents that laid the political and legal foundations of the state and established the core framework for the country's governance. In particular, three leading Enlightenment thinkers — Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton — made substantial contributions to the formation of the U.S. legal system.

Although all three of these Founding Fathers recognized the sacred nature of human rights in principle, their views on how to protect and secure those rights differed significantly. Their divergent approaches ultimately led to the creation of a uniquely balanced political and legal system that ensured the

protection of human rights within a democratic republic.

As noted in Chapter I, during this period, the colonial territories were subjected to unjust and excessive taxation imposed by King George III. These actions led to widespread public discontent and revolts. In this complex historical context, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

This document, which became the first official legal act in the Americas aimed at protecting human rights, holds exceptional historical significance.

Although Thomas Jefferson is recognized as the principal author of the Declaration, he did not regard it merely as a political statement announcing independence. Rather, Jefferson saw the Declaration as a foundational project that would outline the new state's political and legal philosophy. In the preamble of the document, the concept of inalienable natural rights is prominently articulated. From this, it is evident that the colonists sought independence not only due to economic exploitation, but because their natural and legal rights were being continuously violated, thus necessitating the establishment of a sovereign government.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

This excerpt from the Declaration affirms the revolutionary idea that government exists solely to serve the people and safeguard their natural rights. The Founding Fathers thus placed the dignity and freedoms of the individual at the very heart of the state, shaping a philosophy that would go on to inspire constitutional thought worldwide." [1; –P. 32.] Thomas Jefferson argued that the continuous violation of fundamental rights—particularly restrictions on political representation, fair trials, and personal freedoms—was the primary justification for the colonies' pursuit of political independence. He asserted that if a government fails to protect human rights or systematically infringes upon them, the people have the right to establish a new form of governance.

Therefore, the preamble of the Declaration of Independence not only justifies the need for political and legal independence but also elevates the concept of human rights to a core principle in the establishment of a new state. This approach ultimately defined the philosophical and political foundation of the United States and later served as a powerful inspiration for democratic movements around the world.

The second part of the Declaration presents a detailed list of grievances, clearly explaining the rationale behind the demand for independence. Among the accusations made against King George III, many directly concern violations of the inalienable natural rights of individuals. Upon analysis, it becomes evident that the majority of these grievances relate to the suppression of civil liberties.

For example: "He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures..." "He has quartered large bodies of armed troops among us..." These points illustrate how the King endangered the personal safety of civilians and violated their right to private property and the inviolability of the home.

Another notable charge reads: "He has imposed taxes on us without our consent..." "He has refused to cause others to be elected..." Such statements further highlight the denial of political representation and the infringement of basic civil rights, emphasizing the colonists' view that the British Crown had become illegitimate in its governance and no longer protected the rights of its subjects." [2; –P. 32.]

Taxation without representation clearly demonstrates a violation of the individual's right to political participation.

Citing this and numerous other infringements upon fundamental human rights, Thomas Jefferson crafted what would become his most prominent political work — the Declaration of Independence.

However, Alexander Hamilton advocated for a more realistic approach to such ideals. While he supported the core principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence, his practical political views often differed from those of Jefferson. In his writings, Hamilton emphasized that Jefferson's ideas, while noble, were overly idealized and difficult to implement in practice. As a proponent of a strong centralized government, Hamilton approached certain parts of the Declaration with a more critical and pragmatic lens. "Jefferson's views on natural rights in the Declaration are

admirable, but they must be reconciled with the realities of practical governance. A government cannot be built solely on philosophical theories," Hamilton argued, stressing the importance of institutional strength and administrative functionality over purely abstract ideals." [3] James Madison, as a close political ally of Jefferson, fully supported the ideas on human rights expressed in the Declaration of Independence. He viewed the Declaration as the foundation of the U.S. Constitution, and emphasized that the mechanisms for protecting human rights were based on the very principles articulated in that historic document.

"The Declaration established human rights and liberties as the most essential principle of state policy. We implemented these principles through the Constitution and the Bill of Rights," Madison asserted, underlining his belief that the protection of fundamental freedoms must be embedded not only in political theory but also in concrete legal and institutional frameworks". [4; –P. 155.]

