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From the American Revolution to the Making of Haiti: Defining the Characteristics of a Tyrannical Regime and its Tyrant.

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Abstract:

This thesis aims investigate the historical characteristics, features, and common traits that allows to define the tyrannical nature of a government and its ruler(s).

To elaborate the final answer, the starting points of this research are the American Revolution and the *Declaration of Independence*, one of most prominent documents issued by the Founding Fathers on the 4th of July 1776. The first chapter provides a solid and detailed historical background of the primary legislative acts and events that prompted the former colonies to draft the Declaration of Independence through which they condemned the motherland for the implementation of a tyrannical regime. The second chapter focuses the concept of tyranny and its historical evolution. Selected thinkers such as Plato, John Locke, and Thomas Paine play a vital role in underscoring the attitudes and the characteristics of tyrants and their regime, which are deemed fundamental in order to provide a solid conceptual ground which facilitates the comprehension of not only the tyranny analysed in the first chapter but also of the purpose and the essence of the third chapter. In the third and final chapter, two key figures of the American and Haitian revolutions will be analysed, namely Thomas Jefferson and Touissaint Louverture. Through a precise analysis of their respective views and approaches to the institution of slavery, the chapter aims to provide a concrete and specific example of what a tyrant could be.

Keywords: Tyranny, Subordination, Personal interests, Common interests, Slavery.

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Italian Summary.

Con l'avvento del nazionalismo e de populismo, carismatici leader si sono imposti nel panorama politico internazionale e mondiale, sollevando dibattiti sull'effettiva natura e concreto orientamento dei loro governi. Come ci suggerisce Robert Dahl, determinare la transizione di un regime da democratico ad antidemocratico non sarà una questione così immediata come potrebbe essere invece la determinazione del "*freezing point*" dell'acqua. Lo stesso principio, adattato ai concetti di tirannia e regime tirannico, ha trovato applicazione nel corso di questa ricerca. Nello specifico, questa ricerca si concentra prevalentemente su figure ed eventi storici che hanno lasciato un segno profondo nella storia moderna di fine diciottesimo secolo. Il focus della tesi si muove a cavallo dei tre capitoli affrontando tematiche legate alla tirannia nel contesto rivoluzionario americano e haitiano. Lo scopo di questa tesi sarà quindi quello di investigare sulla natura effettiva di tali regimi e leader per fornire un preciso identikit della tirannia (e del tiranno) tramite una ricostruzione storica che permetta di definire le caratteristiche di un regime tirannico, e renderlo applicabile quindi anche nel panorama internazionale attuale.

Focalizzandosi sull'evoluzione del rapporto tra le cosiddette "Tredici Colonie" e il governo britannico, il primo capitolo fornisce un contesto storico dettagliato degli avvenimenti principali che hanno portato le colonie a definire la loro indipendenza dalla madrepatria. Non fu un singolo avvenimento a determinare tale "malessere", ma un insieme di avvenimenti che furono percepiti dai *Founding Fathers*, e in particolar modo da Jefferson, come un tentativo di ridurre in schiavitù le colonie. Tramite la Dichiarazione d'indipendenza promulgata il 4 luglio 1776, i padri fondatori americani denunciarono il governo britannico per aver cercato di imporre un regime tirannico che li condannò ad un lungo periodo di ingiurie e soprusi. Atti legislativi come lo *Stamp Act*, il *Coercive Act*, e il *Declaratory Act* contribuirono ad inasprire le tensioni tra le colonie e la madre patria, delineando quindi un contesto sociopolitico ricco di tensioni.

Le colonie erano di fatto sudditi all'interno dell'Impero britannico, e come tali dovettero sottostare alle rigide e arbitrarie imposizioni del governo al quale erano subordinate. Il fatto che quindi fossero costrette ad affrontare improvvise tassazioni ogni qualvolta il governo britannico lo ritenesse opportuno fu motivo di grande insoddisfazione che maturò nel tempo a tal punto da richiedere l'indipendenza. Ad esempio, lo *Stamp Act* impose il pagamento di una somma di denaro per qualsiasi tipo di carta utilizzato per la scrittura di documenti, libelli, o addirittura licenze per la vendita di prodotti a base alcolica. Ulteriori limitazioni alla libertà politica delle colonie, come ad esempio il divieto ai membri delle *lower house* di eleggere i membri delle *upper house*, determinarono un quadro generale di instabilità e insoddisfazione che non si limitò solo ad una dimensione diplomatica, ma degenerò anche da un punto di vista militare con la prima battaglia combattuta il 19 aprile 1775 (Battaglia di Lexington and Concord)

Il secondo capitolo avrà quindi l'obiettivo di "penetrare" nella dichiarazione di indipendenza americana e selezionare un concetto cardine per questa tesi, e analizzarne il suo percorso storico tramite le parole di pensatori selezionati. Da Platone a Thomas Paine, passando per Cicerone, Machiavelli, Hobbes, e Locke, il secondo capitolo avrà il difficile compito di fornire una serie di caratteristiche e riflessioni che permetto di inquadrare meglio i concetti di tirannia e tiranno. Come il secondo capitolo cercherà di far emerge, nel momento in cui un leader politico è accecato da una bramosia di potere, sia economico che politico, tenderà a perdere di vista il suo obiettivo cardine, vale a dire il mantenimento dello stato tramite il raggiungimento del benessere della collettività. Di conseguenza, nel momento in cui le aspirazioni e gli interessi personali del leader superano quelli della comunità governata vi sono tutti i presupposti per definire tale leader come tirannico, a maggior ragione se i diritti fondamentali come la vita e la libertà vengono violati. Un piccolo estratto emerge dall'opera *Common Sense* di Thomas Paine, un libello nel quale l'autore definirà Re Giorgio III come un pericoloso nemico della libertà degli americani. L'indipendenza e il governo autonomo saranno quindi elementi cardini sui quali la

dichiarazione d'indipendenza verrà stipulata, con l'obiettivo di recidere ogni tipo di legame con la madrepatria e scongiurare l'opportunità di aprire la porta ad una tirannia infinita.

Il terzo ed ultimo capitolo metterà in luce tutte le contradizioni relative ai principi contenuti nella dichiarazione d'indipendenza. Da un lato, i padri fondatori americani invocarono a gran voce un governo che non violasse i loro diritti fondamentali, andando quindi in netto contrasto con il regime imposto dal parlamento, ma soprattutto da Re Giorgio III. Inizialmente, Jefferson denunciò la tirannia del governo britannico accusandolo di voler ridurre in schiavitù le colonie. Tuttavia, si vedrà come tali principi vennero applicati in maniera arbitraria all'interno della società americana che si svilupperà una volta riconosciuta l'indipendenza, con la schiavitù venne mantenuta e rinforzata tramite la Costituzione del 1787.

Il terzo ed ultimo capitolo di questa tesi si focalizza quindi su un aspetto ben preciso di due figure storiche che hanno avuto un ruolo fondamentale nelle rispettive rivoluzioni: Thomas Jefferson e Touissaint Louverture. Il terzo capitolo non sarà un'analisi biografica dei due personaggi storici ma bensì un confronto sulle rispettive visioni e posizioni in relazione alla schiavitù. L'obiettivo sarà quello di determinare se, effettivamente, Jefferson e Louverture fossero più tirannici che leader rivoluzionari e salvatori della patria. Come vedremo, entrambi i leader furono attivi nel contrastare il fenomeno della schiavitù, ma gli enormi interessi personali prevalsero sul bene comune di un determinato segmento della popolazione. Nel momento in cui gli interessi del leader politico prevalgono su quelli della popolazione e sul loro benessere ed integrità morale e fisica si verrà a verificare una condizione per la quale vi saranno i presupposti necessari per poter considerare tirannico un determinato regime. Al tempo stesso, Jefferson e Louverture contribuiscono a rafforzare il paragone del punto di congelamento dell'acqua: da un lato è stato possibile determinare come, perlomeno da un punto di vista teorico e ideologico, entrambi avessero mosso qualche passo in favore dell'abolizione della schiavitù. Jefferson, sebbene influenzato da pregiudizi raziali tipici dell'epoca, provò ad inserire una clausola all'interno della bozza

originale della Dichiarazione d'Indipendenza riguardante abolizione della tratta degli schiavi. Tuttavia, l'enorme pressione da parte dei membri del congresso fece si che tale passaggio venne omesso nel documento finale ratificato il 4 luglio. Inoltre, dagli scritti privati di Jefferson emerse il suo timore nei confronti di una "punizione divina" a causa dell'abominio commesso per il trattamento riservato agli schiavi. Al tempo stesso, Jefferson fu personalmente coinvolto nel mantenimento e rafforzamento di tale istituzione nella società americana, in quanto possedette circa 150 schiavi al momento della stesura del testo della dichiarazione, che contribuisce a rafforzare la sua immagine di politico schiavista e antiabolizionista.

Un discorso simile può essere fatto per Touissaint Louverture, ampiamente elogiato per le sue doti di condottiero che valsero la libertà ad un popolo di schiavi. Louverture, una volta "salito" al potere, promulgò la costituzione nel 1801 con la quale si autoproclamò governatore di Haiti. Il primo passo fu quello di proclamare la definitiva abolizione della schiavitù in nome della libertà del popolo haitiano. Tuttavia, se da un lato queste tendenze sembrano contrastare con la definizione di tirannia e tiranno, Louverture di fatto eserciterà il proprio potere senza controllo su tutta l'isola, imponendo esecuzioni forzate e arbitrarie, ma soprattutto mantenendo la schiavitù sotto mentite spoglie. Se prima i lavoratori nelle piantagioni erano a tutti gli effetti schiavi, dopo l'avvento al potere di Louverture vennero promossi a "lavoratori" a tutti gli effetti. Tuttavia, la loro libertà fu enormemente limitata in quanto non era di fatto permesso assentarsi dal luogo di lavoro. Le tendenze schiaviste sia di Jefferson che di Louverture sembrano quindi delineare un quadro molto chiaro, per il quale entrambi verranno definiti come tiranni.

Dall'insieme di questi tre capitoli emerge una visione chiara e ben precisa della tirannia, vale a dire quella di una degenerazione di un governo nel quale l'interesse sovrano è quello del governatore (o dei governatori), anziché della popolazione. Il primo capitolo mette in luce una tirannia che potremmo volutamente definire come " legislativa". L'imposizione di leggi e tasse minavano l'economia e lo sviluppo coloniale, ma non limitavano la loro libertà fisica. Al tempo stesso, se per definizione la tirannia si riferisce all'imposizione di un sistema

di governo autoritario e repressivo, che limita fortemente il potere e il campo d'azione dei sudditi, allora vi sono tutti i presupposti per considerarlo tirannico. Il terzo capitolo, tramite l'analisi delle posizioni schiaviste di Jefferson e Louverture, riprende fortemente questo concetto e un focus su un tema che rafforza ulteriormente la concezione di tirannia e governatori tirannici.

Introduction.

Nowadays, the rise of authoritarian governments ruled by powerful leaders seems to have marked a quite ambiguous, not to say perilous, tendency which contrasts with the ideals of progress and equality that spread across the world. At the same time, the rise of authoritarian regimes is not a current phenomenon but rather it should be conceived as the reaffirmation of historical tendencies from the past centuries. It is within this historical dimension that this analysis will be execute.

The starting point of this work revolves around the American Revolution and the *Declaration of Independence* signed by the Founding Fathers. After more than a decade of both diplomatic and military conflicts, the former British colonies would declare their independence from the motherland on the 4th of July 1776 by affirming that they had been victims of "repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States"[1]. As the first chapter of this will thoroughly analyse, the former colonies found themselves trapped within a dimension where they could only be ruled by a motherland which was concerned only with the imposition of legislative acts through which obtaining sensational benefits from the colonies. Subsequently, those tyrannical tendencies would prompt the former colonies to denounce a condition of subordination for which they suffered a "long train of abuses and usurpation"[2]. However, after formally obtaining the recognition of the independence, the U.S. appear to have maintained a considerable amount of tyrannical features also within their new republican and independent society in a manner that allows to expand the focus from Atlantic to the Caribbean. Not long after the American Revolution, the Caribbean set the stage for a further worth-noticing revolution, namely the Haitian one. Precisely, both the American and Haitian revolution will provide a solid ground to contextualized how tyranny evolved and occurred first in during the American revolution, and then the more radical and human dimension it acquired in both the post-revolutionary U.S and the revolutionary Haiti. In order to do so, it was necessary to start

[1] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*, 4th of July 1776. Retrieved from: The Declaration of Independence.
[2] *Ibidem*.

from the roots of the American Revolution to then move across the Atlantic to reach the Caribbean, where the Haitian slave revolt marked the history of the revolutionary moment in the 19th and 20th centuries. Touissaint Louverture, the revolutionary Haitian leader who guided the Haitian population through a long battle that concluded with the abolition of the slavery in the Haitian territories, will play a key role in the third and final chapter of this thesis. By providing a comparison between the Jeffersonian and Louverturian conception of the institution of slavery, we will finally comprehend that tyranny was not a rigid concept, but it is shaped and adapted by the context in which it arises. Therefore, this research should be conceived as a journey within the concept of tyranny to demonstrate that there can be common historical characteristics that allows to define political regimes and its leaders as tyrannical which can be adapted to the present days. Even if the contexts in which they operate diverge, when the interests and the well-being of the population, communities, nations, and states is prevented from being reached because of the rulers' tendencies to pursue their personal interests, even at the cost of sacrificing the fundamental rights of the subjects, then there may be all the circumstances that facilitate the definition of such rulers and their government as tyrannical ones. This view is reinforced by Waldron's contribution in terms of the Rule of Law and rule by law for which "law" should be conceived as a body of norms that aims to resolve the disputes among citizens[3]. In terms of disputes, legal institutions and procedures are deemed vital for protecting citizens from the abuse of power in both the private and public spheres. As a consequence, Waldron believes that citizens should abide by such norms and legal procedures regardless of their agreement or disagreement with them[4].

But until what point should citizens comply with it in a way that do not overwhelm they basic rights such as life and freedom? The key point at issue is that he law should be the same for everyone, so that no one is above the law, and everyone will subsequently have access to law protection. Accordingly, law should be accessible in order to protect and

[3] J. Waldron," The Rule of Law", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 edition), Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, accessed on the 10th of September 2025. Retrieved from: Rule of Law.

[4] *Ibidem.*

safeguard the individuals against the abuses of public and private power [5]. Therefore, should we prioritise the law or those who actually make it?

Law must be implemented by the rulers for the common good of the collectivity as it is not an instrument through which the rulers dominate over the citizens. On the one hand, we may notice that the rule of law refers to the correct use of the power according to the values of democracy and fundamental human rights. Precise criteria are set out to define its correct implementation, among which separation of power, equality among the law and prohibition of the arbitrary execution of the power [6]. Hence, it is acceptable to be ruled by a ruler or a multitude of rulers, but only as long as they are all subjects to the same law. Subsequently, this would create a condition for which nothing and nobody should be above law. In the context of this thesis, we will realize that when the ruler made the law through the constitution, but he arbitrarily applied it according to his personal necessities even at the cost of exceeding the power of the law, which heavily contrasts with the nature and purpose of the Rule of Law. When this happens, the Rule of Law is replaced by the rule by law, which means that the law is used as an instrument of political power used by the governments to exercise control only over the citizens and not the state; subsequently, this defines a common characteristic of the authoritarian regimes[7]. In the context of this thesis, the third chapter will provide concrete examples of authoritarian regimes where the rule by law predominates over the Rule of Law. Concretely, both Jefferson and Louverture's positions as to the abolition of slavery will reveal deeper facets of the respective societies: the constitution was used as an instrument to reinforce the power in the hand of the political class, which subsequently privileged their interests rather than the effective and universal common goods. As Waldron notes, the "Laws are supposed to guide the conduct (…)", which should be less arbitrary and coercive and be more impersonal and conductive to liberty [8]. On the contrary, when rulers exercise their power through the rule by law, such

[5] *Ibidem.*
[6] European Commission, "What is the Rule of Law?", accessed on the 10th of September 2025. Retrieved from: Rule of Law.
[7] J. Waldron, "The Rule of Law", accessed on the 10th of September 2025.
[8] *Ibidem.*

mechanism replaces the Rule of Law, and law will become the most powerful instrument in the hands of the rulers to act arbitrarily[9]. Generality and impersonality, two vital characteristics of the Rule of Law, are what should free the citizen from the dependence on the rulers' will. If impersonality is replaced by a criterion which we may want to call "personality", then the rule of man may prevail over the Rule of Law, and the power will subsequently be implemented in a very arbitrary way.

The purpose of this thesis will be reached through the following three chapters, each one performing a specific and precise function.
The first chapter of this thesis aims to provide an historical background of the context in which the *Declaration of Independence* was conceived, formulated, and shaped. Precisely, the chapter aims to analyse the evolution of the relationship between Britain (the tyrannical motherland) and the former British colonies (the subjects). More precisely, the first chapter aims to reveal the colonial malaise that spread due to the consistent imposition of legislative acts and taxation with the purpose of obtaining extra revenues and benefits from the colonial lands.

After analysing the events that stimulated the development of the American Sentiment and prompted the former colonies to denounce the tyrannical government in the declaration, the second chapter will focus on the roots of the specific concept of tyranny. Through an historical evolution of such a concept, the second chapter will provide the conceptual basis through which we should comprehend what a tyranny and a tyrant are.

The second chapter serves a fundamental function which is that of determining what can be considered the identikit of a proper tyrant. The concept of tyranny and its characteristics will be thoroughly analysed through selected thinkers and philosophers: starting with Plato from the Ancient Times, the analysis will terminate with a focus on two

[9] *Ibidem.*

relevant figure that shaped the conscience of Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers, namely John Locke and Thomas Paine. The second chapter will provide sufficient elements to comprehend that a strong and centralized government that denies the individuals' liberties (both from a moral and physical perspective) in order to achieve their interests, regardless of the outcome and hypothetical negative consequences the population would have to deal with, seems to be considered as sufficiently starting point to define that regime, and the relative sovereign, as a tyrannical one.

The third and final chapter of this thesis will move the focus back to the practice through the analysis of two historical characters and their positions as to the abolition or maintenance of the institution of slavery which were key in their respective revolutions and governments, namely Thomas Jefferson and Touissaint Louverture. Specifically, the third chapter aims determine whether the two leaders could be defined as tyrant on the ground of what has been argued on the two previous chapter. To make this even more explicit, the focus of the chapter will be on their positions as to the abolition of slavery Therefore, should a government, or a governor, be considered a tyrant for his attitudes which favour the maintenance of institution of slavery as a consequence of the rulers' interests?

The primary sources that will be analysed in the following chapters cover a wide range of topics. In the first chapter, parliamentary acts issued by the British Parliament will intertwine with personal writings and private correspondence of the Founding Fathers, articles published on gazettes, and formal documents sent by the Congress to the British Government. In the second chapter, primary sources refer to the political and philosophical texts, treatises and books written by each of the thinkers we will be analysed, such as Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Paine's *Common Sense*. In the third and final chapter, the primary sources amount to governmental documents as well as personal writings of the historical characters analysed. Primary sources will play a vital

role in the context of this thesis as they provide a direct and precise focus on the each of the topic analysed.