At the core of Thomas Jefferson's philosophical worldview stood the issue of human rights. From the Declaration of Independence to his letters with Madison and other legal texts, Jefferson consistently demonstrated a serious and principled approach to the protection of human rights. Among the most intimate and inviolable of those rights is freedom of religion, which, as Jefferson emphasized, pertains directly to individual conscience, inner conviction, and moral autonomy.

Jefferson's strong belief that the state should not interfere in matters of religious faith reflects his role as one of the most progressive defenders of natural rights. In his seminal work "Notes on the State of Virginia" (1785), he writes about the consequences of religious coercion:

"Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burned, tortured, fined, and imprisoned. What has been the effect of this coercion? To make half the world fools and the other half hypocrites." [5; – P. 86.] With this powerful statement, Jefferson warned against the danger of enforcing religious conformity by law. One of the defining features of the Founding Fathers of the United States—compared to other political-philosophical schools—was that they were not merely theorists, but practical statesmen who actively sought to implement their ideals into reality. In particular, Jefferson did not confine his thoughts on religious liberty to abstract philosophy; he worked to guarantee freedom of conscience and belief through concrete

legal measures.

Guided by these principles, Jefferson drafted the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in 1777. Though written by Jefferson, the statute was formally adopted by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786, with the essential support of his close ally James Madison.

A review of the statute's content reveals Jefferson's unwavering commitment to the separation of church and state. He proposed several normative principles aimed at safeguarding the natural right of each person to religious liberty, including:

"No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever..."
"All men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion..."

Through this legislation, Jefferson laid the groundwork for constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and set a precedent that would later influence the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution" [6; – P. 2.]

When the first ten amendments were added to the U.S. Constitution, one of them specifically addressed religious freedom. This amendment stated that: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

In other words, the government shall not recognize any official religion, shall not oppose any belief, and shall not support any religion through legislation. [7; – P. 1.]

Jefferson's attitude toward this amendment can be understood through his famous letter to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut. In this letter, he articulated his deep philosophical and political convictions regarding the relationship between religion and government. Jefferson wrote:

"I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State."

Jefferson emphasized his belief that religion is a strictly personal matter between an individual and their God. He expressed his strong respect for the legislative principle adopted by the American people, according to which Congress must never pass laws either endorsing or prohibiting any religion. Through this framework, Jefferson envisioned a metaphorical "wall of separation between church and state," a concept that would become a cornerstone of American constitutional thought and legal precedent

regarding religious freedom". [8]

Jefferson's ideas on religious liberty were strongly supported by James Madison. Madison's own views on religious freedom were first publicly expressed in his famous 1785 document, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," written in opposition to a proposed Virginia bill that aimed to provide state financial support to churches.

In that document, Madison firmly asserted: "Religion is wholly exempt from the cognizance of civil society... It is a matter of personal conscience and conviction, and every individual has the right to act according to the dictates of their own conscience."

This powerful statement reflects Madison's deep commitment to the principle of religious autonomy and his opposition to any state involvement in religious matters.

He argued that true religious belief cannot be compelled by law, and that government support or interference in matters of faith inherently violates individual liberty." [9]

For Madison, the notion of compelling the state to provide financial support to religious institutions was fundamentally at odds with freedom of conscience—indeed, he considered it a form of "tyranny." He firmly opposed such practices and repeatedly warned against state interference in religious affairs, viewing it as a direct violation of natural rights. His position on this matter was not limited to a single document; it was consistently reaffirmed throughout his other writings and speeches during the ratification debates of the U.S. Constitution.

Turning to Alexander Hamilton, he also expressed distinct views on the matter. In the very first essay of "The Federalist Papers", Hamilton briefly addresses this topic, asserting:

"In politics, as in religion, it is absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution."

With this statement, Hamilton reinforced the idea that coercion—whether in matters of faith or governance—is not a legitimate means of achieving truth or unity. His approach emphasized the need for reasoned persuasion and institutional balance, rejecting force as a tool for shaping belief or loyalty, either politically or spiritually". [10; – P. 10.] Hamilton opposed religious coercion and state-sponsored religion. He regarded religious liberty as a vital component of civil society, although he was less radical than Jefferson on the idea of strict separation between church and state.

In general, Hamilton was also a staunch defender of human rights, though his approach to these issues differed somewhat from Jefferson's. His 1774 pamphlet, "A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress," stands as a key document reflecting Hamilton's views on human rights and political authority.

In that work, Hamilton criticized the British Parliament's illegitimate authority over the American colonies and advanced the following principled idea:

"All men have one common origin, they participate in the same nature, and consequently have equal rights. No one can have authority over another unless it is voluntarily granted."

Through this statement, Hamilton emphasizes the natural equality of individuals and affirms that all legitimate authority must be derived from mutual consent.

For Hamilton, political power is created by the people and becomes lawful only when it is based on voluntarily delegated powers.

Unlike Jefferson, Hamilton placed greater focus on the practical enforcement of rights than on abstract theorizing.

This becomes evident in his opposition to slavery and his respect for the intellectual capacity of African Americans.

Hamilton regarded slavery as morally wrong, and wrote: "Their natural faculties are as good as ours." Such views reflect his belief in the equal dignity and potential of all human beings, and further demonstrate his commitment to justice and human rights in both theory and practice" [11] Indeed, in 1785, Alexander Hamilton, together with John Jay, co-founded the New York Manumission Society, an organization committed to promoting the emancipation of enslaved African Americans and protecting the rights of freed individuals.

The society actively worked to abolish the international slave trade in New York and advocated for the gradual abolition of slavery throughout the state. According to numerous historians who have studied this period of American history, Hamilton is believed never to have owned slaves, a fact often cited as further evidence of his personal commitment to human rights.

While Hamilton's actions were rooted in practical engagement, his efforts were also supported in principle by James Madison, though Madison's views on slavery were more complex and often contradictory.

During the Constitutional Convention on August 25, 1787, Madison expressed his concerns regarding the legitimization of slavery as a property right. He stated:

"Mr. Madison thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men." This statement reflects Madison's moral unease with the notion of human beings as property, although he did not always act consistently in opposition to the institution of slavery. Unlike Hamilton, Madison himself owned enslaved people, and while he acknowledged the immorality of slavery in principle, his political actions often fell short of active resistance to it.

Together, these perspectives highlight the divergent and at times conflicted approaches of the Founding Fathers toward slavery — with Hamilton taking a more activist stance, and Madison grappling with the contradiction between natural rights philosophy and the prevailing socio-economic realities of the time". [12; – P. 155.] This view stood in direct opposition to the demands of Southern states, which sought to enshrine the institution of slavery within the U.S. Constitution as a form of economic "property" protection.

While Southern delegates insisted on safeguarding slavery as a protected property right, James Madison firmly rejected this idea, considering it a violation of liberal-democratic constitutional principles. At the time the Constitution was being drafted, there were sharp divisions between the Northern and Southern states on the issue of slavery. Had the Constitution included a clause abolishing slavery, Southern states might have refused to ratify the document, risking the disintegration of the Union.

In one of his letters, Madison described slavery as follows:

"The magnitude of this evil among us is so deeply felt, and so universally acknowledged, that no merit could be greater than devising a satisfactory remedy." [13]

Madison discussed the issue of slavery extensively in his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, who evaluated the matter not only from a moral standpoint but also in terms of international politics and trade.

In one such letter, Jefferson expressed harsh criticism of slavery, while also lamenting the political difficulties in legislatively abolishing the practice. He wrote: "The clause reprobating the importation of slaves was struck out in compliance with South Carolina and Georgia, who never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who wished to continue it. Our Northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for though their people have very few slaves themselves, yet they have been pretty considerable carriers of them to others." [14]

Jefferson addressed the issue not only in private correspondence but also in his published works. In one

particularly famous statement, he wrote: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever." [15] Here, Jefferson conveys his moral condemnation of slavery, expressing fear of divine retribution for such a grave injustice. In a letter to John Holmes, he added:

"I can say with conscious truth that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach... But as it is, we have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is on one scale, and self-preservation on the other." [16]

Jefferson also made practical efforts to curb slavery. One of his most notable initiatives came in 1784, when he proposed a bill to ban slavery in new U.S. territories. Jefferson submitted this legislation to the Continental Congress, which included a clause stipulating that slavery would be prohibited in all future territories after the year 1800. However, the measure failed by just one vote. The proposal read: "After the year 1800, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said states, otherwise than in punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." [17]