Primary sources will be commented, analysed and contextualised through a solid secondary bibliography, which includes the works of Alan Taylor, Quentin Skinner, Maurizio Viroli, Jeremy Popkin, Philippe Girard, and Laurent Dubois.

Chapter I: Discovering the colonial malaise.

1.1- Background.

The roots of the American Revolution could be even traced back at the beginning of the 17thcentury[10] – although the crucial historical period has been circumscribed to the 1760s-1780s – when the British Empire found Virginia in 1607, their very first colony[11]. In a century-long history, many key events contributed to shape the dynamic context in which the revolution would fire up in the second half of the 18th. Among those facts and events, the 1688 Glorious Revolution marked a turning point in the history of the relations between the motherland and the colonies which would enter a completely different dimension in the following century, since the substantial change generated by the Glorious Revolution would lead to the colonial revolution which would determine their independence. According to Taylor, the catholic King James II was removed from his charge by his protestant daughter Mary II[12]. Now, if the replacement of a king with his daughter may not surprise as on several occasions Kings or Queen were taken over by members of their families, there is a point at this issue that must be accurately clarified. To be more specific, the succession at the throne from James II to Mary II signified the transition from a Catholic monarch to a Protestant one, which would have fundamental consequences in terms of management of the powers and authority.

Indeed, one of the pillars of the protestant orientation was the elevation of the Parliament to the supreme and untouchable entity of the Empire, to which the entire legislative and executive power was reserved[13]. Following the 1688 Glorious Revolution, the "King-in-Parliament" was established resulting in a new bicameral legislation in which both parliament and crown had equal degree of power and influence[14]. Such a legislation became the engine that enhanced the influence of colonies as well. To be more specific, the imperial-wars era was reaching a global dimension, which means that it would be more expensive

[10] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, New York, The Modern Library, 2002, p.9.
[11] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2016, p.19.
[12] *Ibidem*.
[13] B. Baylin, *The Ideological Origin of The Declaration,* Cambridge (MA), Belknap Press, 1967.
[14] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions,* p.10.

and demanding to support the efforts required by the war. For instance, plantations in America were required to produce a certain amount of tradable goods such as sugar, cocoa nuts, and coffee.[15] However, the vast dimension of the British Empire entailed a series of complication that obstructed the British mission.

As Taylor highlights, many complexities hampered the original British plan that was supposed to pivot on the idea of creating an imperial "catchment area" to have access to raw materials and tradable goods, and to collect consistent revenues to finance their imperial expeditions. In addition, communication among the officials and the governors was inefficient, which benefitted more the interests of colonists rather than the profits of the Crown.[16] Therefore, the motherland would engage consistent diplomatic disputes against their colonial possession, which often would end up with some symbolic concession to the colonies. Initially, the motherland allowed a cooperation based mainly on an agreements between the new British Government and the property holders in America, who were entrusted to collect taxes and revenues in exchange for the power to elect the local assembly.[17] The assemblies would grow in relevance, dimension and competence, and they would play a vital role in shaping a common knowledge and growing sentiment of independence, which would remain latent until the 1760's.

Located in the northwest of the American continent, only a few lands were conquered in the 18th century, since the vast majority of the claims were obtained in the 17th century. After Virginia, the New Netherland was found in 1614 and renominated in New York. After founding Maryland in 1634, settlers from Britain founded Delaware in 1638 (formerly New Sweden), New Jersey (1664), South Carolina (1670), and Pennsylvania in 1680. During the 1620s and 1630s, colonists from England came and founded the New England colonies, comprehensive of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Connecticut. Only North Carolina and Georgia were founded in the 18th century, respectively, in 1712 and

[15] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Townshend Acts: The Revenue Act*, 20th of November 1767. Retrieved from: Townshend Act.
[16] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions,* pp. 32-33.
[17] *Ibidem*, p.10.

1733[18]. Despite the fact that the aforementioned colonies were all British possession, they still maintained a substantial degree of heterogeneity at the same time. As Taylor notes, the colonies featured several differences from both a geographical and social perspective. For instance, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia were vital for the production of rice, indigo, cattle and grains[19]. While they heavily relied on slaves to work the lands, the Atlantic Seaboard's middle colonies diverged both from a social and economic point of view. Colonies such as New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York implemented a family-run model of farms which discourage the reliance on slaves to work the lands [20]. New England colonies, which included Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Massachussetts, were active on commercial activities via sea, which included fishing, trading rum, molasses, sugar, and even raw material in exchange for manufactured goods. Finally, colonies such as Maryland and Virginia produced tobacco for the British market and corn for the local one [21].

Considering the countless number of acts, facts, and events that occurred during the "American Revolutionary Era" in the 18th century, this chapter will focus on those which significantly contributed to the deterioration of the relationship between the British Empire and their colonies.

On the British front, the Glorious Revolution had already shaped a political dimension in which the Parliament was the Supreme Authority, and it retained the absolute power to make the laws that would be imposed also over the subjects. On the other hand, the colonies consistently demonstrated devotion and subordination to their superiors as they underwent a process of economic growth as well as they were provided with security from external attack by the British troops, especially after the British win in the French and Indian War. The devotion for the motherland, however, became consistently weaker during the 1760s, when the history of the relationship between the Crown and the colonies entered a new

[18] *Ibidem*, pp.19-20.
[19] *Ibidem.*
[20] *Ibidem*.
[21] *Ibidem.*

historical phase, since act after act the colonial malaise would increase and lead to a consistent escalation of tensions. The revolutionary period lasted for almost two decades and entailed a series of "diplomatic" disputes that would enrich the 1760s and the 1770s. Then, the dispute would acquire a proper military connotation after the 1775 Lexington and Concord battles. Within this scenario, of considerable pertinence is the fact that colonial leaders had no initial plans of boycotting the British Royals in any manner. Instead, their main objective was to emphasize the fact that the Crown had imposed taxes over taxes without neither consulting them nor conceding them proper representation in the parliament.

Emblematic would the *Massachussetts Circular Letter* be, in which the colonies denounced the imposition of taxes for "(…) the sole and express purpose of raising a revenue (…)"[22]. Parliamentary acts such as the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts played a crucial part in reversing the colonial "fidelity" towards the Crown. Such acts, alongside many more, encouraged the rise and spread revolutionary feelings which would lead to revolution.

According to Weslager, the thirteen colonies often craved for rivalries and jalousies in a context where the sociopolitical "draining" environment helped them converge gradually – though consistently – towards what would become the unique focus, purpose, and solution[23].

Furthermore, the Stamp Act provided the colonists with a memorable lesson: the capability to master the Crown's weaknesses and the ability to act to maintain a subordinate approach while continuing to protest in parallel.[24] Those events portrayed a comprehensive scenario in which the motherland and the colonies were committed to the fulfilment of their respective objectives. On the imperial front, the crown relied on its supreme entity, namely the Parliament, with which every law could be applied; instead, the colonies, although being subjects, so politically subordinated to the mother crown, did not retired from questioning

[22] S. Adams, J. Otis, *The Massachusetts Circular Letter*, 11th of February 1768. Retrieved from: The Circular Letter.

[23] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1976, p.31.

[24] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions,* pp.104-105.

the parliamentary authority on every occasion which entailed the pass of an allegedly unconstitutional law.

Considering the revolutionary stage in the history of the British Empire and its colonial claims in America during the 18th century, the formerly submitted revolutionary subjects completely overturned the dynamics of subordination in less than two decades. By developing an eradicated and widespread American Sentiment, the thirteen colonies would succeed in steering the revolutionary machinery in the opposite direction from the initial sentiment of devotion for the beloved motherland.

Therefore, this chapter aims to provide an introductory historical background by focusing on the acts, facts, and events behind a specific passage of the Declaration of Independence, issued on the 4th of July 1776. Specifically, the Founding Fathers, guided by Thomas Jefferson, denounced King George III for his "(…) long train of abuses and usurpation (…) all having in direct object the direct establishment of an absolute tyranny over the states."[25]

1.2 - The Stamp Act and The Stamp Act Congress.

The *Stamp Act* is one of the key events that contributed to the embitterment of the relationships between the motherland and the colonies, as colonial reactions to its approval and conversion into law demonstrated that the balance between the rulers and the subordinates began to change. As Weslager notes, the colonial sentiment for the motherland was of gratitude to the motherland when the Stamp Act was promulgated, since the colonies benefited from many improvements, especially from an economic perspective.[26]

The reason for the imposition of such a sudden colonial taxation resided on the French and Indian War, which was part of the more complex Seven Years war, which ended only in 1763. The Seven Years War was considered by many historians as the very first global conflict that marked either the British hegemony on the North America and the ascent in India.

[25] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.

[26] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, pp.21-24.

The defeat of France at the hands of the British Empire had several positive consequences for the Crown's interest. Indeed, the Crown had the opportunity to cut through the Appalachians, which permitted to extend their territorial possession and increase their prestige in the world. Moreover, that victory permitted to strengthen the ties between the colonies and the Crown, while reinforcing the dynamics of subordination.[27] Therefore, the contextualization provided by Weslager reveals that there were no indications that would foresee of a revolution among the colonies in America; instead, there was only a deep sentiment of gratitude and devotion especially since colonies acquired prestige and economic prosperity under the British leadership.[28] All things considered, the French and Indian war appeared to be both a pleasure and a pain for the colonies.

At the same time, the point at the issue of the dispute concerns the arbitrary imposition of taxes by the Parliament that encountered the reaction of the colonies. As Hinderaker argues, the colonists believed that the consent to the imposition of taxation constituted part of their rights since they were all Englishmen. On the other hand, the Parliament ruled on the grounds of the protestant orientation for which the supreme authority had the supreme legislative power; therefore, the parliament had the legislative power to impose taxation on the British territories without consulting any other entity.[29] Thus, the *Stamp Act* set the primordial basis for further escalations of tensions between the colonies and the motherland, and it helped to delineate the two orbits around which rulers and subordinate would pivot.

A key figure in the Stamp Act experience was Lord George Grenville, an influential member of the British order who was appointed as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1763[30]. In agreement with the Parliament, it was decided to maintain a considerable number of officials in the colonies to protect them from foreign assaults.

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[27] *Ibidem.*

[28] *Ibidem.*

[29] E. Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre,* Cambridge (MA), England, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,2017, p.50.

[30] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, pp.21-24.

However, this had a relevant cost which contributed to increase the debt of the British Empire, which soared to 133 million after the war.[31] For these reasons, Grenville and the Parliament opted for the introduction of a sudden taxation that would have reduced the motherland's economic for both the stay of troops in the colonies and the recover from the military expenditures. At the same time, the colonies perceived the Parliament's behaviours as incorrect since they objected the fact that they were neither informed of that manoeuvre nor consulted as to the number of officials to be deployed.

Despite the colonial malaise, the *Stamp Act* was passed on the 27th of February 1765, but the effective royal assent was given only on the 22nd of March 1765 (due to the illness of King George III), but it became effective only on the 1st of November 1765 [32]. The act consisted of the application of a taxation on the stamps as part of the Lord Grenville's plan to recover from the military expenditures.

Specifically, the *Stamp Act* entailed the imposition of a different taxation "For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper" that were used to print, engross and write petitions, declarations, pamphlets (and basically any category of writings that required the use of paper or other materials). More precisely, the duties could amount to shillings, pence, and even pound[33]. For instance, duties were applied to the licenses to retain alcoholic products such as wine, spirits, or liquors, as well as to the paper where petitions, bills, and replications were written, and even to almanacs and calendars [34]. To ensure the payment of the duties, Stamp Distributors were charged with both providing the sheets and collecting the revenues from the purchase of the paper.[35] Worthy of mention is the stratagem adopted by Benjamin Franklin, who realized that as the taxation amounted to one paper per sheet but only half if the page was folded, then the colonies should have printed on folded pages to reduce the revenues collected by the British government. By applying this strategy, Franklin purchased about 50.000 paper sheets that would be sent to the colonies. This would

[31] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.48-49.
[32] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, pp.33-52.
[33] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Stamp Act*, 22nd of March 1765. Retrieved from: Stamp Act.
[34] *Ibidem*.
[35] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, pp.33-52.

allow them to continue printing of newspaper, gazette, journals, and all the means of communication requiring paper while reducing the fiscal stress on the colonies.[36]

The widespread belief among the colonies was that the motherland was obtaining enormous benefits from the imposition of taxes on territories which had already provided the motherland with many market goods. Therefore, as soon as the act entered into force, riots and protests broke out against Stamp Distributors as they were the closest representative of the motherland in the colonies.[37] The Stamp Act instigated loud protests and insurrections as never before: it was the first attempt by the parliament to impose direct taxation of the colonists, although the strategy of taxing the stamps had already been adopted since the 17th century in the colonies.[38] To enrich the contribution, Middlekauf highlights the core of the dispute: the point at issue was not even the economic amount of the taxes, but rather it was a matter"(…) reorganization of the local politics (…)" that would only anticipate and predict what would happen in the future and in wider terms.[39] Within the perspective of the refoundation of the colonial politics, the crucial aspect is that such an issue proved to be emblematic and resuming in the sense that it already depicts the bigger picture in which the whole chapter would deal. On the British front, if the Parliament implemented – and would continue in the future – "prohibitive" taxation and authoritarian impositions of different natures, then the colonial reactions aimed to directly question the constitutionality of the aforementioned measures. For instance, Wood argues that in 1765 the Rhode Island Assembly declared the Stamp Act unconstitutional, so it authorized officials in the colony not to abide by the it.[40] All things considered, there was an increasing disappointment among the colonists and the population, and the perception and belief of having been betrayed might have marked a non-return point, from which diplomatic relations would be embittered throughout the years.

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[36] *Ibidem*.
[37] *Ibidem*.
[38] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, p.13.
[39] R. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.40.
[40] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, p.14.

Overall, the embitterment among the colonial population should not be circumscribed only to the stamp act, since more acts would contribute to exacerbate tensions. At the same time, the Stamp Act did play a key role in depicting a new and tense scenario that would be widened throughout the years. The Stamp Act would constitute one of the many events that prompted the Founding Fathers, in 1776, to explicitly denounce the tyrannical regime maintained by King George III. The colonies repeatedly criticised the motherland, not only in their Declaration of Independence but also in many other occasions.

From 1766 to 1776, numerous pamphlets, articles in gazettes, and even songs explicitly would criticise the motherland for its tyrannical approach towards the colonies. Insightful is the examination to Benjamin Franklin, during which the House of Common addressed him with a series of question concerning the Stamp Act. In the text of the *Examination Before the Committee of the Whole Houses of Commons*, Benjamin Franklin affirmed that the degree of respect for the Parliament decreased, and people considered such measures "(…) unconstitutional, and unjust"[41]. Between 1767 and 1768, John Dickinson wrote *Letters from a Farmer*, which would be followed by the *Massachusetts Circular Letters*. On the 7th of July 1768, the same Dickinson wrote the text of a popular song named *The Liberty Song*, where the population was encouraged to "(…) join hand in hand, brave Americans all, (…) no tyrannous act shall suppress your just claim ,(…) in freedom we're born, and in freedom we'll live(…), not as slaves but as freemen(…)"[42]. In the Boston Gazette, Samuel Adams wrote, on the 5th of December 1768, that the population claimed their right to give their consent to the imposition of taxation. The point at issue was not to refuse the payment of taxation, but rather to refuse to be subordinated to the payment of revenues if not by "(…) consent given through their representatives"[43]. Finally, a further example of how the colonies felt repressed is perceivable by Thomas Jefferson's treatise *Summary View of the Rights of the British America*. In his treatise, Jefferson highlighted that the colonies were

[41] House of Commons, *Examination Before the Committee of the Whole of the House of Commons*, 13th of February 1766. Retrieved from: Examination Before The Committee.
[42] J. Dickinson, *The Liberty Song*, 7th of July 1768, Boston Gazette. Retrieved from: Liberty song.
[43] S. Adams, *Article on the Boston Gazette*, 5th of December 1768. Retrieved from: Boston Gazette.

seeking the abolition to put an end to the "deliberate and systematic plan of reducing us to slavery"[44]. Ironically, the same Jefferson was a well-known slave owner, as the third chapter of this thesis will reveal.

The Stamp Act led to a dynamic reaction by the colonial leaders who decided to reunite to conceive a formal reaction to the imposition of the taxation. In October 1765, the delegates of nine of the colonies on the mainland, namely Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, South Carolina, and Rhode Island, met together in the New York City Hall, in what would be given the name of the Stamp Act Congress[45]. The point at this issue is that there was a shared belief that the nature of the congress was neither to punish nor to challenge the Parliament's right to impose taxes on the colonies. Indeed, at this initial stage of the dispute, the colonial leaders accepted the right of imposing taxation as they only aimed to restore the positive relationship that had always intercurred between the Crown and the colonies. As Weslager claims, the primary purpose of the Congress was to ponder upon the power of the Parliament to raise taxes in the colonies without their consent.[46] Thus, the colonies proved that they were willingly to continue to pay taxes to the Crown, but, in exchange, they required the political representation in the British Parliament. In other words, the thirteen colonies were contesting the imposition of a sudden taxation without receiving proper representation as the motherland only attempted to recover economically from the French and Indian War.

The congress was created mainly as a consequence of the efforts and pressures on the other colonies by the Massachusetts Assembly and its committee, composed of Mr. James Otis and Mr. Richard Henry Lee, who were charged with sending the formal proposal to the other colonies. First and foremost, the point of the discussion was about the mere governmental attempt to collect extra revenues from the colonies. In addition, that was the perfect scenario to extend the discussion the colonial representation in the British

[44] T. Jefferson, *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, 1774. Retrieved from: Summary view.
[45] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.102-103.
[46] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, pp.10-12.

Parliament. All these points would be highlighted by the 27 representatives of the colonies in the *Declaration of Rights of The Stamp Act Congress*, which would be issued during the meeting [47]. The delegates were all men of politics in the sense that they were active representative of the respective Assembly in each colony, and they were all born in America except for three subjects. The congress lasted until the 25th of October 1765, with the representatives of each colony reunited for the first time on the 7th of October 1765. They nominated Massachusetts's representatives Otis and Ruggles as the two presidents of the Congress[48]. Through the document, the Congress aimed to affirm their rights and privileges as members of the Empire, but at the same time to confirm their loyalty to the motherland[49].

What must be consistently underscored is the polite and peaceful nature that governed the Congress, with the main purpose referring to the abolition of a parliamentary Act rather than declaring an attack against the Crown. Promulgated on the 19th of October 1765 by the twenty-seven representatives to the Stamp Act Congress, the document articulated fourteen points relating to the rights of the colonies and grievances of the Parliament. Delving deeper into its text, the pacific and polite nature of the meeting was already noticeable since the very beginning of the document. Indeed, the colonies neither aimed to undermine the protestant pillar of the Parliament as the supreme identity nor to declare rebellion against the Crown. Instead, the representatives addressed the mother crown by maintaining the degree of subordination by declaring themselves "(…) sincerely devoted, with the warmest sentiments of affection and Duty to His Majesty's person and Government (…)".[50] The famous motto "No taxation without representation" is the essence of the third point in the declaration as the colonies expressively demanded "no taxes should be imposed on them, but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives." [51] However, such a degree of subordination would reveal a hidden "confrontational" nature which would be

[47] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*: *With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, p.108-128.
[48] *Ibidem.*
[49] *Ibidem.*
[50] The Stamp Act Congress, *Declaration of Rights of the Stamp Act Congress,* 19th of October 1765. Retrieved from: Declaration of Rights.
[51] *Ibidem*.

made explicit in the future events, which will uncover such disguise and demonstrate the consistently growing sentiment of detachment from the motherland, which was still to evolve.