Jefferson even included a paragraph in his original 1776 draft of the Declaration of Independence condemning the British king for supporting the slave trade. He accused the king of violating human rights by permitting the transatlantic importation of slaves into the colonies. However, this paragraph was removed from the final version of the Declaration at the insistence of delegates from Southern and some Northern colonies. This historical detail is noted by American historian Stephen E. Lucas in his essay "The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence." [18]

As noted in Chapter One, although Thomas Jefferson advanced deep theoretical ideas regarding the protection of human rights, his lifelong use of enslaved labor has sparked considerable criticism and debate in scholarly circles. Nevertheless, his writings on natural rights served as a major inspiration for the global development of human rights.

Jefferson was particularly critical of the fact that the newly drafted U.S. Constitution did not initially include explicit protections for fundamental rights and freedoms.

He demanded the inclusion of clear and specific provisions safeguarding essential liberties.

As a result of this pressure—along with the influence of James Madison—the first ten amendments were added to the Constitution, now known collectively as the Bill

of Rights. However, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton held divergent views on the scope, necessity, and interpretation of these amendments.

Jefferson expressed deep concern over the absence of guarantees for basic civil liberties in the original Constitution.

In a letter to James Madison dated December 20, 1787, he wrote: "Let me now add what I do not like. First, the omission of a bill of rights, providing clearly and without the aid of sophisms for... freedom of religion, freedom of the press, protection against standing armies, restrictions against monopolies, the habeas corpus, and trial by jury."

Jefferson dismissed the argument—offered by some, including James Wilson—that the federal government had not been granted powers over such rights and therefore posed no threat to them. In Jefferson's view, without explicit protections, rights could not be truly safeguarded, and the Constitution would be deprived of its most essential guarantees. He concluded: "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse." [19]

Initially, James Madison did not believe that a bill of rights was necessary. He argued that the Constitution already defined and limited federal powers, making additional rights protections redundant. In a letter to Jefferson dated October 17, 1788, Madison stated: "My own opinion has always been in favor of a bill of rights, provided it be so framed as not to imply powers not meant to be included in the enumeration... I never considered [its absence] a material defect, nor have I ever been anxious to supply the omission by a specific amendment... I have always supposed that a bill of rights, although not essential in a general Constitution, would not be altogether useless." [20]

Later, under continued correspondence with Jefferson and mounting pressure from the Anti-Federalists, Madison reconsidered his position. In a letter to Richard Peters dated August 19, 1789, he explained the new rationale behind the Bill of Rights:

"The object of the amendments is to secure the rights of the people and of the states against misconstruction or abuse of the powers of the general government... They are carefully guarded and will, I trust, be acceptable to the people." [21]

This statement shows Madison's conciliatory and pragmatic approach—he did not shift positions out of mere political pressure but through thoughtful

reflection on the historical and constitutional context.

In contrast, Alexander Hamilton adopted a fundamentally different stance. As one of the leading Federalists, he opposed the necessity of a Bill of Rights. In Federalist No. 84, Hamilton argued that the Constitution already limited government power through enumeration of powers, thus rendering a bill of rights unnecessary: "The most considerable of the remaining objections is that the plan of the convention contains no bill of rights... I answer that the Constitution is itself, in every rational sense, and to every useful purpose, a bill of rights."

Hamilton further claimed that traditional bills of rights, such as those in England, were historically agreements between monarchs and their subjects, designed to limit royal authority, not democratic governments.

"Bills of rights are, in their origin, stipulations between kings and their subjects... Magna Carta was obtained by the barons, sword in hand, from King John. The Petition of Right was a declaration of liberties by Parliament to Charles I. The Bill of Rights [1688] was likewise enacted by Parliament." [22–24]

Hamilton argued that such declarations were less relevant in a government founded on the consent of the people, as the U.S. Constitution was. He concluded: "Here, the people surrender nothing; and as they retain everything, they have no need of particular reservations... The Constitution is itself a bill of rights."

Hamilton believed that adding such provisions could imply that the government had powers it did not possess, and thus do more harm than good. To him, the structure of the Constitution, its reliance on popular sovereignty, and its enumeration of powers already offered sufficient protection.