Once again, the colonial effort steered toward having the representation recognized by the British Parliament by questioning the arbitrary imposition of further taxation for the sole purpose of recovering from the French and Indian War. As explicitly reported in the 4th point of the Declaration, the colonies contested the lack of proper parliamentary representation by denouncing a condition for which they had no representative in the House of Commons [52]. From the perspective of deterioration and exacerbation of the relationship among the motherland and the colonies, the twenty-seven colonial representatives attempted to promote their viewpoint on the issues of taxation and representation in the Declaration. If the language adopted by colonial leaders was gentle, polite and respectful, at the same time it appeared to be determined as well. Colonies were attempting to be considered at the same level of the other British subjects in the Kingdom by highlighting at the second of the fourteen points that, "(…) subjects in these colonies are entitled to all the inherent rights and privileges of his natural born subjects within the kingdom of Great Britain.".[53]

If analysed under critical a lens, the document acquired its prominence with a future perspective on the ground that the colonies were at the onset of the future coalition against the Crown. All things considered, if, on the one hand, the representatives were straightforward in demonstrating their position, they also maintained a cautious approach in not questioning the solemn authority of the Parliament and the Royal Family at the moment of the presentation of the *Declaration of Rights*. At that historical point, the degree of tensions was extremely low since the frictions would escalate during in the following year, mainly in the 1770s, when Boston would affirm itself as the revolutionary centre in the

[52] *Ibidem*.
[53] *Ibidem*.

colonies. After the imposition of the Stamp Act, we may affirm that the fire was yet to break up, but a small flame had already lighted.

The Parliament and the colonies reached an agreement through which the *Stamp Act* was repealed. If this agreement appears to be a signal of détente from the Parliament, then the tension would increase with the passage of a brief authoritarian law, named *Declaratory Act*. Passed on the 18th of March 1766, as part of the agreement between the motherland and the colonies, the *Declaratory Act* served as an emblematic assertion of the tyrannical approach that was maintained, and that would be maintained throughout the years, in terms of colonial politics. The Parliament reserved all the powers to make laws and to ensure their application and imposition in the colonies. In the act, many words of powerful meaning were used. Indeed, the Parliament referred to the colonial formal initiatives as "(…) inconsistent with the dependency of the said colonies (…)[54]". Moreover, plantations and colonies were defined as "(…) subordinate (…) and dependent upon the imperial crown and the parliament of the Great Britain (…)".
The last line of the first paragraph is even more insightful as it properly embodies the dynamics subordination between the rulers and the subordinates. The parliament and the crown thus retain the whole authority to exercise and impose the imperial power over the subordinates in all its facets, as they declared to have:

> "(…) full power and authority to make laws and statutes
> of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America,
> subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever".

Thus, by declaring so through an official act, every margin of space for political dynamism and freedom in the colonies was suppressed. Or, at least, in theory. To ascertain that the parliamentary supremacy was made clear, the act referred to the resolutions, acts,

[54] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Declaratory Act*. Retrieved from: Declaratory Act.

movements and whatever political attempt entailing whatever degree of freedom or autonomy from motherland as "(…) null and void to all in purposes whatsoever".

The imposition of an act sparked the acrimony and the rage among the colonies to the point that, according to Middlekauf, such mere appropriation of the American liberties had to be enforced through the deployment of the Army as the British were conscious of the everything but pacific response by the colonies[55]. The Declaratory Act, among the vast amount of Acts that had been passed before the date of the proclamation of the Independence by the colonies, may even suffice to act as the most emblematic demonstration of the tyrannical regime that King George III had planned to establish over the colonies. The Thirteen colonies, therefore, retained no other option but to abide by whatever act, law, and decree that would be enacted.

1.3- The Townshend Acts.

Issued on the 29th of June 1767, the Townshend Acts were named after Chancellor of Exchequer Charles Townshend, appointed during the ministry of William Pitt, appointed by King George in 1766.[56] According to Chaffin, the Townshend Acts comprised a series of acts through which the Parliament aimed to impose several taxes on the goods that were imported into the colonies through which the motherland reinforced their absolute power to impose laws (and taxes) in all the cases whatsoever [57]. Taylor identifies the three main purposes of the Townshend Act: suspending the New York Assembly for not complying with the Quartering Act; imposing duties on the importation of goods such as glass, paper, and tea; establishing a Board of Customs Commissioners through which managing the colonial revenues[58]. More precisely, the New York Restraining Act served as a punishment

[55] R. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, p.105.
[56] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, pp.3-12.
[57] R. J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Act Crisis, 1767-1770", in *A Companion to The American Revolution*, edited by J. P Greene and J. R. Role, Malden, Blackwell Publisher, 2000, pp.134-150.
[58] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.70

for the colonies of New Jersey and New York for not respecting the Munity act, which required the colonies to provide logistic support to the British troops in the colonial territories.[59] Moreover, the establishment of the Custom Commissioners in Boston aimed to create a body of seven commissioners in which three of them were charged with establishing the Board to collect the colonial revenues [60]. However, given that the primary scope of this chapter is to delve deeper into the tyrannical regime the motherland implemented, only the act that focuses on the revenues will be considered as it was a well-resorted strategy adopted by the British Monarchy.

The act reflected the plan of the Crown, which aimed to collecting extra revenues from the colonial possession with the mere purpose of recovering from the French and Indian War. Thus, the Revenue Act focalized on providing a detailed list of goods that concerned what was, according to text itself, "(…) imported into any British American colony or plantation"[61]. The act focused intensely on the taxation of various types of paper, but it also extended to many other goods. For instance, every ream of paper entailed a different charge according to its values: the Atlas fine was evaluated to be charged for twelve shillings, while the Demy Second was charged for nine pence. Other goods, such as red lead, tea, cocoa nuts and coffee, were also affected by the imposition of duties which varied according to weights of the goods.[62].

The act reflected widely the approach adopted by the motherland. As Christie and Labaree reveal, more than £40.000 were collected by 1774 in just four years, which were destined to the payment of salaries for governors, lawyers, judges and many other officials in the colonial administrative sphere, such as the Massachusetts and New York governors [63].

[59] R. J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Act Crisis, 1767-1770", in *A Companion to The American Revolution*, edited by J. P Greene and J. R. Role, Malden, Blackwell Publisher, 2000, pp.134-150.
[60] *Ibidem.*
[61] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Townshend Acts: The Revenue Act*.
[62] *Ibidem*.
[63] I. R. Christie, B. W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution,* New York, W. W. Norton & Company,1976, p.154.

Moreover, among the amount of revenues collected after the passage of the act, £43.420 could be collected only from the tea duties, as Chaffin argues.[64]

These data contribute to determining the precise economic plan the motherland aimed to implement, which reinforces the idea of the colonies as a mere remunerative basin. Emblematic of this is the fact that the Townshend Acts were passed to pay the salaries of the military officials and soldiers the motherland had deployed in the American territories without obtaining their consent. Therefore, this act strengthened the tyrannical regime even more, as the Founding Fathers would explain in the 1776 Declaration of Independence. The Revenue Act essentially exemplifies the whole dispute: the thirteen colonies would no longer tolerate the oppressive and authoritarian regime, as they had not given their consent either to the deployment of the army or to the payment of the officials' salaries, which was imposed without the possibility of appeal by the motherland.

The prominent aspect of this act concerns the fact that such circumstances permit to identify the two opposing spheres of actions and authority that have been delineated so far. From the perspective of the Crown, the colonial lands and plantations constituted a mere basin from which extra revenues were collected, as well as a widely assorted array of goods of either to be traded or consumed in the motherland. Every circumstance represented an opportunity for the motherland to introduce a further and sudden taxation on the colonies. On the other front, the colonies began to accumulate a sense of discontent and detachment from the motherland that would reach its peak in the following years. Therefore, a mere focus on the amount of revenues and goods taxed by the Parliament would be insignificant if the broader perspective in which it collocated would not be examined. Thus, considering what has been examined so far, the resignation of the Stamp Act had permitted the colonies to reach an agreement with the Empire, which should be regarded as a successful achievement. However, such an achievement was soon nullified by the passage of the Declaratory Act, with which the Parliament clarified the Supreme and undeniable authority to make and impose laws over their subjects. In other words, the Declaratory Act played the part of the opening door for the promulgation of the Townshend Acts, with which the

[64] R. J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Act Crisis 1767-1770", pp.134-150.

parliament renewed its imperial superiority over the colonies by imposing once again taxes over paper. This issue was even questioned by John Dickinson, a lawyer from Pennsylvania already involved in the Stamp Act affair, who was considered a very influential critique to the parliament's authority in view of his *Letter from a Farmer*, where he apparently signed every letter as "A Farmer".

Overall, the Townshend Acts experience fortified the personality of the colonies, which reacted in different but rather balanced manners. Dickinson was the key individual on the Pennsylvanian front in encouraging the population to bring conscience and stand against the affirmation of such a tyrannical regime. He challenged the motherland in several fields, including an explicit invitation to the commence the colonial boycott of the British goods which would also be promoted in Boston[65]. If, on the one hand, the Townshend Act may be considered an ordinary example of legislature from the Supreme Authority, then the colonial malaise highlighted how the colonies and the Empire were fluctuating around two different dimensions [66]. On the other hand, Dickinson embodied the colonial spirits as he dynamically contested and opposed the supreme authority of the Parliament.

Delving deeper into his work, the criticism to the motherland emerged explicitly as he publicly challenged the manners through which the Parliament was imposing its authority over the subjects. In the very first letter, he argued that the sudden taxation was a "(…) violation of the liberty of the people of that province, and consequently of all these colonies"[67].

Since the first letter, Dickinson embodied a comprehensive spirit that was vital in shaping the common colonial heroism in overturning, both from a diplomatic and military point of view, the motherland. In the last line of the first letter, he affirmed that "(…) for the cause

[65] *Ibidem*, pp.134-150.

[66] *Ibidem*.

[67] Dickinson John, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*. Philadelphia, 1768, edited by Richard T.H. Halsey, published by The Outlook Company, New York, 1903, p.10. Retrieved from: Letters From a Farmer.

of one is the cause of all (…)"[68]. Reactions came also from the Massachusetts colony where the *Massachusetts Circular Letter* metaphorically disturbed the serenity of the Parliament. Written on the 11th of February 1768, by Samuel Adams and James Otis, the document emphasized since the first line the growing difficulties in the relationship between the motherland and the colonies Adams and Otis recognised, once again, the supreme authority of the Parliament by affirming that "(…) his Majesty's high court of Parliament is the supreme legislative power over the whole Empire"[69], but at the same time they went on to reveal their malaise over the administration of the colonies. In doing so, the two politicians indirectly referred the foundation of the constitution by affirming that, "(…) they have an equitable claim to the full enjoyment of the fundamental rules of the British constitution."[70]. The prominence of the *Massachusetts Circular Letter* was increased also by the colonies' (implicit) proposal advanced to have the parliamentary representation recognised.

The Motherland's response mattered in view of a future perspective of the events that would occur, rather than in terms of concrete results. Indeed, the Secretary of State for the British Empire in the colonies, Wills Hill notified Massachusetts' governor Francis Bernard to impose the retirement of the Circular Letter. On the British front, they were conscious that such imposition would lead to powerful uprisings – Hill had also warned General Thomas Gage to be prepared to deploy the army in the eventuality that Boston might rebel. In New York, the Assembly declared the Mutiny Act unconstitutional, so it decided not to abide by it. Suspended by the parliament until it would have complied with the Quartering act, the Assembly feared the consequences of their non obedience and provided £3000 to the motherland as a contribution to the Act[71]. This situation depicts a picture in which the colonies still feared the Parliament, but at the same time something was finally moving.

[68] *Ibidem.*
[69] S. Adams, J. Otis, *The Massachusetts Circular Letter*.
[70] *Ibidem.*
[71] R. J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Act Crisis 1767-1770", pp.134-150.

On the 1st of March 1768, ninety-eight merchants reunited in Boston to vote in favour of the boycott of the goods imported from Britain. Three days later, the merchants opted not to import goods for one year, except for necessary goods. Moreover, New York merchants joined the Bostonian initiative in April 1768, deciding to alter the trade with the Crown by stopping the shipment of orders by the 15th of August and imports by the 1st of November. All things considered, in concrete terms, as the boycott was not successful since, as revealed by Chaffin, it would fail within two years. For instance, In New York, the high unemployment rate and a currency shortage compelled the previously rebelling merchants to embrace, once again, their imports from Britain[72].

The boycott was a notable reaction to the imperial authority as it revealed the intensity at which colonies were fermenting; in addition, such a boycott is revealing in the sense that it demonstrated that the colonies were considering even more "concrete" actions on the field to reinvigorate the diplomatic dispute.

As already claimed, colonial upheavals occurred in different manners, which is quite peculiar since that there was a widespread cohesion in adhering to the rebellion against the motherland, although it was at its early stages. The colonial behaviours represented a boisterous manifest of their dissatisfaction which symbolized the deterioration of the positive relationship that the colonies had maintained with the tyrannical motherland. Subsequently, almost three years later its approval, the Townshend Act was officially repealed on the 12th of April 1770 [73]. Key to this achievement was Lord North, who was appointed as British Prime Minister in the same year. Under his direction, the Parliament decided to repeal the Townshend duties as a consequence of the relevant economic losses the boycott caused. The only exception was made for the tea duties, which was still considered a fundamental source of income by the motherland [74].

The relevance of such parliamentary act and the perspective in which it contextualized must be found neither in the "numerical" aspects such as the economic loss made from the boycott

[72] *Ibidem*.
[73] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, p.4.
[74] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.112-113.

nor in the death after the Boston events. Rather, the prominence of such experience comes from the fact that the authority of the parliament commenced to weaken, which contributed to confirm that the Stamp Act was not an isolate experience, but the first of many. In few years, the Parliament passed from being the supreme and untouchable authority to a questioned and weaker institution, which had to concede what the colonies were craving for. The parliament having to concede to the colonies what they were pursuing, the Secretary of State planning to deploy the army as he was aware of the plausible insurrections, as well as Boston promoting the Boycott, and New York rejecting the Act are circumstances that revealed how the British Crown was consistently losing its authority over the colonies, which were tracking the path toward their independence. The colonies were no longer hiding before the supreme authority of the parliament, but rather they were challenging it through a consistently increasingly mutual cooperation.

From the Townshend Acts experience, the lesson that must be learnt is that colonies were consistently achieving a moral independence from the motherland, which would be formalized later in 1783 in Treaty of Paris. Such colonial improvements, which asserted the parallel slow "decadence" of the imperial capability to exercise the authority over the subordinates, are not fortuitous episodes of rebellion by part of colonists. According to Greene, there are several reasons behind the colonial improvements in terms of moral and political growth. During the period before the revolutionary era, betterments in the means of communication and the rise of non-political organization contributed to the divulgation of the acquaintance that positively included the whole population. The knowledge of political issues was made accessible through the spread of local journals and gazette, the rise of clubs, new legal profession, and improvements in travel and political participation and activism, which metaphorically depicted the new horizons that would be sought by the population. All these elements must be summed to the consequences that the Seven Years War (strengthening of the fiscal imposition and military control) implied, which subsequently had negative repercussion on the relationship between the colonies and the

motherland[75]. The final result would be the transformation of balanced colonial subordination into a manifest expression of maximum political acquaintance that would be reached with the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence two decades later.

1.4- Boston, the core of the revolution.

1.4.1 The Boston Massacre

Boston was the core of the insurgent dynamism that agitated the colonial upheavals. On the 1st of October 1768, the soldiers belonging to the fourteenth and fifteenth regiments of the British army arrived in Boston to safeguard and protect the imperial officials in the execution of their function to enforce the law. During the snowy night of the 5th of March 1770, a fight occurred between two young individuals and a British soldier.[76]. According to Hinderaker, even the most minute detail was mentioned in the local gazette some days after the events [77]. As per Hinderaker, Edward Archibald and William Merchant were the two protagonists who encountered the soldier's antipathy. The soldier guarding a Custom House in King Street first fought against Archbald by beating him and pushing Merchant, who in turn replied by sticking the soldier. Then, a man who was escorting the official at the moment of the aggression ran away and returned to the place of the fight, followed by two more soldiers. During the chaos, many locals arrived to contribute to the fight, but they moved away after realizing they had very scarce equipment to defend themselves.[78] The situation rapidly escalated into a more severe and perilous riot. The fight peaked in King Street, where many youngsters and citizens gathered and started throwing snowballs at the soldiers. In this context, according to Abraham and Fisher, troops could intervene in civilian riots unless by direct order of the captain. There, a forty-year-old Irishman, the well-

[75] J. P. Greene, *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History*, Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia,1994, p.161.
[76] D. Abraham, D. Fisher, *John Adams Under Fire: The Founding Father's Fight for Justice in the Boston Massacre Murder Trial*, New York, Hanover Square Press, 2020, pp.11-12.
[77] E. Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre*, p.11.
[78] *Ibidem*.

experienced[79] Captain Thomas Preston ordered to fire on the crowd, which ended up with the death of five individuals.[80] Preston would turn himself to the Sheriff after the issue of a warrant by Justice of Peace John Tudor and Justice Richard Dana for ordering the soldiers to set fire to the insurgent civilians.[81]

The event took place in a wider and saturated context, as the city had already received King George III's troops in response to how it might have perceived the imposition of the Townshend Acts. Despite occurring only two years after the Townshend act came into effect, the event is a direct result of the deterioration of the pacific relationship that had already been occurring in the past years. The Boston Massacre acquired prominence since it was the very first "physical" confrontation that took place between representatives of the motherland and the colonies. It has a symbolic power in the sense that it represents the escalation of such tensions in the relationships highlighted in the past pages. Metaphorically, it opened a new page in the book of the tortuous relationships between the British Crown and the colonies from the 1760s.

Although not ordered by the King or the Parliament, the *Boston Massacre* represented the very first imperial assault to the colonies. Dynamic and always seeking trouble, Boston would be the place of a further riot, the Boston Tea Party, in response to the Tea Act imposed by Parliament on the 10th of May 1773 [82]. The Parliament intended to provide economic recovery and support to the finance of the East India Company, and it decided to do so through the *Tea Act*.[83] The company was on the point of declaring bankruptcy due to the colonial boycott which targeted the tea among other goods.[84]. In authorizing such a measure, the Parliament also allowed the company to retain the complete monopoly on the tea trade

[79] R. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, p.96.
[80] D. Abraham, D. Fisher, *John Adams Under Fire: The Founding Father's Fight for Justice in the Boston Massacre Murder Trial,* p.2.
[81] *Ibidem,* p.14.
[82] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, p.4.
[83] R. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, p.156.
[84] D. L. Ammerman, "The tea crisis and its consequences, through 1775", in *A Companion to The American Revolution*, edited by J. P Greene and J. R. Role, Malden, Blackwell Publisher, 2000, pp.196-199.

in the colonies by allowing them to select specific merchants to whom they directly sell the product instead of passing before to England. In addition, the Parliament decided to lower the tea prince while maintaining unaltered the duties on it [85]. By doing so, the Parliament only exacerbated further tensions in Boston as it expelled many merchants from the Tea Market. According to Ammerman[86], the Tea Act had the power to reunite merchants, patriots, and criminals such as smugglers under the same roof as they were all raging by the imposition of the act. He argues that patriots considered such act as the numberless Parliament's attempt to compel colonies to accept the forced taxation over goods, while smugglers were affected by the lowering in the tea price as it was legally sold at a more economical price.

1.4.2 The Boston Tea Party and the Coercive Acts

Dated on the 16th of December 1773 [87], the Boston Tea Party referred to the sabotage occurred in Boston as a reaction to the promulgation of the Tea Act. Even though the ships containing tea were steered to the four major ports of the colonies, such "physical" sabotage happened only in Boston[88]. While ships were forbidden to unload in New York and Philadelphia, the tea boxes were literally dumped into the sea in the Boston Harbor by disguised patriots. Here, once again, the episode must be contextualized with the rebellious perspective of the colonies and the imperial position of supposed superiority. As Ammerman claims, the Parliament reserved to itself the faculty to impose a law for which ships and cargo vessels could be unloaded only after paying the taxes [89]. Therefore, the simple fact of not having the tea shipment materially delivered to the merchants in the colonies depicts another situation in which the colonies affronted the tyrannical authority of the parliament by deciding to refuse to abide by the supreme authority. Taylor provides more details about the fact: fifty

[85] *Ibidem*.
[86] *Ibidem*.
[87] G.S. Wood, *The American Revolution,* p.4.
[88] D. L. Ammerman, "The tea crisis and its consequences, through 1775", pp.196-199.
[89] *Ibidem*.

colonists jumped on board of the three ships that were waiting on the Boston harbour, and they destroyed 340 tea boxes by hitting them with their hatches for an amount of damage of £90.000.[90]

On the British front, the British Government was conscious of the possibility that the complications arising from the management of the riotous colonies would reach more dramatic dimension. In a letter sent to Lord Chatham on the 3rd of February 1774, Lord Shelburne revealed Lord Buckingham's concerns about the future of the British hegemony in the American territories. Emblematic is Lord Buckingham's claims "(…) were to be free, or slaves to our colonies."[91]. At the same time, this affirmation did not exclude a hypothetical colonial successful takeover. In other words, it was a "all or nothing" situation in which both the motherland and the colonies could lose or win.

Composed of four acts defined in the following lines, the Coercive Acts was passed in 1774, representing the response implemented by the British Parliament to the Boston Tea Party.[92] According to the interpretation provided by Christie and Labaree, the same act received a different nomination in the colonies, namely the *Intolerable Acts*, since the tyrannical measures adopted by the Parliament were considered literally intolerable [93].

First and foremost, the Boston Port Act was passed on the 31st of March 1774, by the Parliament, to impose the closure of the Boston Port. The King decided to order the closing of the port as shipping in that specific area was considered unsafe for the British interests and it represented the counterattack by the Government to the Tea Party as no other ports were closed in Massachusetts Bay [94]. As noticeable since the first lines of the document, the

[90] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.114-115.
[91] Lord Shelburne to Lord Chatham, Correspondence dated on the 3rd of February 1774. Retrieved from: Correspondence.
[92] C. Bonwick, "Opposition in Britain", in *A Companion to The American Revolution*, edited by J. P Greene and J. R. Role, Malden, Blackwell Publisher, 2000, p.249.
[93] I. R. Christie, B. W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution*, p.193.
[94] D. L. Ammerman, "The tea crisis and its consequences, through 1775", p.198.

British Parliament affirmed that the public peace was questioned during the Boston upheavals, so the Government was forced to react in order to limit and repress the rebelling spirit that was arising in the city. The port would be entirely reopened only once the city of Boston had repaid the East India Company for the damages suffered during the Tea Party, and the King had declared its safety[95].

However, the port was not completely closed as it remained accessible to the vessels and ships only to guarantee access to food and fuel, Meanwhile, the principal port to have access to the Massachusetts Bay was moved to Salem, as declared at the fourth point of the Act's text[96]. According to the text of the act, the Parliament also imposed the repayment, at higher prices, of every good that would be destroyed or damaged[97].

The *Massachusetts Government Act*, the second of the four acts that composed the whole legislative measure, focused prevalently on strengthening the control over political activities in the colony. The act, which entered into force on the 20th of May 1774, directly entitled the King to appoint the members of the Council (upper house) instead of permitting governors to selected from a list made by the lower house. Moreover, the Majesty retained the power to oversee the Council for key procedures, such as the nomination, appointment, and even the removal of many judicial officers, including the attorney general, marshals, justices of the peace, and other officials of the courts and Council, as well as the judges of the inferior court of common pleas [98].

A key element to which the attention must be drawn concerns the relevance of the lower house in conceding the political representation to a vast array of social classes people nominated them. Representing editors, merchants, and lawyers, the lower house had a relevant role in the Assemblies since they were designated to regulate trade and salaries for the officials, collect recruits for the troops, and, most importantly, nominate the delegates to

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[95] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.114-115.
[96] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Boston Port Act*, 31st of March 1774. Retrieved from: Boston Port Act.
[97] *Ibidem*.
[98] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Coercive Acts: The Massachusetts Government Act*, 20th of May 1774. Retrieved from: Massachusetts Government Act.

represent the colonies in the activities that entailed the presence of the British Parliament.[99] In supporting the relevance of the lower house, Tully argues that the it increasingly benefitted from the Glorious Revolution that had happened in 1688, after which their role and influence would strengthen since the beginning of the 18th century, which would lead them to challenge directly the British government and control the provincial political outcomes[100].Therefore, the Massachusetts Government Act seems to have a concrete restraining nature, rather than a punitive one. By reducing the power of the lower house, the Parliament implicitly affirmed its supreme authority in what should be considered a "dictatorial" attempt to both repress the political effervescence that was emerging in the colonies and clarify, once and for all, the fact that colonies were just subjects and nothing more. Furthermore, the ruling authority permitted towns' meeting once a year, but it limited them to hold the debates only if concerning "local matters"[101].

A further limitation to the colonial activities came from the *Justice Act*. The colonies were subjected to a modification of the juridical system, which aimed to ensure more protection for members of the officials of the Crown by simply transferring the place of trial to Britain or in less insurgent colonies. The act aimed to protect government officials and their subordinates from local revenges in the eventuality of capital cases[102]. Specifically, as stated at paragraph five of the text, the "inquisition, indictment, or appeal may be tried in some other of his Majesty's colonies (…).[103]

Finally, the *Quartering Act* concerned the "quarters" made available by colonies to the British troops: if the quarters were insufficient for the troops, then the governors would have the power to seize unoccupied buildings in the city and destiny them to the troops[104].

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[99] C. A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress*, p.47.
[100] A. Tully, "Political Development of the Colonies", in *A Companion to The American Revolution*, edited by J.P Greene and J. R. Role, Malden, Blackwell Publisher, 2000, pp.30-32
[101] D. L. Ammerman, "The tea crisis and its consequences, through 1775", p.198.
[102] *Ibidem.*
[103] Great Britain, The Parliament: *The Justice Act*, 20th of May 1774. Retrieved from: Justice Act.
[104] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Quartering Act*, 2nd of June 1774. Retrieved from: Quartering Act.

As demonstrated by the many parliamentary acts and events analysed so far, the key dynamic of the dispute pivoted on the fact that the Parliament commenced a diplomatic fight with their colonies to increase their revenues after the French and Indian War. The logic at the base of the British strategy related to the Glorious Revolution, which had reshaped the political identity and legislative mechanisms in the Empire. Accordingly, the Parliament was the Supreme Entity, so it retained the supreme power to impose its law over the subjects. On the contrary, the colonies felt betrayed by the motherland since it did not concede them the parliamentary representation, and it continued to impose laws without their consent. As a consequence, the colonies began to realize that if they had continued to abide by the British supremacy, they would not have attained even the slightest degree of liberty and sovereignty.

Thomas Gage's letter to London is insightful in this context, and it embodies the whole American moral insurgence that arose throughout the years: "People talk more seriously than ever about America (…)" [105]. Moreover, the fact that the parliament promised the colonies to repeal the Coercive Act if they repaid the East India Company for its losses has quite a revealing meaning. The opening up of the Parliament to the possibility of repealing the Coercive Acts is a manifested, although not that obvious, affirmation of the loss of Parliament's ability to maintain and exercise its authority and power over the subjects, which had grown in acquiescence and would not retire from their desire to achieve the independence. Moreover, according to Breen, the previously conceived idea of the boycott of British goods in the 1770's returned to the minds of colonial leaders. Despite not being successful, the boycott should be conceived as a powerful instrument in the hands of the colonies, which would be formalized in a few months during the 1st Continental Congress through the settlement of the Continental Association.[106]

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[105] T. Gage, *Letter to Governor Thomas Hutchison*, in "The *Diary and Letters of his Excellency Thomas Hutchinson"*, by Peter Orlando Hutchinson, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1886, p.100. Retrieved from: Letter to Hutchinson.

[106] T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People,* New York, Hill and Wang, 2010, p.166.

Christie and Labaree contribute to the issue by arguing that the promulgation of the Coercive Acts marked a turning point in the history of the revolutionary dispute. Accordingly, with the exclusion of the Boston Port Act, the supposed-to-be purpose of the other three acts was to provide a sort of reform rather a punishment for the facts [107]. However, what transpired from the three acts was a mere intent of reforming the political sphere in the colonies in a manner that should have been more convenient for the interest of the Crown. South Carolinian William Drayton's words are emblematic in synthetizing the British attempt to reform the legislation that bound the colonies to the motherland: "The question now is (…) whether she has a constitutional right to exercise despotism"[108]. Such words portray at their best the politics embodied in Lord Buckingham's affirmation mentioned at the beginning of this section: it was a matter of being rulers or being ruled, and the motherland decided to rule. As per Christie and Labaree, before the pass of the Coercive Acts, the dispute had been centred only on the ground of the impositions of taxation in all the cases whatsoever, but with the Coercive Acts the motherland extended it to the imposition and management of power and its limits (which it had not apparently)[109].

At that historical stage, the formalization of the independence was not an explicit objective, but the path towards such accomplishment was delineated. The Sons of Liberty, newspapers, and gazette played a vital role in engaging the confrontations with New England's country-sided population. Farmers were frightened by the scarce yield the lands were providing them with, which led them to join the Patriots' cause[110]. In Massachusetts, people had already been contesting such acts as it violated their liberties. Rural Patriots were gaining support also thanks to the objectives they were achieving they declared the

[107] I. R. Christie, B. W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution,* pp.202-205.
[108] W. Drayton, *Letter from Freeman of South-Carolina to the deputies of North America, assembled in the high court of congress at Philadelphia*, Charles-Town, South Carolina, printed by Peter Timoty, 1774, p.7. Retrieved from: Letter to deputies.
[109] I. R. Christie, B. W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution,* pp.202-205

[110] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.120-123.

Massachusetts Government Act null, while they deprived Governor Gage of his powers[111]. Moreover, people refused to pay taxes, while militia officers began to answer only to local committees[112]. The Patriots also reshaped local politics by organizing the Provincial Congress through which every town would send their delegates to coordinate the political sphere in the colony. As Taylor argues, what was an initial resistance was on the ground of "(…) evolving into a revolution[113]".

Tensions were reaching the highest level, and in one year, both the Empire and the colonies would raise arms in Lexington and Concord, in what would be the very first armed conflict during the American Revolution.

1.5-The First Continental Congress

Reunited on the 5th of September 1774 and lasting until the 26th of the same year by twelve of the thirteen colonies, the Congress marked a further turning point in the history of their permanence under the Crown in a what may be considered a formalization of their union and cohesion against the motherland [114]. The first congress, which provides continuity to the revolutionary spirit arose especially in Massachusetts, would be followed by the Second Congress, where the Virginian delegate Richard Henry affirmed that "(…) all the old Provinces not one excepted are directed by the same firmness of union, and determination to resist by all ways and to every extremity"[115].

All the fervours, tensions, and rage accumulated in the past decade would conjunct altogether in a meeting which will change the history of the Americans. If, one the one hand, colonies had already convened in New York with the purpose to address the Parliament for

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[111] *Ibidem.*
[112] *Ibidem.*
[113] *Ibidem*.
[114] G. S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, p.19.
[115] Lee Richard Henry, *Letter to William Lee*, 10th of May 1775, Philadelphia. Part of "The Letters of Richard Henry Lee", Vol.1, 1762-1778, collected and edited by James Curtis Ballagh, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1911, p.134. Retrieved from: Internet Archive.

the passing of the Stamp Act, then it is also worthy of mention the fact that they maintained a solved and placid approach towards their superiors in context where the seriousness of the dispute was yet to escalate.

However, almost ten years later, the escalation of tensions and violence would be perceived in the directedness of the tone used by the colonies to address the Parliament in the *Declaration and Resolves* during the First Congress, where they would demand a series of rights and concessions.

Brought by Paul Revere to Carpenters' Hall, the Suffolk Resolves were officially approved by the Congress on the 17th of September 1774 [116]. The document recognised, once again, King George III as the legitimate Sovereign, but at the same, the Congress adopted the document to condemn the unconstitutionality of the government given the violations of the rights to which the colonies were entitled by the British Constitution [117]. Despite confirming their will to remain part of the British Empire, the colonies would no longer tolerate the despotic regime imposed by the King as the break with the motherland appeared to be irrecuperable. The colonies refused then to abide by the previously-approved Coercive Acts, and, more generally, to all the Acts passed in the previous decade since it was believed to be only an "(…) attempt of a wicked administration to enslave America."[118]

At that specific stage of the relationship, the only feasible solution was the revolution rather than the peace: the consistently-increasing American Sentiment was enhancing the conviction that the formerly-beloved motherland was rather a tyrannical and authoritarian monarchical government which only pursue a growing worldwide dimension based on prestige and power. Despite this, the colonies maintained until the very last and minute hope to reconcile with the King. Before 1776 the thirteen colonies had always sought to remain subordinated to the British Crown. Specifically, they did not" (…) wish a diminution of their prerogative (…)", but at the same time they no longer tolerated all the injuries they

[116] T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People*, pp.130-133.
[117] J. Warren, *The Suffolk Resolves*, 9th of September 1774. Retrieved from: Suffolk Resolves.
[118] *Ibidem*.

had accumulated in the past years. All they were attempting to recover where those dynamics of "peace, liberty and safety."[119]

Focusing on the *Declaration and Resolves*, the document was issued on the 14th of October 1774[120], when the delegates sent by the colonies gathered in the First Continental Congress. As Middlekauf claims, the British Parliament's authority was publicly rejected in different ways[121]. Such a denial depicts a valuable context in which the Declaration and Resolves collocated, and the fact that colonial representatives directly addressed the British Government confirms it: the Parliament was solemnly accused of having operated by adopting "(…) unconstitutional powers (…)"[122] for the imposition of its supreme authority in different manners. The Colonial leaders insisted on arguing that the further pass of many acts with their relative statutes, such as the *Coercive Acts*, were "(…) impolitic, unjust, and cruel, as well as unconstitutional, and most dangerous and destructive of American rights"[123]. The colonies, therefore, expressed their malaise for not being actively involved in the creation of a free government, which also required a division of the legislative branches to avoid the centralisation of full legislative power in the hands of Parliament. Specifically, the exclusion of colonial representatives from legislative procedures was contested by the colonies, as they denounced the repeated dissolution of their assemblies, particularly when the King passed the law that authorized him to nominate members of the upper house. Before the passage of that law, the nomination of the upper house representatives was a prerogative of the lower house, which provided representation to many social classes. By enacting such a law, the King proved that the participation of the colonies in political activities was not as essential as the Americans believed it to be. Therefore, the exclusion of the colonies from the parliamentary representation and the consistent limitations imposed

[119] The Delegates to the First Continental Congress, *The Petition to King George III*, October 1774, Philadelphia. Retrieved from: Petition.
[120] The Delegates to the First Continental Congress, *Declaration and resolves*, 14th of October 1774.Retrieved from: Declaration and Resolves.
[121] R. Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, p.105.
[122] The Delegates to the First Continental Congress, *Declaration and resolves*.
[123] *Ibidem*.

on their authority reinforce the view that the British Government had been implementing a tyrannical regime that compelled the colonies to abide by it. Not surprisingly, the colonies declared that "such acts and measures (…) demonstrate a system formed to enslave America"[124].

Additionally, also Unger contributes to clarify the issue of the denial of the Parliament's authority in the colonies by claiming that the colonies, when reunited in the congress and established the Continental Association, they rejected every form of parliamentary authority over them, while recognizing only the Royal Family. Accordingly, the provinces also declared that they would boycott the British trade by imposing a blockade on the importation and exportation of goods from and to Britain, which would affect even the slave trade and the consumption of goods.[125]

Considering all the circumstances, the fact that subordinates referred to the imposition of their rulers as unjust and cruel should not be of so much surprise. However, what contributes to highlight even more the fact that the colonies have matured their own conscience and a common purpose of achieving the independence was the affirmation of their rights in a long list of resolves. If on the one hand it may be argued that even during the Stamp Act Congress the colonies had already issued a declaration of right, then in the *Declaration and Resolves* the content and the language used to address the Parliament were much more straightforward. The colonies asserted their rights in an official document, which should be considered alongside the *Petition to the King* as one of the final diplomatic attempts to redress relations with Parliament. John Adams would claim later, in 1816, in a letter to Dr Morse, that "(…) the revolution was complete, in the minds of the people, and the union of the colonies, before the war, commenced(...)"[126].

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[124] *Ibidem*.

[125] H. G. Unger, *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked A Revolution*, Cambridge(MA), Da Capo Press, Member of the Perseus Book Group, Philadelphia, 2011, p.59.

[126] J. Adams, *Letter to Dr. J. Morse*, 22nd of December 1815, retrieved in "The Works of John Adams, second President of the United States: with a life of the author, notes and illustrations", Boston, Little, Brown and Company,1856, Volume X, p.197. Retrieved from: Works of J. Adams.

1.6- Entering the 2nd Continental Congress.

Ferling argues that the deployment of the army was the historical instrument used by tyrants to fortify and strengthen even more the control over the subjects. In the specific context of the American Revolution, the deployment of a standing army, and the further degeneration into a military dispute, was only a consequence of the abuse of power implemented by the British Government. Ferling believes that the tyrannical approach adopted by the motherland was the inevitable consequence of the many situations we analysed in the chapter [127]. For instance, the tyranny originated from the consistent imposition of taxes without the concession of a proper parliamentary representation, as well as the deployment of a standing army without a consultation with the colonial representatives, and even the prohibition for members of the lower house (where the vast majority of the population could be represented) to nominate the representatives in the upper house.