While listing certain specific rights in detail may seem ill-suited for a constitutional document intended to regulate broad and fundamental political interests, Hamilton argued that criticisms regarding the absence of a Bill of Rights were unfounded. He believed there were strong reasons to reject these objections. In fact, Hamilton warned that such declarations might not only be unnecessary, but even dangerous.

He cautioned that listing specific rights might inadvertently imply that the government held powers it did not actually possess. For example, if one were to say, "freedom of the press shall not be infringed," it might suggest that the government had the power to regulate the press but was simply refraining from using it. This, he feared, could lead to misinterpretation and manipulation.

Hamilton expressed concern that prohibiting powers the government was never granted—such as restrictions on the press—might actually imply those powers existed.

He emphasized that, unlike in British constitutional tradition where rights were claimed from monarchs, the U.S. Constitution preserved all rights for the people and only delegated limited powers to the government. In his view, including a Bill of Rights might undermine the core philosophy of the Constitution—the doctrine of enumerated powers and a limited government.

Hamilton's unique stance on the Bill of Rights did not indicate a lack of concern for human rights. On the contrary, his efforts to establish a strong national government—through checks and balances, economic centralization, and executive structure—were all grounded in a desire to secure individual liberty and justice.

He once wrote: "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power." [26]

Hamilton repeatedly emphasized the importance of rights in his public speeches, stating: "In a free government, the security of civil rights must be the same as that of religious rights. It consists in the multiplicity of interests and in the multiplicity of sects." [27]

Each of the three Founding Fathers—Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison—had a unique and profound perspective on human rights. Jefferson, in particular, regarded freedom of speech and the press as essential elements of a free society. He famously stated: "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." [28]

To Jefferson, a free press was more than a medium of information—it was a vital instrument of public accountability, and the strongest safeguard of liberty. In a letter to James Currie, he wrote: "Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost." [29]

Thus, in response to Anti-Federalist pressure and widespread public demand, the first ten amendments—collectively known as the Bill of Rights—were adopted into the U.S. Constitution in 1791.

These amendments sought to protect personal, political, and civil liberties, especially in the First Amendment, which guaranteed freedom of speech, the

press, religion, and the right to peaceful assembly.

In his speech to Congress on June 8, 1789, James Madison, who introduced the amendments, declared: "The people shall not be deprived or abridged of their right to speak, to write, or to publish their sentiments; and the freedom of the press, as one of the great bulwarks of liberty, shall be inviolable." [30]

This statement shows that Madison viewed press freedom as fundamental to a free society and essential to the republican form of government.

In his letter to Isaac H. Tiffany dated April 4, 1819, Jefferson further emphasized the supremacy of natural rights over statutory law, writing:

"I do not believe that the phrase 'within the limits of the law' is necessary or proper... Laws are often but the will of the majority, and the will of the majority is sometimes the will of a tyrant. I recognize but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively; and human rights are the gift of God, not of government." [31]

In Federalist No. 54, Hamilton discusses the delicate balance between property rights and personal rights. He asserts: "Government is instituted not only for the protection of property but for the protection of individuals. Therefore, both are equally deserving of protection. The principle of proportional representation applies equally to both. To recognize a property interest in persons is to violate fundamental justice. Government is the invention of human reason to meet human needs. Individuals possess their own minds, their freedom of expression, their religious convictions, their physical security and liberty. All these constitute forms of property and must be equally protected".

The Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton—were visionary figures who elevated human rights from abstract theory to the foundational purpose of the state. They not only articulated the inalienable rights to life, liberty, property, conscience, and expression, but also enshrined these principles in constitutional frameworks.

Thanks to their efforts, for the first time in history, a modern state was conceptualized as an institution designed to protect human rights. The adoption of the Bill of Rights, the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, all reflect the legal and moral responsibility these founders embraced.

Though their approaches varied—Jefferson's idealism, Madison's pragmatism, and Hamilton's structuralism—

their collective efforts forged a balanced, durable, and rights-based constitutional system. Today, the core rights and freedoms recognized by democratic societies around the world are direct descendants of these historical processes and philosophical legacies.

Ultimately, the Founders made human rights the heart of political life and the defining purpose of government.

Their legacy remains a universal symbol of freedom, justice, and the rule of law—not only for the United States, but for all humanity.

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