The dispute reached the military dimension in the spring of 1775s through the Battles of Lexington and Concord, on the 19th of April 1775. Despite this, the colonies would still restate their willingness to maintain the ties with the motherland. After the Battle of Bunker Hill, which occurred on the 17th of June 1775, the colonies were officially declared to be at war within the Empire. King George III stated that the colonies, by overlooking their conditions of Alliance with the British Monarchy, prepared and ordered a War against them. This act represented a specific turning point in the history of the relationship between the colonies and the motherland, as it proved that there were no possibilities of restoring the degree of mutual trust that had linked the colonies until the 1760s. However, the colonies remained insecure about the final rupture with the King and the subsequent declaration of their sovereignty

[127] J. Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp.73-93.

1.6.1 The Petition to the King – also known as "Olive Branch Petition ".

The Olive Branch Petition originated as an attempt to seek reconciliation with the Empire after the outbreak of the war. As Taylor notes, Dickinson wrote the Petition to balance the tensions that spread not only between the colonies and motherland but also among the diverging factions of the Congress which reconvened on the 10th of May 1775 [128]. Loyalists and Patriots pivoted around two different orbits: the loyalists were more prone to maintain their relationship within the imperial situation since they were advocating more stability; conversely, the Patriots sought a more revolutionary project in which there was no conceived space for the motherland[129]. Internally, the Patriots were still divided into two different groups, the moderates and the radicals. Radicals pushed for the independence, while moderates aimed to achieve restoration in terms of trade with the Empire[130]. The colonial representatives explicitly affirmed that they aimed to redress a situation that could only degenerate into a more dramatic military dispute by stating that, such dispute, "may be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation" [131]. The main purpose of the petition was to encourage King George III to allow the colonies to honourably govern his dominions, in the attempt to strike a balance between the colonial desire to achieve, at least, a minimum degree of autonomy within the British Empire. However, the King's refusal to receive the petition[132]. Thus, the second petition sent to the king, and the subsequent refusal of the reconciliation proposed by the colonies, appears to have been the very act of last resort. From that moment, within a year, the colonies would declare their independence. The same Dickinson was also involved in the drafting process of the *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms*, which was adopted on the 6th of July 1775, when the colonies formally responded to the motherland by taking up the arms and declaring that

[128] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.138-145.
[129] *Ibidem*.
[130] *Ibidem*.
[131] The Delegates to the Second Continental Congress, *Petition to the King*, 8th of July 1775. Retrieved from: Petition to the King.
[132] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.138-145.

they would lay them down only in case of positive resolution of the hostilities[133]. In the document, the colonies reiterated their determination not to succumb to the "unjustifiable" thirst for power that characterized the governmental activities. As the document reveals, the colonies attempted to achieve a natural and balanced resolution of the conflict as they did not pursue the separation from the Great Britain, but rather they fiercely opposed the "(…) unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated Ministers (…)"[134]. If on the one hand it would have serve as the very final and desperate attempt to redress an irremediable condition, this declaration worked as the formalization of the armed conflict.[135]

1.6.2 The Lee resolution and the Declaration of Independence.

The very final step towards the Declaration of Independence can be collocated on a specific year, the 1776s. On the 7th of June 1776, Virginian Delegate to the second congress Richard Henry Lee proposed what is known as *Lee Resolution*. Brief in length, but exceedingly powerful and emblematic in terms of meaning, the document represented the very last American encouragement to apply the American identity and national spirits that had developed in the past decades of injuries and usurpations. Therefore, by stating that the United Colonies are free and independent, and, as such, they are "absolved from all the allegiances to the British Crown", the colonies only anticipated what would be clarified in the *Declaration of Independence* [136].

Although the official recognition by the British Empire was formalized only after many years, precisely in 1783 with the Paris Treaty, the 1776 summer allowed to write a new chapter in the history of the evolution of the relationship between the colonies and the

[133] The Delegates to the Continental Congress, *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms*, 6th of July 1775. Retrieved from: Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms.
[134] *Ibidem*.
[135] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, Cambridge (MA) - London, England, Harvard University Press, 2007, p.32.
[136] R. H. Lee, *Lee Resolution*, 7th of June 1776. Retrieved from: Lee Resolution.

Empire. As reported by Taylor, there was still a lack of cohesion among the factions that composed the congresses, which helps to underscore even more the importance and prominence of both the resolution and declarations. Therefore, it is within this articulated and well-stratified fragmentations that both the *Lee Resolution* and the *1776 Declaration of Independence* should be collocated to properly highlight their prominence. Within this paucity of consent and cohesion required by the project to construct the American Federation, all the factions that participated to the second congress would finally converge toward a unique direction.

The Resolution had the power to reunite the colonies with the only exception of the New York's delegation, that would join the colonies just a week after the promulgation of the Declaration[137].

Here comes the turning point in the history of the thirteen colonies and their subordination to the motherland as, on the 4th of July 1776, the Congress adopted the *Declaration of Independence*. In this chapter, the purpose was to analyse and describe how the legislative measures, adopted by the British Government, contributed to a gradual exacerbation of the relationship between colonies and motherland. Therefore, the Declaration should be considered as the final step towards the formalization of the fracture with the motherland: the thirteen colonies, reunited in the Congress, declared that "these colonies are (…) free and independent states; that are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown (…)"[138]. This powerful and emblematic passage that concludes the text has the power to seal a long decade where the Founding Fathers declared to have suffered from a "(…) long train of abuses and usurpation (…)."[139].

As Armitage argues, the document constitutes the culmination of previously-issued documents such as petitions and speeches with which the colonies attempted to limit the tyrannical regime imposed by King George III[140]. On the 4th of July 1776, the Congress,

[137] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, p.160.
[138] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*.
[139] *Ibidem*.
[140] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.31-50.

through a committee of five delegates where Thomas Jefferson stood out, formalized the separation of the colonies from the tyrannical legislative impositions they had suffered from in the previous decade [141]. The point at issue is that although the escalation of tensions reached a proper military dimension only in 1775, the consistent imposition of acts, such as the Stamp Act, the Townshend Act, and the Declaratory Act, was perceived by the Founding Fathers as "(…)a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states"[142].

This key passage is followed by a long list of grievances that contributes to support the idea tyrannical scenario depicted by the Founding Fathers that amounted to the imposition of taxation without the consent of the governed, the rejection to pass law of immediate importance which would obstruct the administration of justice, and the alteration of their forms of government [143].

As Wood argues, the American Revolution should be considered from a peculiar lense as it was radical from an eighteen-century perspective: the radical change that marked the American society was something that Wood believes it would be a game changer in the course of the future history[144]. The point at the issue is to determine what "category" of human beings would be part of such social change, since the American project entailed several contradictions that may call into question the truly democratic and republican nature of its government. Precisely, a key passage of the Declaration reveals the contradictions between the theoretical aspirations maintained in the text and the final actualization of such principles. The Founding Fathers argued "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (…)"[145]. They denounced the British Government's plan to reduce them to slavery, but at the same time they would fail to abolish the institution of slavery within their republican society. Therefore, Wood appears to be

[141] *Ibidem.*
[142] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*.
[143] *Ibidem.*
[144] G. S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, New York, Alfred P. Knopf, 1992, p.5.
[145] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*.

right when claiming that "The revolution made the interest and prosperity of ordinary people"[146]. Precisely, the enjoyment of the fundamental human rights would be heavily biased on the ground of race. Black people constituted a remarkable part of the American society yet not integrated at all within the dynamics of a supposed-to-be republican and democratic society. Middlekauff supports this analysis by arguing that the enjoyment of those rights was not conceived to be extended to black people: the orbit of the American democratic was exceedingly distant from the one of the universalisations of those principles and the subsequent application to human beings without consideration of race.[147]

Everything considered, the American Revolution set a milestone in the history of the revolutions. On the one hand, it represented the model that symbolically inspired the fracture from the ties with the motherland, which result was amplified even more by the Declaration of Independence. As Armitage notes, the Thomas Jefferson's creative pen that wrote the text set a milestone in the history of the future revolution as secessionists, revolutionaries, and separatists would basically have to readapt the American text to their context [148]. Not surprisingly, many are the declaration of independence written after 1776 across the world: Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, and even Haiti. Among those countries, Haiti was actually the very first one which declared the Independence from France with an astonishing outcome. Indeed, the onset of the Haitian Revolution is a slave revolt occurred 1791 that would culminate with the 1804 Haitian Declaration.

It may appear true that the British Crown exercised a degree of coercion over the American colonies which was implemented through a consistent imposition of legislative measures without the consent of the subjects. Moreover, it must be recalled that the *Declaratory Act* permitted the exercise of the legislative power in "(…) all the cases whatsoever"[149], which subsequently should exclude the possibility to appeal, as the Founding Fathers did, to the

[146] *Ibidem.*
[147] R. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, p.246.
[148] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.141-142.
[149] Great Britain, The Parliament*: The Declaratory Act*.

arbitrary use of power since it was permitted by a specific parliamentary act. At the same time, worthy of mention is also the fact that the relationship between the subjects and the Governors escalated at the point that the use of military force was the inevitable consequence. It is within this issue that we should ponder upon. The Founding Fathers reported the long train of abuses they had suffered in the previous decade (1765-1776) by affirming that the King of Great Britain only aimed to establish a tyrannical regime [150]. If we may want to describe the Tyranny experienced by the former thirteen colonies, we should voluntarily use the word "peculiar". Specifically, if on the one hand the fact that Britain made use of their powers arbitrarily seems to be undeniable, then we should underscore the idea that it primarily occurred to raise revenues. Conversely, it may be true that such arbitrary imposition without consent should suffice to define the British regime as tyrannical; nonetheless, as the following chapters will reveal, the concept of tyranny seems to delve much deeper and more comprehensively into the human dimension.

[150] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*.

Chapter II: Within the concept of tyranny.

2.1-Preamble

As the previous chapter thoroughly examined, the former thirteen colonies aimed to sever the ties with the motherland in order to achieve their own political, social, and economic dimension. To be more precise, we may consider the concept of "*Communitas Perfecta*" mentioned by Skinner. Despite not referring to the American Revolution, the concept of *Communitas Perfecta* refers to the establishment of corporation where the regulation of the domestic affairs had to be independently achieved and without any type of external interreference[151]. Although the context of application was different and wider in the American society, such a concept properly summarises the American republican project. Therefore, the 1776 Declaration of Independence should be considered as the formalization of the American sentiment developed by the former colonies. Among the several principles and concepts it incorporates, one seems to emerge more than the others: the "(…) establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States" [152]. As Armitage notes, not only did the American declaration of independence acquire a symbolic relevance in the domestic context, but it also inspired many other revolutionary upheavals in the nineteen centuries, such as in the Caribbean and Spanish America[153]. Among these revolutions, one specifically stood out for its peculiar and revolutionary processes and meaning. The Haitian Revolution commenced with a slave insurrection in the French colony of Saint-Domingue in 1791: throughout more than a decade of upheavals, Touissaint Louverture, a skilful and well-educated leader, would emerge and establish the first and independent republic on the ruins of slavery. Louverture, influenced by enlightenment ideals and gifted with sensation rhetoric and oral abilities, would be also capable of abolishing both servitude and slavery

[151] Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume II: The Age of Reformation*, Cambridge (UK)-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.115.
[152] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.
[153] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.4-10.

in the French side island, which was originally conceived to be an agricultural basin to increase the prestige of the French Monarchy. However, as the following chapter will delve deeper into, Louverture's attempt to abolish slavery would appear to have remained incomplete in practice due to specific reasons. Haiti was structurally dependent on the plantation economy, which required a gigantic amount of labour force to work the lands. In order to deal with the economic necessity of the island, Louverture would institute a coercive regime based on the agricultural plantations in which the workers were compelled to work and not to leave if not for few, specific motivations. Furthermore, the next chapter will also reveal that Louverture frequently sentenced to death many individuals involved in upheavals and rebellion against his repressive and centralized practices. Moreover, he appears to have frequently prioritised personal interests and enrichment over the common good of the population. Similarly, on the American front, slavery remained a key pillar of the American society due to a combination of racial prejudices and economic interests that can be depicted through the figure of Thomas Jefferson. He is well known for his pro-slavery tendencies and racial prejudices as he owned many slaves at the time of the drafting of the American declaration of independence. The American Founding Fathers denounced the attempt of the British tyranny to reduce them to a condition of slavery within the Empire, but then they would fail to abolish the institution of slavery once formally independent. Therefore, we may want to delve deeper into this key contradiction between social and political practices and ideals that arose both in the Haitian and American context. Based on the Enlighted ideals of freedom, equality, and liberty, it seems that in both cases the prevailing interests of the rulers betrayed the premises.

Focusing on this chapter, it should be conceived as a panoramic journey within the concept of tyranny that commences in the Mediterranean world and will conclude across the Atlantic. The first part of the journey will offer an intertwining analysis of the evolution of the concept of tyranny throughout a selection of thinkers and philosophers. Then, after reaching the destination, the final stay will be within the Age of Enlightenment, where Locke and Paine will be the key figure to conclude our analysis. Thus, the combination of

thoughts among the following thinkers and philosophers permits to delve deeper into the point at the issue of this chapter, which is to underscore the common characteristics of the concept of tyranny in order to create the identikit of a tyrant that would be useful to properly understand the figure of both Jefferson and Louverture in the following chapter.

As Dahl claims, the transition from a democratic to an undemocratic regime cannot be determined like the freezing point of water as there is no specific point beyond which the undemocratic nature of a regime begins[154]. So, if water reached the freezing point at a specific temperature which lead to a change of its state from liquid to solid, when it comes to define a political regime the transition may be much more demanding and less clear. Similarly, we should consider this analogy and to adapt it to the context of this thesis to determine that it is not possible to determine with extreme precision what a tyrannical regime is. As we will notice, tyranny is a concept that may share key common features but at the same time radically diverge according to the context and the philosopher. For instance, the following lines will reveal that Plato considered tyranny as a degeneration of democracy, while Locke was vaguer in affirming that tyranny would begin where law ends. Therefore, we should consider that there may be no rigorous conceptualization of what tyranny (or a tyrant) is, but rather it may be more useful to consider key, common characteristics over which building the analysis. Hence, before delving deeper into the core of the chapter, a proper definition of the "tyranny "would be provided in order to introduce since the very first pages of this chapter the vital aspects of the concept of tyranny we should consider throughout this work. English dictionary Oxford clarifies that, in a tyranny, the power and authority are exercised unfairly and cruelly by the ruler, which is subsequently named "tyrant" [155]. Similarly, Cambridge dictionary strengthens the definition by introducing two principles characteristics which would be vital to understand the context of this thesis- First and foremost, the power in the hand of the ruler (or rulers) is unlimited,

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[154] R. H. Dahl, "Can International Organization be Democratic? A Skeptic's View", in *The Global Transformations Reader: An introduction to the Globalization Debate*, edited by David Held and Anthony McGrew, Cambridge (UK), Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p.531.

[155] Oxford Dictionary, definition of tyranny, accessed on the 2nd of July 2025. Retrieved from: Oxford Dictionary.

which reinforces the idea that defining the concept of tyranny may entail several complications. Moreover, the second pillar characteristics identified within the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary is that such unlimited power extends over the people [156].

As Ehrenberg notes, the word tyranny derived from the Lydian language and which was associated to the word King, which still had no negative connotation. On the contrary, the word tyrant referred to those political leaders who contributed to the social, political and economic improvement of the state, which allowed to retain the support of the vast majority of the population. Despite being individuals who often aimed to seize the power to set their familiar dynasty, tyrants were rulers which knew how to combine the interests of the state with their personal aspiration determining a balanced political scenario. In addition, tyrants found also fertile ground in conditions of economic distress and social disruption, which seems to be a key feature in the figure of Touissaint Louverture and Thomas Jefferson. Moreover, the commercial interests of the tyrants often improved the economic condition of the states, for instance through the trade of precious goods such as gold and silver[157]. As Ehrenberg claims, the word tyrant acquired a negative connotation in Sparta, where the interests of the oligarchic government had to be protected, which explains why Sparta adopted a different approach to deal with tyrants. For instance, in 632 B.C. the Megara's Tyrant son-in-law Cylon attempted to seize the power, but he was fiercely repressed by the armed reaction of the peasant who successfully avoided the coup by the tyrant [158]. In general, the oligarchic governments were oriented towards the realization of the interests of nobles and wealthy landowners in an oppressive way that often led to the rise of tyrants[159]. Similarly, this seems to be the precise mechanism through which the British Government attempted to collect revenues from the colonies in every conceivable way, and which would

[156] Cambridge Dictionary, definition of tyranny, accessed on the 2nd of July, 2025. Retrieved from: Cambridge Dictionary.
[157] V. Ehrenberg, *From Solomon to Socrate: Greek History and Civilisation during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.*, London-New York, Routledge, 1973, pp.23-25.
[158] *Ibidem*, pp.56-61.
[159] *Ibidem*.

not diverge in its essence from how both Jefferson and Louverture would act. Therefore, the pursuit of personal interests at the expense of the collective good which would determine a condition of malaise among the individuals seems to be a vital mechanism through which understanding tyrannical figures and regimes.

Lewis, in the collection of essays "Ancient Tyranny", claims that many individuals covered autocratic positions in the exercise of the power throughout the history, ranging from Kings, First Citizens, Dictators, military leaders, generals. This wide category of ruler seems to be of enormous relevance as it reveals that the epithet "tyrant" may have no universal application because it may vary according to the specific context and times [160]. Subsequently, Aristotle provides a vital lesson that we may consider as a starting point for the following analysis: "(…) governments which have a regard to the common interests (…) are therefore true forms; but those which regard only the interests of the rulers are all defective (…)"[161]. Therefore, the key point at issue is that of tyranny as a consequence of the degeneration of power: both the United States of American and the Haitian revolutionary government were different in their forms, but the degeneration of the power in hand of those entitled to exercise it seems to have weakened these differences and led to the establishment of two tyrannical governments. Therefore, we should focus mainly of the common characteristics that identified a tyrant, and this is exactly what this chapter will attempt to do.

Political legitimacy has always been a tackling issue for the implementation of a tyrannical regime. Both in the Roman and Greek ancient worlds, the assent of the individuals was required to legitimate the power of the rulers. For instance, the legitimation in the Ancient Greece depended on the consensus among the citizen body within the Polis, regardless of whether it was an oligarchy or a democracy[162]. In Rome, the legitimation of the power was

[160] S. Lewis, see the introduction in *Ancient Tyranny*, edited by S. Lewis, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp.4-10.
[161] Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Part 7, 4th Century B.C.E, translated by Benjamin Jowett, Batoche Books, Kitchener, 1999, pp.60-61. Retrieved from: Politics.
[162] A. Wolpert, "The Violence of Thirty Tyrants", in *Ancient Tyranny*, edited by S. Lewis, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p.220.

attained through the vote of the *comitia curiata*, the popular assembly which voted the *lex curiata* which confirmed the power of the king.[163] Despite this, the emerge of tyrannical regimes could not still be prevented though. In Rome, many kings provided sensational benefits to the common good of the community: Servius accomplished the reorganization of the social and political structures, while Ancus Marcius created a port in Ostia to facilitate the commercial and maritime activities. However, King Tarquinius Superbus shared all the characteristics of a tyrant: *superbia*, indolence, and immeasurable cruelty at the point that he even killed his predecessor Servius and usurped his throne [164]. Similarly in Greece, Glinister notes that tyrants could provide benefits and well-being for the collectivity by developing urban structures such as markets, public buildings and temples[165]. However, it appears that the figure of the tyrant was still perceived as a negative presence for the state: Mitchell claims that a tyrant was considered as a ruler who does everything he wanted without being subjected to any degree of control as he was not accountable to anyone. Moreover, a tyrant was an individual full of pride and envy, corrupted by power and wealth who allowed him to make an arbitrary use of justice by sentencing to death without trial. Therefore, the tyrant appeared to be a ruler concerned only with his personal interests, needs, and wills, rather than the collective good of the population [166].

2.2- Plato: tyranny as the degeneration of liberty.

During his lifetime, Plato was significantly influenced by two dramatic events that would shape and condition his political beliefs and orientation. First and foremost, Critias led a coup in 404 B.C. that overturned the Athenian democratic regime based on the consent to be governed and established the oligarchic reign of terror known as the "thirty-tyrant",

[163] F. Glinister, "Kingship and tyranny in archaic Rome", in *Ancient Tyranny*, edited by S. Lewis, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp.19-24.
[164] *Ibidem*.
[165] *Ibidem*.
[166] L. Mitchell, "Tyrannical Oligarchs at Athens", in *Ancient Tyranny*, edited by S. Lewis, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, pp. 178-186.

which lasted for a brief period as the democratic faction soon reconquered power. However, it was within the democratic comeback that the second tragic event occurred: Socrates, the beloved mentor of Plato, was sentenced to death in 399 B.C., which contributed to increasing Plato's hostility towards democracy [167]. Therefore, Socrates' death represented a tragic and emblematic event for the social context of the time, as well as the figurative detonation of Plato's political anti-democratic thinking [168]. Moreover, Plato lived in a period where the Polis still existed in a context where the institution of slavery was one of the key pillars of the city-state in which his political thought developed. As Cartledge claims, slavery was the concretisation of the physical denial of human freedom: for a Greek individual, to be free meant to be the opposite of a slave[169] Within this vigorous background, Plato developed his distinctive political thought, which aligned with the social and political context of his time.

The aspiration of Plato was a government where philosophers would become kings and rulers, thereby providing humanity with the possibility of escaping the political troubles of their time [170]. Vegetti supports this claim by arguing that per each form of government there was a specific type of man: for Plato, the Aristocracy was the ideal form of government, which deeply diverged from the other forms. Plato then turned to analyse democracy, describing it as fertile ground for tyranny to arise. Specifically, the main reason why a democratic regime would turn into a tyrannical one was, paradoxically, the complete freedom within the state, because there would be no authority to regulate actions within the state [171]. In what seems to be interpreted as a platonic state of anarchy, the same Plato rejected the possibility that the natural hierarchical distinctions among the individuals could faint: for Plato a father could not be at the same level of his sons as well as a young and an old men could not be alike, and neither could slaves be equal to their purchasers[172].

[167] M. Vegetti, *Guida alla lettura della Repubblica di Platone*, Bari, Editori Laterza, 2007, pp.1-10.
[168] P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp.96-99.
[169] *Ibidem*, pp.20-21.
[170] *Ibidem*, pp.96-99.
[171] M. Vegetti, *Guida alla lettura della Repubblica di Platone,* pp.72-77.
[172] Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8, 360 B.C.E, translated by Benjamin Jowett, retrieved from:Republic.

Therefore, Plato rejects the annihilation of the distinctions that naturally existed among individuals, which was the principal outcome of democracy.

We may ask ourselves: how can tyranny arise from a democracy? The answer lies in the concept of liberty, which for Plato is linked to the condition in which the soul operates. This means that in Plato, there is a profound, relevant psychological dimension in which the concept of freedom is applied. According to Ferrari, the Platonic idea of liberty is based on the ground that reason must govern the other components of the soul [173]. The concept of liberty in Plato acquires a peculiar meaning due to his aversion to the republic, where liberty is the pillar, and, because of this, the final outcome of democracy could only be a degeneration into tyranny[174]. On the contrary, Plato was a convinced supporter of the Aristocratic government, namely the government of a few individuals who were gifted by nature with rational abilities and reasoning[175]. The key difference between a democratic form of government and other forms is highlighted by Stalley, who supports the platonic claim for which democracy would lead to tyranny because all the individuals are primarily focused on satisfying their interests and necessities, and therefore do not care about who and how exercises the power[176]. Therefore, the positive ruler is the one who must possess the highest degree of acquaintance *(logos*) which must be applied to attain the good of the state independently of the consent given by the subjects. Those (few) possessing the logos must therefore govern those who lack it (the vast majority) in order to achieve the common good for the community[177]. Subsequently, the common good would not be achieved within the democratic regimes in which democratic men operate. The democratic man was considered a tyrant because he embodied the idea of full liberty the democracy allowed for as he was controlled by all his desires, rather than rational thoughts, which would enslave

[173] F. Ferrari, "Platone e la Libertà. Etica, politica, filosofia" in *Teoria Politica*, Annali XIII, editors: Massimo Cuono, Valentina Pazé, Torino, Rosemberg & Sellier, 2023, pp. 73-85.
[174] *Ibidem*.
[175] *Ibidem*.
[176] R. F. Stalley, "Plato's Doctrine of Freedom", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1998, New Series, Vol. 98, 1998,pp.147-158.
[177] G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press,1973, pp.140-163.

his soul, and so was the tyrannical city [178]. It is therefore plausible to say that, instead of focusing on common goods, the tyrant focused on his necessities, and so the population would be completely free to act, which would then lead to the degeneration of society.

This Platonic consideration provides a peculiar context in which both the American and Haitian contexts may resemble each other. To do so, Popper guides us through his analysis by prompting us to reflect on the question: who should govern? According to Plato, the answer would relate to the government of those in possession of logos, namely the philosophers. The analysis provided by Popper thus reveals how the government to which Plato aspired was a totalitarian one that he sought to present as just and favourable [179]. Popper then reinforces his thesis by arguing that a Platonic government implies a restrictive and accurate selection: the best, the natural leaders, must govern, while the natural servants must submit to and be guided by those in possession of reason[180]. Since Plato conceived the government of the best as the one where the philosopher-kings exercise the power, it may be more beneficial to apply such a conceptualisation by interpreting it through the idea of the restrictive selection provided by Popper. In this way, the Platonic theory provides a solid foundation that justifies both the American and Haitian governments. As the following chapter will underscore, Louverture will be the key figure within the Haitian political scenario, while in the United States, the federal model will ensure that, in fact, in every state, the best would rule.

However, Plato's peculiarity seems to lie in his theorisation of tyranny as deriving from a contest of absolute freedom and the pursuit of one's desires. What remains therefore is the fact that Plato, notoriously anti-democratic, provides a basis that can lead to the justification of the American and Haitian government in its relationship with slavery, and which

[178] R. F. Stalley, "Plato's Doctrine of Freedom", pp.147-158.
[179] K.Popper, *La società aperta e i suoi nemici. Volume I: Platone totalitario*, translated by Renato Pavetto, Roma, Armando Editore, 2014, p.114.
[180] *Ibidem,* pp.149-158.

therefore allows us to set up the analysis of the chapter based on what we want to underscore, which the revelation of both the American and Haitian as tyrannical regimes.

The crucial element to understand this peculiar view of democracy is the individuals: Plato believes that in a democracy, there is "(…) neither law nor order", so the individuals and the rulers would only pursue self-interests instead of the collective good, therefore leading to the establishment of a tyranny [181]. Therefore, Ferrari contributes to clarify Plato's view of liberty: to be free, an individual must act according to a specific logic, for which the individual in question is perfectly aware of the utility of the action executed. Moreover, Stalley reinforces the platonic view of liberty by claiming that such irrational behaviour could not only be a matter of personal choices but also it may be determined by the context in which the individuals live. Subsequently, it is a responsibility of the "few" to deal with the disorder of the city; this is why Plato preferred a government run by philosophers, because they were the few who could deal rationally with the necessities of daily life[182]. In other words, the individual must act rationally; otherwise, he or she would not be free. Subsequently, if not free, the individual will be subjected to a form of slavery. Therefore, is a slave a free individual if acting rationally and, as such, should this view apply to other contexts, like the American and Haitian ones?

For Plato, it seems that a slave acting rationally would enjoy a higher degree of freedom than a free individual acting irrationally. However, slavery as a social institution and not as a moral condition would not be overturned in case of rational behaviour, especially given that slaves were not gifted with any degree of rationality according to Plato.
When it comes to defining slavery in Plato's thoughts, the issue may be quite challenging, as there are no specific passages to cite from the philosopher's works. As Vlastos argues, the fact that Plato never addressed the concept of slavery, especially in *The Republic*, probably means that he did not incline to do so. Plato lived in a period when the Polis still existed,

[181] Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8.
[182] R. F. Stalley, "Plato's Doctrine of Freedom", pp.147-158.

and slaves were not considered an active part of their political system[183]. Accordingly, Plato had a negative view of slaves, considering them inferior individuals lacking knowledge, which leads to a condition that Vlastos describes as a deficiency of reasons. What emerges is a condition for which slaves were supposed to follow the orders and nothing more. They had no rational capacity to understand why their belief was true[184]. Delving deeper into the details of the questions, Plato compared two doctors and their approach to minister to their parents: one of the doctors is a slave, while the other is a freeman. For Plato, the lack of rationality in the reasoning is perceivable from the fact that the slave doctor gives direct orders to the slave patients, and, in behaving like a tyrant, will act as if he "had exact knowledge"[185]. On the other hand, Plato argues that the professional doctor delves deeper into the nature of the disease and acquires and provides information because he can engage in conversation with other freemen. Only after convincing the individuals, the doctor would prescribe the best treatment for the patients [186].

To properly comprehend the Platonic vision of slavery, Vlastos suggests we may have to rely on two Aristotelian principles: Aristotle believed that slavery was a matter of natural distinction that benefited both the slaves and the masters. For Plato, the body "(…) was to be the subject" of the soul [187]. Similarly, Aristotle believed that the soul governed both the body and the mind, and rationality ruled over passion, as it was a natural condition.[188] It is within these natural outcomes that Vlastos supports his thesis for which Plato would have agreed with Aristotle. It is within these natural outcomes that Vlastos supports his thesis, one that Plato would likely have agreed with, as Aristotle did. Natural differences differentiated the body from the soul, intellect, and rationality from irrational behaviours. Hence, given that slaves were considered to lack the rational capacity to understand, the outcome is the acceptance of slavery within the society, not only for their practical utility,

[183] G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, pp.140-163.
[184] *Ibidem*.
[185] Plato, *Laws*, Book 4, 360 B.C.E, translated by Benjamin Jowett, retrieved from: Laws.
[186] *Ibidem*.
[187] Plato, *Timaeus*, 360 B.C.E, translated by Benjamin Jowett, retrieved from: Timaeus.
[188] Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Part 5, 4th Century B.C.E, pp.9-10.

but also because it was better for them to be ruled by their masters rather than by no reason at all [189]. The social and political context in which Plato lived, coupled with his personal beliefs, seems to offer a fertile ground to justify both the American and Haitian slavery-based societies and not label them as tyrannical. Precisely, Athens was described by Cartledge as the first Greek Democracy of its time [190]. It is within this democracy that the population conceived slaves as the starting point from which to act and behave oppositely in order to be free. Similarly, slavery was a vital institution also in the federal republic of the United States of America, especially in the southern states, where slaves were employed in the plantations to satisfy the needs of the agricultural economy of the states. As the following chapter will reveal, Jefferson also shared a negative conception of the slaves, according to which they lack rational capabilities to act. In the Haitian context, the following chapter will reveal that the figure of Louverture might be considered as a sort of "platonic" illuminated leader, an individual gifted with intellect and rationality who should be at the helm of government and guide the population through rational and logic actions. Although not a philosopher, we can comprehend that Louverture embodied the Platonic idea of "selection" highlighted by Popper in the previous pages. Similarly, neither Jefferson could be labelled as tyrannical on the ground of Plato's view of the slavery. On the contrary, what permits such a claim relates to the fact that when the rulers pursue their interests and needs only, then there are all the circumstances that allow to define them as such. Moreover, the simple fact that, for Plato, tyranny was the product of a democracy since everyone pursued their interests perfectly depicts what would happen within the Republic of the United States of America, where slavery was maintained due to the vital economic interests of the states. Therefore, Plato's political thought seems to provide a reliable starting point to properly conceived the American and Haitian slavery-based regimes that will be analysed in the following chapter.

[189] G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies.*, p.161.
[190] P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice.*, p.65.

2.3- Cicero: the tyrannical triumph of the rulers' interests.

Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC) experienced the crucial crisis of the Roman Republic where the political decadence required to retrieve political stability through the Roman institutions, in a context where the crisis was enhanced by a rupture in the mechanism of consent among the political social groups and in the Senate [191]. Historical events such as the Social War (91-87), the slave revolt led by Spartacus in 73 BC, as well as the first Triumvirate contributed to exacerbate the social and political tensions in the context of Cicero's advent in the Roman Political field. As Narducci notes, Cicero's mission was to focus on political debates to contrasts the Roman decadence and therefore to safeguard the political institutions to recover the political and social stability that had been hampered from years of social and political tensions [192].

Cicero focused on the fact that the political class had to achieve a proper balance among themselves, focusing on the moral responsibility and the commitment to the common good. As argued in the introduction of this chapter, not all the Roman Kings left a remarkably positive legacy: Cicero affirmed in the *Res Publica* that the name of the king was being hated by the population because of the "(…) account of oppression and pride of one man, Tarquinius"[193]. Not surprisingly, Cicero's purpose to recover the political balance reflects subsequently his opposition to the First Triumvirate signed by Caesar, Pompey and Crassus as it heavily limited the Senate's powers and influence. Formed on the 60 BC, the triumvirate could be considered as a private covenant among three relevant political figures which only aimed to secure themselves relevant positions that would provide them with relevant benefits and limited the authority of the senate. The triumvirate would be renewed in 56 BC in Lucca, and it would have strengthened each character's position. As part of the

[191] G. Clemente, "La politica romana nell'età dell'imperialismo.", in *Storia di Roma II: L'Impero Mediterraneo. 1. La Repubblica Imperiale.*, edited by Aldo Schiavone and Arnaldo Momigliano, Torino, Einaudi Editore, 1990, Vol.1, pp.235-266.
[192] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica*, Bari, Editori laterza,2009, p.18.
[193] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 1, 39, 1st Century B.C. E, translated by George William Featherstonaugh, published by New York, G&C. Carvill, 1829, p.70. Retrieved from: The Republic.

agreement, Crassus and Pompey were recognised the consulate in 55 BC, while Caesar's governship in Gaul was extended by five years. As Narducci argues, Caesar was the one who benefitted the most from this private agreement as he was initially appointed as the Roman Consul in 59 [194]. Moreover, Lepore reinforces this view by arguing that Caesar, with the renewal of the triumvirate, would further reinforce his *imperium*[195].[196]

In general, as Lepore notes, Cicero's political mission aimed to contrasting and limiting a tyrannical model of government and to replace it with a republican model where the individuals would play a central, active role [197]. Indeed, Cicero suggested that a tyrannical government where the one who exercised the power exceeded the limits, must be replaced by a form of government in order to "(…) place in contrast that other type of ruler, the good, wise, and skilful guardian and protector, as one may say, of the practical interests and of the self-respect of the citizens of the State (…)[198]. As Lepore claims, Cicero believed in a reconfiguration of the political dynamics in which there was a consensus between all the active and forces within the Roman public sphere, within which the individual contributed alongside the Senate. It was precisely the individual, especially the young generations that had to be "trained" in order to then be working in the Senate with the goal to achieve a balance, renewed order [199].

It is with a passage in *The Republic* that Cicero precisely defined the concretization of tyranny, which occurs when a king "deviates into unjust rule" [200]. Therefore, following the path tracked by Plato, Cicero identified tyranny not as a precise form of government, but

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[194] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica*, p.139.
[195] E. Lepore, "La Decisione Politica e L'Auctoritas Senatoria: Pompeo, Cicerone e Cesare.", in *Storia di Roma II: L'Impero Mediterraneo. 1. La Repubblica Imperiale.*, edited by Aldo Schiavone and Arnaldo Momigliano, Torino, Einaudi Editore, 1990, p.782.
[196] According to the definition provided by "La Treccani", the word *Imperium* refers to the absolute power exercised in the civil and military field by the Roman Magistrates, like the consuls.
[197] E. Lepore, "Il Pensiero Politico Romano del I Secolo.", *Storia di Roma II: L'Impero Mediterraneo. 1. La Repubblica Imperiale.*, edited by Aldo Schiavone and Arnaldo Momigliano, Torino, Einaudi Editore,, 1990, pp.864-866.
[198] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 2, 29, translated by C.W. Keyes, 1928. Retrieved from: The Republic.
[199] C. Wirszbuski, *Libertas as a Political Idea During the Late Republic and Early Principate*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp.80-81.
[200] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 2, 29, translated by G. Featherstonaugh, p.100.

rather as the degeneration of a precise one(monarchy) into its negative version, which would become therefore a tyranny. The same Cicero defined Tarquinius as the most outstanding example of tyrant, defined as the ruler who misuses the power he already possesses.[201] As Narducci notes, Cicero conceived as tyrants those rulers who only pursued personal interests rather than the collective peace and security[202]. As Wyrszbuski claims, Cicero did not conceive a specific form of government to attain the social wellbeing within the state, but he proposed a mixed form of government [203]. As Cicero affirmed, such a mixed form of government was required to achieve a what he considered a properly balanced distribution of power the hand of the senators with an adequate degree of freedom for the population and sufficient political influence for the aristocracy [204]. Precisely, Cicero's belief to praise the mixed-constitution form of government was considered by Wirszbuski as the attempt to encourage popular satisfaction within the society by preventing from the establishment of both a democracy and an absolute and centralized government [205]. So, if tyranny was the product of an unjust government from the king, then what was the correct behaviour for Cicero? What should the ideal political do in order to be considered as so? As Narducci argues, Cicero believed that the proper political individual was the opposite of the tyrant as he had to pursue the safeguard of the state and the maintenance of its constitutional balance. Moreover, the relevance of the population was vital in a way that the political man had to focus more on their interests rather than the ones of the ruler [206].

A further example of tyrant for Cicero was Gaius Verres, a former Roman magistrate who was accused by Cicero in his work *Verrines Orations* to behave like a tyrant. As Steel provides, Cicero's profound malaise towards Verres was due to immoral behaviour as he was accused to behave like a tyrannical threat to his province. Verres was accused by Cicero to have abused his high-ranked position as magistrate to obtain art treasure from the Sicilian

[201] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 2, 29, translated by C.W. Keyes, 1928.
[202] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica,* p.82.
[203] C. Wirszbuski, *Libertas as a Political Idea During the Late Republic and Early Principate,* pp.42-43.
[204] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 2, 57, translated by C.W. Keyes, 1928.
[205] C. Wirszbuski, *Libertas as a Political Idea During the Late Republic and Early Principate,* p.42.
[206] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica,* p.168.

people or misused his judicial power leading to arbitrary executions. Moreover, Verres was even indicted to have repeatedly favoured his own interests (led by sexual desires) rather than his commitment to his juridical activities [207]. Subsequently, Verres was brought a legal action against for abusing the power conferred upon him and systematically exploiting the tempting benefits Sicily could offer[208]. Prosecuted by the same Cicero for the embezzlement of hundreds of thousands of the Roman silver coins called sesterces, Verres was said to have even readapted the Sicilian taxation system which had efficiently worked efficiently and conformed it according to his own preferences and interests[209]. Not surprisingly, Cicero defined Verres as the enemy of the population, the "greedy" tyrant who turned his "prey" into an unhappy province by plundering cities and temples and imposing the payment of sesterces through orders and judgments [210] [211]. The point at the issue is not entering into the merits of Cicero's role in prosecuting Verres but rather providing a concrete example of what being a tyrant meant to Cicero and attempting to adapt (even in more general terms) to the figure of both Jefferson and Louverture that would be analysed in the following chapter. From Cicero, our attention may be captured by specific values and set of conducts that refers to the abuse of power and the pursue of personal interests. It may appear clear that the King was supposed to deal with the needs of the state in a way that respected its balance and well-being, rather than be a ruler who, to use Cicero's words, was oppressing people maybe even for the sole purpose of commanding[212].Therefore, this meaningful passage from Cicero seems to justify the denunciation of the American Founding Fathers in defining King George III a tyrant, as well as to provide a "lesson" that will be useful also in the following chapter. What we should learn from Cicero's political conceptualization on

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[207] C. E. W. Steel, *Cicero, Rhetoric, and Empire*, New York, Oxford University Press Inc., 2002, pp.29-30.
[208] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica*, pp.39-55.
[209] D. Linder, *The Trial of Gaius (or Caius) Verres: An Account*, (2008). Retrieved from: Trial of Verres. For Cicero, the sum of sesterces stolen by Verres amounted to forty million as he affirmed at 2.2.26.
[210] Cicero, *Verrines Orations*, 70 B.C.E, translated by L.H.G Greenwood, 1928, Retrieved from: Verrines Orations.
[211] There is no unique passage from the source in question where Cicero precisely defined Verres as it was defined in the notes 14. It is a personal reconstruction of the ground of what Cicero affirmed through the work. Precisely, I will provide here the specific points where Cicero affirmed so. "Enemy of the Population" see 2.1.38; "Greedy Tyrant" see 2.2.35; "Prey" see 2.2.17; "Unhappy provinces… Plundering Cities and Temples" see 2.2.18; "imposing…through orders" see 2.2.26.
[212] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 1, 33, translated by C.W. Keyes, 1928.

the forms of government refers to both the words tyranny and tyrant. On the one hand, tyranny should be conceived as a degeneration of the power through the execution of a specific form of government, the monarchy; at the same time, its meaning could be used in what could be conceived as a wider and less literal scenario. We should consider the case of Verres: despite his privileged position within the Roman social ladder, he was not a king literally, but rather he was a magistrate and the governor of Sicily. Notwhistanding, Cicero still called him a tyrant, because he embodied a series of characteristics which could be strictly associated to the degeneration of the power assigned to his relevant and influential charge within the Roman political sphere. Similarly, Narducci notes that Cicero was also concerned by the significant amount of power the Decemvirs would have acquired with the pass of the agrarian law presented by Publius Servilius Rullus on the 63 B.C.[213]. Narducci reveals that the Decemvirs were appointed to charge the law and bestowed with a large degree of power to sell public properties, tax the provinces, and seize the war treasures in excess. Subsequently, such an empowerment in their hand was conceived by Cicero as a fertile ground for their personal ambitions and this would have led to tyrannical ambitions[214].

As Wirszbuski claims, the point at the issue is that Cicero was not trying to influence the common opinion as to the establishment of a proper democracy. So, if it was not the democracy, what was the most balanced form of government? Wirszbuski claims that Cicero favoured the creation of a a mixed form of government based on a balanced distribution of power, authority, and freedom between government, senate, and people [215]. The combination of diverging forms of government would therefore lead to the establishment of what Cicero believed to be the most balanced form of government which combined would determine the most "preferable" one[216].

[213] E. Narducci, *Cicerone: La parola e la politica*, pp.81-82.
[214] *Ibidem*.
[215] C. Wirszbuski, *Libertas as a Political Idea During the Late Republic and Early Principate*, pp.82-83.
[216] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 1, 69, translated by C.W. Keyes, 1928.

At least from a political perspective, Wyrzbuski notes that for Cicero the form of government was a pivotal factor in the achievement of freedom. For instance, a monarchy could not determine liberty since there would not be a balanced distribution of power among all. As for Wyrzbuski, Cicero was consistent with the Roman principle of freedom, for which equality before law was guaranteed. On the contrary, Cicero rejected the absolute generalization that egalitarianism would give: not all the elements in the state could have the same rights, but they should have had at least enough right to have access to freedom [217]. Freedom was therefore available only to those possessing enough rights, which entails a selection within the society.

As Wyrszbusky notes, the concept of freedom strictly relates to the idea of *libertas*, meant to be a condition for which a person is not a slave. In the Roman context, slavery was considered as a legal institution where a person was subjected to the dominion of another person, which made slaves rightless. The Roman radical distinction between slaves and citizens found application also in Cicero's work *Stoic Paradoxes*: in his words, slaves were just "properties of their masters by purchase or any other law of the state"[218]. As Bradley supports, slaves could be sold and punished by their owners with which they established a complete dynamic of submission.[219] Hence, to be free the individual must possess rights, which is not possible if under dominion of another person. Thus, the citizens who were subjected to a condition of slavery could not enjoy the rights deriving from the libertas and, conversely, only the individuals who were actually citizens could benefit from the rights deriving from the condition of freedom[220]. As Bradley claims, Cicero believed that slaves were part of an agreement for which only the masters would acquire benefits. Therefore, Cicero formulated his idea of liberty within this relationship of subordination for which "Liberty (…) is not the way we live under a master, but under none at all"[221]. Being a slave under a master meant that there were no mutual benefits like in a social contract between

[217] *Ibidem*.
[218] Cicero, *Stoic Paradoxes,* Paradox 5, 46 B.C. Retrieved from: Paradoxes.
[219] K. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press,1994, pp.4-6.
[220] C. Wirszbuski, *Libertas as a Political Idea During the Late Republic and Early Principate*, pp.1-3.
[221] Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 2, 23, translated by G. Featherstonaugh, p.99.

fathers and sons where both would mutually receive benefits from their interaction. Within this dynamic of subordination, Bradley notes a key distinction among people belonging to the lowest social categories. Indeed, while slaves were usually employed in the agricultural field, in the domestic context the workers at the disposal of the masters were generally considered servitude. The vital differences between those two social categories refers to the fact Cicero believed that slaves did not work for wages while servants did [222].

Similarly, this distinction seems to find concrete application in the context of the Haitian society: as the following chapter will clarify, Louverture would succeed in formally abolishing the institution of slavery. However, the manumission of slavery would appear to be restored through a different perspective, namely that of workers on the plantation who received wages in exchange of their labour force. Therefore, based on this distinction between slaves and servants, it may be challenging and even wrong to claim that the population of Haiti lived under a regime of slavery. Moreover, the Ciceronian conception of the slavery, which reflects the wider Roman society of his time, seems to perfectly depict the republican society in the post-revolutionary U.S, where slaves were not conceived as citizens. If on the one hand Cicero's view of the slavery impedes to label both Jefferson and Louverture as tyrants for their approaches to the institution of slavery, at the same time we could define both leaders as tyrannical rulers on the ground of his political thought analysed in the previous pages. Hence, the late roman republic seems not to provide the proper model through which affirming that tyranny and slavery were strictly related. Precisely, the Republic of the United States of American was not a monarchy, and neither was the colonial Haiti after the takeover of Louverture. Therefore, if this claim may discourage from defining both regimes as tyrannical, the fact that in both context the interests of the rulers prevailed may be a solid feature that permits to label them as such, and therefore connecting slavery and tyranny.

[222] K. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, pp.64-66.

2.4-Niccolò Machiavelli and the tyrannical thirst: how power and liberties shape tyranny.

Born and raised in the Florence of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (1469-1527), Machiavelli came from a local family which belong to the higher ranks of the Florentine society as they had held offices in the city government [223]. Machiavelli worked as Secretary of the Republic and he devoted his whole life to defend the Florentine, and in general the Italian, liberty in a context where he never experienced a democratic republic. Notwhistanding, he experienced the rise to power of the Florentine Medici's family and the repeated invasions of foreigners such as Spain and France [224]. Machiavelli contributed to the rise of the Florentine civic humanism which reflects the tendencies to the praise and advocate for the role of the prince in a context where important Italian cities, such as Florence and Venice, had already commenced a process of transformation into notable models of *de facto* independent city-republic since the eleventh century[225]. Machiavelli was committed to the republican ideals and civic involvement in a context where he, as well as many other previous thinkers like as Marsilio, feared the possibility for the republican institutions to be overwhelmed by the prevailing attitudes of the tyrants [226]. Not surprisingly, the following lines will reveal how the figure of the single individuals, the citizens, was a key element for Machiavelli in order to protect the freedom of the Republic [227]. Precisely, Skinner argues that Machiavelli lived in a context where tyrannical tendencies began in 1434, when Cosimo De Medici commenced to develop a new oligarchical regime under his leadership. Cosimo's tyrannical attitudes would be granted continuity by his

[223] M. Viroli, *Niccolo's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2000, translated by Anthony Shugaar, p.6.
[224] M. Viroli, *Scegliere il principe. I Consigli di Machiavelli al cittadino elettore*, Bari, Editori Laterza, Bari, 2013, pp.5-19.
[225] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume II: Renaissance Virtues*, Cambridge (UK)-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp.3-11.
[226] Q. Skinner, *The Foundation of the Modern Political Thought, Volume I: The Renaissance*, Cambridge (UK)-New York, University Press,1979, pp.55-70.
[227] Q. Skinner, *The Foundation of the Modern Political Thought, Volume I: The Renaissance*, pp. 178-181.

stepson Lorenzo, who established the so-called "Council of Seventy" where, basically, his supporters were appointed to conduct the affairs of the Florentine republic [228].

As Viroli notes, Machiavelli's directly experienced the threatening to the liberty from foreign enemies, which heavily influenced his political conception of the most adequate rulers. For instance, one year before his death, Machiavelli had suggested the Florentine *Signoria* to adopt a policy of intransigence by adopting an authoritarian approach to deal with the threats posed by the Landsknechts advance from Bozen : Machiavelli believed that when an enemy only aimed to oppress the rival and reduce the country's freedom, then attempting to negotiate with him to find compromises would prove it inefficient because the such an enemy would not end his process until the goal would be achieved[229]. As the following lines will reveal, this contribution provided by Viroli clarifies the Machiavellian view as to the most adequate ruler, who was required to exercise a strong, centralized, and authoritarian power if required to by the situation.

From a political point of view, Machiavelli was a devoted supporter of his homeland, Italy, in a way that permits to consider his figure as one of the greatest experts of the Italian politics of his time. Specifically, Viroli claims that Machiavelli believed in the moral abilities of the citizens as a necessary condition not to succumb to live in a state of freedom. The citizens could not be represented by the servants of those in power as they were a perilous threat to the protection of the republican freedom[230]. Viroli provocatively highlights a reality that was common even at the times of Machiavelli and that can be reinterpreted in the context of this thesis. He argues that current politicians, like back at the time of Machiavelli, are dominated by a different sort of passion that hampers the final outcome of the politics: personal earnings and incomes, envy, fears, interests; all these elements combined are, and were, a danger for the popular sovereignty and the subsequent common good. Accordingly, if the citizens gave their vote to those politicians base their politics on the hate for the rivals

[228] *Ibidem,* p.114.
[229] M. Viroli, *Scegliere il principe. I Consigli di Machiavelli al cittadino elettore*, pp.81-82.
[230] *Ibidem,* pp.5-19.

instead of focusing on the concrete well-being and maintenance of the states, then the final outcome can only be that of a tyrannical regime[231]. In the context of this thesis, this prevision by Machiavelli perfectly embodies the dynamics of the events that led to the American Revolution and also summarises what happened during the government of Touissaint Louverture.

As highlighted in the first chapter, the former thirteen colonies endured a long period of abuses at the hands of the British Empire, although they initially had no reason to alter those dynamics of subordination. The situation changed when the British Monarchy heavily pursued the way of the Crown's economic interest and began to impose systematic taxation over the colonies. If the point at issue in Machiavelli's conception of tyranny was to underscore that when the focus is not on the real freedom, liberties, and good of the population, tyrants, blinded by their personal interests and weaknesses, are likely to affirm themselves as the cities' rulers. Similarly, economic interests were pursued by the same Americans who firmly contested the British regime: especially in the southern states, the agricultural economy required the labour force the Americans compensated through the employment of slaves in the plantation. Within the Machiavellian perspective, also Louverture could be part of this description of the Machiavellian *tiranno*, even though he had to deal with a different economic situation. The point at the issue is that the Haitian slaves initially supported the slave revolt led by Louverture and his further rise to power for reasons that had to do with their personal freedom and liberties. However, after the reinforcement of the hard labour through a centralized government to meet the economic necessity of the island, the population realized that even their former hero pursued the way of the personal and economic interests.

It is thus the servitude that contributes to the enslavement of a community: within a free community and its free institutions, every individual must play an active and equal role in order to prevent the establishment of a tyrannical regime whether the *tiranno* can be either

[231] N. Machiavelli, *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, 1531, edited by Mario Martelli, Florence, Sansoni, 2000, Book 1, Paragraph 40, p.107. Retrieved from: Discorsi.

a single individual or a group of many. Every individual must be therefore ready to provide the proper contribution to avoid a situation of submission in the hands of the rulers. By applying these principles, not only will the tyrannical regime be prevented from being implemented, but also the population will effectively enjoy the individual liberty [232]. Heavily influenced by the Roman Empire, Machiavelli focused the well-known distinction between *patrizi* and *plebei* which provides a perspective that seems to be intriguing for this analysis. The key point at the issue is that, as Skinner argues, the combination of lower and upper class in the same political sphere generates a political equilibrium for which there is the necessary degree of popular participation within the activities of the republic. Not only were the lower included in the political participation, but also they contributed to balance the more influential power in the hand of the *Patrizi*. The result was that of a balance of power in a way that prevent from the prevarication of the upper classes [233]. However, as we will comprehend in the following lines, the figure of the prince would be the vital element that would have to act in order to attain the maintenance of the state.

As Skinner argues, a key concept in the Machiavellian analysis is the idea of *virtù*. Machiavelli articulated this idea in two different versions, moving the focus from the figure of population to those of the prince [234]. The prince must be able to make use of the wrong according to the situation, therefore he is required to demonstrate his intellectual abilities to deal with the use of the wrong [235]. This entails that there was no unique solution in the hands of the prince as he had to act according to the challenges he would face. In Machiavelli's view, the figure of the prince had to be a balanced one: he was the individual who had to demonstrate a proper balance where courage, fortitude, reason, and temperament had to intertwine according to the challenges. Satisfaction and content had to be achieved over hatred and dissatisfaction that would only determine a condition of

[232] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume II: Renaissance Virtues*, pp.160-206.
[233] Q. Skinner, *The Foundation of the Modern Political Thought, Volume I: The Renaissance*, pp.178-181.
[234] *Ibidem*.
[235] N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1532, Chapter 15. Italian version by Giuseppe Lisio, Firenze, Sansoni Editore, pp.92-94. Retrieved from: Il Principe.

distrust over him [236]. This point is crucial as it recalls, and it will depict, the experience of both the former British colonies as well as well as the path of the Louverturian age in Haiti. In principle, both the British Crown and Louverture enjoyed the trusts and satisfaction of the population, but the adoption of a progressively centralized form of government reveals the discontent of both the former colonies and the Haitian population. In this perspective, Skinner highlights how Machiavelli proposed a combination of *virtù* not only from the prince but also from the population. Thus, the concept of *virtù* refers to the ability to do whatever is required to attain the eternal glory regardless of the positive or negative character of the actions, Skinner clarifies[237]. Here we should ask a question: what is a proper tyranny according to Machiavelli? If the prince (or the ruler, more generally) is required to make use of his powerful strength and abilities to maintain the integrity of the state even at the cost of being considered a cruel entity, then he may exercise the power for his own interests while pretending to do so for the good of the population. Machiavelli provides us with the answer: the common good and the maintenance of the state is always the priority for a good ruler. It is within the exercise of the power that the proper balance must be achieved: as Machiavelli affirms in the *Discorsi*, a tyranny arises when the population is exceedingly concerned with the liberty and the nobles with their thirst for power [238]. Viroli certifies this interpretation by claiming that when the individuals fail in fulfilling their obligations as citizens, then a clever and powerful "villain" will take over and dominate.[239]

Machiavelli's conception of the perfect ruler could be referred to through a specific figure, namely Pope Alexander IV's son Cesare Borgia. As Pocock argues, Machiavelli's admiration for Cesare is unquestionable to the point that it has been widely agreed that the key hero in *The Prince* was precisely him[240]. Viroli reinforces this thesis by arguing that Machiavelli,

[236] *Ibidem*, Chapters 17-19, pp.97-119.
[237] Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp.64-67.
[238] N. Machiavelli, *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, Book 1, Paragraph 40, p.107.
[239] M. Viroli, *Scegliere il principe. I Consigli di Machiavelli al cittadino elettore*, p.7.
[240] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republic Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975, pp.173-176.

after meeting him on two diplomatic missions in 1502, remained impressed by his military and oral abilities, as well as his knowledge to master the art of simulation [241] [242]. Precisely, Machiavelli praised Cesare Borgia in and his quality as a ruler: he argues that Borgia was often considered cruel, but it was within this cruelty that he managed to reunified Romagna even at the cost of being considered as so [243]. Machiavelli extolled his abilities to remain unaffected by the negative judgements if the goal to attain was to maintain the cohesiveness among the subjects, because a ruler had to exercise the power even in an authoritarian manner if required [244]. Viroli encourages to learn a key lesson from Machiavelli and his ideas: he might have had his own personal interests and ambitions, but such a personal goal should never be in contrast with the common good and well-being of the community, state, or nations[245]. The point at issue seems to be quite straightforward: the rulers must act towards the well-being of the community, regardless of the consideration as a cruel leader. In the *Discorsi,* we may find an even stronger and more direct passage that summarises his thought: a single individual main even retain the whole power alone as long as he exercises it not for himself, but rather for the "(…) common good (…) for the fatherland"[246].

As the following chapter will reveal, it appears that both the American and Haitian reflected some key concept of Machiavelli. Haiti may be considered to have been forced to maintain a sort of centralized political approach through his Prince since the island would appear to be weak as it was mainly an ancestorial French agricultural laboratory with the majority of the population composed by slaves, and it only relied on agriculture and not much else. Conversely, the U.S entailed a different perspective: the thirteen states were part of a more autonomous and developed nation, with a solidified social ladder in which the whites dominated and the blacks were basically considered a different and detached orbit within

[241] M. Viroli, *Redeeming the Prince: The Meaning of Machiavelli's Masterpiece*, Princeton (N.J), Princeton University Press, 2014, p.72.
[242] M. Viroli, *Niccolo's Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli,* p.57.
[243] N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter 17, pp.97-102.
[244] M. Viroli, *Scegliere il principe. I Consigli di Machiavelli al cittadino elettore,* p.70.
[245] *Ibidem*, p.5.
[246] N. Machiavelli, *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, Book 1, Paragraph 9, p.34.

the same society. In the American context it seems that not only the leaders were responsible of the implementation of a tyrannical regime, but also the population contributed to the crystallization of the tyrannical tendencies within the American society. Hence, if analysed under the Machiavellian lens, we could conclude that the former American colonies certainly lived under a tyrannical regime which only pursue the enrichment of the motherland rather than the actual well-being and common good of the colonies. The following chapter will provide more details as to the interests of both Jefferson and Louverture, which would be in line with what has been argued so far. On the American front, it appeared that the good of the fatherland was safeguarded and achieved, especially in economic terms. More precisely, southern states were heavily dependent on agricultural economy, which required labour force to work the lands and provide the goods for the market. At the same time, it may seem that, within this necessity, the pursue of the personal ambitions of the rulers to exploit slaves would prevail over the real common good as slavery and the slave trade would still be a vital component of the American economy. As to the Haitian front, Louverture might be considered in Machiavellian terms the Haitian prince, who would guide the population towards an unexpected triumph over the former French governors. At the same time, it happened that personal interests and needs of the ruler were preferred to the ones of the population, which permits to delineate the principal characteristics of a tyrant or tyranny. In simpler terms, both the American and Haitian governments, through their representatives, would share some princely features at least until when the personal interests would not take over the intent of governing for the good of the society.

2.5- Thomas Hobbes: the challenge of the popular discontent.

Born in Westport, England, on the 5th of April 1588, Hobbes instruction was initially rooted on the classical and humanistic studies[247]. However, during the 1630s he began to sever the ties with the humanist side of his education and become more interests in mathematics and natural sciences[248]. Hobbes then developed his principal political theories of liberties and the states by discrediting his humanistic background which made him a strong opponent of the Renascence. In terms of liberty, Hobbes offered a sample of his rejection of humanistic theories by demolishing the Renaissance view of political and social subordination and dependence as a driver of unfreedom. If they based their political philosophy on the ground that the citizens had to be equipped with the same degree of political participation, in Hobbes the only condition that determines unfreedom is the physical impediment to motion[249].

In terms of liberty of the individuals, Machiavelli offerred a solid ground to extend the analysis to a further conceptualization of the same concepts. As Skinner clarifies, in Machiavelli the idea of freedom is that of a barely-achievable condition in a government ruled by a prince [250]. As explained some lines above, the prince has to act according to the challenges to show his *virtù* and his rational abilities, but he is not always supposed to act as a good character. In other words, the prince is legitimate to use the wrong when required and regardless of the consideration his action will receive [251]. As Skinner notes, the humanist view of the state found its most relevant application in Machiavelli's works and ideas for which, basically, the ruler had to maintain the state. From this starting point, Skinner reveals that Hobbes' vision of the politics developed in complete antithesis with this humanist

[247] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume III*: *Hobbes and Civil Science*, Cambridge (UK)-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.5-38.
[248] *Ibidem*.
[249] *Ibidem*.
[250] Q. Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.69
[251] Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, p.66.

vision as, for Hobbes, the ruler was the state[252]. Therefore, both Machiavelli and Hobbes may appear to share similar views as to the maintenance of political stability, but they differ radically in providing the solution to the attainment of the goal. Hobbes stands out for his radical naturalism that may present some similar features to Machiavelli, but it also differs for specific reasons: both Machiavelli and Hobbes shared a similar way of concerning the centralization of power in a way that, if aimed to the preservation and salvation of the state, then the hypothetical authoritarian nature of the government would not be called into question. However, as we have comprehended, Machiavelli was a convinced supporter of the republican form of government, while Hobbes completely rejects it. In 1651, Hobbes published his work *The Leviathan*, where the essence of his radicalism developed during the revolutionary years in England where the individuals were living in a state of complete dereliction and delegitimization [253].

In Hobbes, the rejection of humanism principles is underscored by Skinner in a way that permits to establish a critical point of analysis. Hobbes, as Sommerville argues, had a convinced materialist conception that rejected the distinction between body and soul [254]. Not surprisingly, the liberty for Hobbes consists of the limitation of the individuals' physical liberty: a moral and philosophical conception of more "spiritual" impediments seems to remain outside the conception of liberty in Hobbes [255]. In his deeply contradictory definition of liberty, Hobbes reiterated his idea in the *Leviathan*'s chapters fourteen and twenty-one, where he defined liberty as the lack of external impediments which refers to absence of opposition conceived as "external impediment to motion"[256]. Despite this, Hobbes complicates his conception of liberty by arguing that a free man is basically an individual which is not prevented from the exercise of his "(…) will, desire and inclination to do"[257]

[252] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume II: Renaissance Virtues*, p.9.
[253] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Anglican Tradition*, pp.371-380.
[254] J. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992, p.166.
[255] Q. Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, pp.124-136.
[256] T. Hobbes, *The Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, London,1651. Edition reprinted and published by Oxford University Press, Chapters 14 and 21, at p.99 and p.161.Retrieved from: The Leviathan.
[257] *Ibidem,* Chapter 21, pp.162-163.

but he also argued that liberty, if considered from its proper sense, it must refer to the corporal liberty from, for instance, chains or prisons. Therefore, if we would consider this intricated analysis of the Hobbesian idea of liberty, we should also consider what Skinner clarified: the idea of acting willingly and freely is the same concept defined in different ways [258]. It is within this peculiar idea of liberty that both the first and third chapters can find contextualisation. Hobbes permits to claim that both the former thirteen colonies and the Haitian population willingly submitted their sovereignty respectively to the motherland and to Louverture. The former British colonies were limited mainly from a legislative perspective, in which the motherland consistently imposed its legislation over the subjects; however, these dynamics seem to properly embody the Hobbesian conception of the monarchy. On the contrary, the Hobbesian conceptualization of liberty will find a more precise application in the third chapter as it will reveal that both under the republican United States of America and the Louverturian government, there is a huge limitation of physical liberties as slavery composed a relevant part of the respective societies.

As Hobbes argued, in a monarchy they were all slaves [259]. This powerful affirmation permits to delve deeper into the Hobbesian conception of the most proper forms of government and liberty. Starting from the roots, Strauss affirms that Hobbes was as a convinced supporter of the monarchy and an opposer of the democracy[260]. This claim could be even enough to summarize the wider perspective in which he contextualises his peculiar analysis. As Skinner reveals, Hobbes drew from no other political ideas of his time, which makes his vision even more contradictory and sophisticated [261]. Moreover, as Sommerville notes, Hobbes tracked and followed a completely different path than the one shared by most of the contractualists of his time. Indeed, Hobbes' vision of the centralization of the power in the hand of the individual, or individuals, determines the basis of the Commonwealth in which the individuals are no more than subjects, which seems to be enough to distinguish

[258] Q. Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*, p.138.
[259] T. Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Chapter 19, p.252.
[260] L. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Genesis*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press,1996, p.59.
[261] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume III*: *Hobbes and Civil Science*, p.264.

them from slaves though. Precisely, as Sommerville claims, Hobbes believed that all the individuals in the commonwealth had to renounce to their sovereign rights for a wider collective good. The main purpose was, subsequently, to achieve and preserve peace in order to guarantee the self-preservation; however, the manner conceived by Hobbes was to empower the legitimate sovereign to exercise his power in a sort of "extreme" way as the population authorizes all the sovereign's actions [262]. Therefore, the achievement of peace and self-preservation was conceived by Hobbes as the purpose to achieve through the delegation of the consent to a sovereign, regardless of if the sovereignty was embodied by an individual or a multitude of individuals [263]. Skinner clarifies Hobbes' position as to the ruler being the state of the person by noting that, for Hobbes, the ruler could be considered the state because the sovereign is an actor that played the role of the state and so he acted in his name.[264]

A key part of the Hobbesian conception as to the most adequate form of government can be found in the fact that the philosopher shared a peculiar vision of tyranny. Specifically, he believed that the idea of tyranny only referred to a situation where the individuals would be irritated by their sovereign as is a bad execution of monarchy [265]. Therefore, it seems the idea of degeneration of power as the consequence leading to a tyranny finds contextualization also in the Hobbesian view. For Hobbes, the sovereignty could lie in one or more individuals and based on that, subsequent forms of government would arise. The three forms distinguished by Hobbes were monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, with tyranny being only the way the population called monarchy when discontent [266]. Subsequently, this seems to be the perfect ground to "justify" the fact that the former American colonies denounced the British Government. However, according to Sommerville, Hobbes refuted the idea that the king of England was subjected to the law and

[262] J. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context,* pp.57-60.
[263] T. Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Chapter 19, pp.142.
[264] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume II: Renaissance Virtues*, p.403.
[265] T. Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Chapter 19, p.142, and p.551.
[266] *Ibidem*.

could not impose taxation without consent [267]. Therefore, the Hobbesian doctrine seems to reject the definition of tyranny conceived by the former thirteen colonies since they voluntarily recognised the authority of the British Crown in a covenant through which they delegated their sovereignty.

Hobbes's conception of tyranny appears to be of peculiar application, which reinforces the example of the water freezing point mentioned in the premises of this chapter. On the one hand, the fact the King could not be criticised for imposing taxes without consent seems to frustrate the colonial cause against the imposition taxation without consent and representation. The British Crown retained the sovereign power over the colonies, which had accepted their permanence within the empire as they would benefit from economic stability and political order. At the same time, what we should learn from the Hobbesian theory is that tyranny could still be linked to the malaise of the population due to a negative implementation and execution of the power in the hands of the rulers, such as in the case of the former colonies. In this way, all the grievances mentioned in the American *Declaration of Independence* maintains its essence since the tyrannical regime was not implemented for the salvation and self-preservation of the state but for the exploitation of the colonial lands to increase the imperial British prestige worldwide. Hobbes also claimed that physical prevention was the only condition for which liberty was limited, and so the U.S and Haiti would not escape this reality because slaves in their territories were enchained, and so their motion was literally impeded. This means that there was no violation of freedom in the case of former colonies because the individuals were not hold together through chains like slaves. At the same time, in Haiti Louverture would lead the population through an outstanding revolutionary path which might be obscured by the economic precariousness of the island which may relate to the preservation of the state and therefore justifying his attitudes. Despite not being a monarchy, Haiti would have in Louverture the supreme monarch of the island entrusted by the population (in a condition of "distress") to execute the duties to ensure self-preservation and order of the colony, even at the risk of

[267] J. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes*, p.167.

implementing a centralized and authoritarian regime. However, the following chapter will reveal that both in the U.S and Haiti such measures would exceed the mere salvation and self-preservation of the states, which means that there might be features of both Jefferson and Louverture's political activity that may be contained in the Hobbesian conceptions of tyranny.

2.6- John Locke: tyranny and the exercise of power beyond rights.

According to Baylin, many philosophers and writers influenced the American Founding Fathers due to their Enlightenment background. Among these, one of the most influential, if not the most, was John Locke [268]. Precisely, Locke's prominence in the American context was linked to the *Two Treatises of Government*, a work composed of two political treatises that the author secretly published in 1689 which remained unknown until almost the onset of the revolution [269]. As the following chapter will reveal, the reinterpretation of Locke's masterpiece was strategically executed by the American Founding Fathers in order to maintain the degree of subordination of the slave, since they were a key component of the agricultural-based economy in the United States of America, particularly in the southern states.

As claimed by Hill, Locke's political philosophy constituted a radical break from the Hobbesian doctrine of the ruler the main expression of the state [270]. On the one hand, Hobbes believed in the absolute and unlimited authority of the ruler which must be exercised in order to attain the protection of the subjects; at the same time, the only condition was that the ruler had to be recognised by the subjects conceding the sovereignty [271]. Conversely, the same Hill notes that Locke went beyond the idea of the government as rigid authority and embodied key characteristics of the revolutionary writers, philosophers, and thinkers of his

[268] B. Baylin, *The Ideological Origin of The Declaration,* pp.32-34
[269] T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots*, pp.130-133.
[270] C. Hill, *The Century of the Revolution:1603-1704*, New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 1961, pp.298-305.
[271] *Ibidem*, p.175.

time. Among key thinkers such as Bacon and Bayle, Locke contributed to give prominence to social, moral, and political principles which would contribute to the process of "cultural" rupture with the previous century [272]. The individual would become way more relevant and influential in the writings of the Enlightenment authors, as both Locke and Paine demonstrate. For instance, Locke's political philosophy recalled the conception of liberty for which the individuals were free from being arrested arbitrarily or taxed without giving the consent [273]. Laslett emphasize Locke's prominence in foreseeing and anticipating the social change his age. He claims that Locke focused on the relevance of the legislative power, which was conceived as the "necessary mark" of all the civil societies, which had to preserve the liberty of the individuals within the society and represent them all [274]. Moreover, Ashcraft's contribution is vital to support the claim of the centrality of the individual within the active political sphere in the Lockean political theory. Precisely, Ashcraft notes that the election of a legislative assembly would assume a central role in Locke's political theory for which the consent given to the government was vital for the individuals in order to be active participants of the political life of the state [275].

Locke not only played a vital role in embodying the key vital elements of the Enlightenment, but he also revolutionized the conception of the individuals within the political sphere. As Tully highlights, Locke's key move was to focus thoroughly on the individuals and make them the central element of his politics since political power must lie in the hands of the people, not in centralized, authoritarian political entities [276]. Therefore, the essence of Locke's political and ideological theory of governments is presented in the *Two Treatises of Government*, in which Locke provided a sort of guide to reject the centralized, tyrannical

[272] J. I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790*, New York, Oxford University Press ,2011, pp.10-14.
[273] C. Hill, *The Century of the Revolution:1603-1704*, pp.298-305.
[274] J.Locke (1632-1704), P. Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government,* edited by Peter Laslett, Cambridge (UK)- New York, Cambridge University Press, Student Edition, 1988, pp.19-20.
[275] R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, Milton Park (UK), Routledge Library Editions: Political Science, Vol.17, 2010, p.8
[276] J. Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.18-29.

government by rulers in favour of a more disciplined, collective, and democratic approach to politics. Specifically, Locke believed in a state of equality for which all the individuals (defined by him as creatures of the same species) had to enjoy the same conditions of equality by nature "(…) without Subordination or Subjection" [277]. At the same time, the degree of subordination or subjection still had to remain as it was considered a vital element by Locke to balance the political sphere with the freedom one. Therefore, it appears that Locke believed that people were not entitled to live in a perpetual state of absolute freedom based on the absence of any law that aims to coordinate the actions of the community in which the population reunites. Conferred upon the government through the consent of the individuals, the legislative power must be oriented to guarantee the preservation of human dignity through respect for what should be considered their fundamental rights, namely "(…) Life, Health, Liberty or Possession."[278]. To resume this key passage, Locke aimed to make the Rule of Law prevail over the rule by law, which means that the individuals were required to abide by the law in a way that, at the same time, would still maintain their influence within the political sphere and not make them passive entities.

The respect for the fundamental human rights inspired the American Founding Fathers to the point that they articulated the preamble of the 1776 Declaration of Independence on the grounds of some Lockean pillars. Precisely, they declared that human beings "are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[279]. Not only did they mention the fundamental human rights that Locke aimed to preserve, but they also stated that the only way to preserve them was to institute a government among men which acquires its power by the consent of the individuals [280]. Nevertheless, the preservation of liberty was arbitrarily implemented within American society as the maintenance of slavery heavily limited the application of the

[277] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government,* Book 2, Chapter 2, Paragraph 4, from The Works of John Locke, A New Edition, London, 1823, Vol. V, prepared by Rod Hay for the McMaster University Archive of the History of Economic Thought, p.106. Retrieved from: Two Treatises of Government.
[278] *Ibidem*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Paragraph 6, p.107.
[279] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.
[280] *Ibidem*.

Lockean doctrine. Likewise, in the Haitian context, the revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture failed to guarantee the preservation of liberty due to the island's plantation-based economy, which required a large labour force to meet its economic needs. After formally manumitting both slavery and servitude within the Haitian society, Louverture would fail to apply it to the practice, with a subsequent reinforcement of the dynamics of slavery.

In addition, Dunn argues that one of the pillars of the Lockean doctrine was the right to resistance. The human being is the protagonist in the Lockean solution to resist and overthrow a tyrannical regime, which is determined by the imposition of power and force over its subjects [281]. Locke articulated his thoughts on behalf of the plural, not the singular. He conceived the population as a conjunction of individuals, and, as such, there would be no justification for any individual to exercise despotically the power conferred upon him to safeguard his interests. In the Lockean philosophy, the preservation of mankind is a vital goal that had to be achieved through a proper balance of legislative power. The regulation of daily life within society, rather than within a specific category of the population, is what legislative power is supposed to achieve. Therefore, the existence of the population could not be subjected to the use of a despotic and "(…) arbitrary power of another [individual]"[282]. Not surprisingly, life and fortune are an intrinsic part of the human existence in Lockean thought. Therefore, except for the exception in a case deriving from a just war, slavery was not conceived to be part of the society designed by Locke [283]. Subsequently, the central position of individuals and the safeguard of fundamental human rights in the Lockean perspective legitimize the popular revolution in the case of a centralized, authoritarian government.

[281] J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. An Historical Account of the Argument of the ' Two Treatises of Government'*, Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp.165-184.
[282] J. Locke, Two Treatises of Government, Book 2, Chapter 11, Paragraph 135, p.163.
[283] *Ibidem*, Paragraph 85, p.140.

Dunn provides a vital contribution to further clarify the barriers that Locke placed between what we could conceive as rational and irrational behaviours, which evolved through the rejection of the use of force in favour of the law as a mean for humans to avoid the state of war. According to Dunn, Locke focused on the limitation of the use of force as it was conceived as the instrument in the hand of beasts, so human beings turn into beasts when they make use of force. Therefore, it is through the use of brutal, physical, and irrational force that the peace within the community will be damaged and limited [284].

Nevertheless, the contribution provided by Ashcraft reveals the contradictory nature of the Lockean use of force. He claims that Locke referred to the creation of a state of war if force was used, but he dwelled on a particular statement[285]. Indeed, Locke introduced the use of force focusing on the legitimization of the authority to use it: if the use of force exceeds the power the law equips the ruler with, automatically the individual in question would result to be acting beyond the power he retains, and so "without authority" [286]. Therefore, the question we should ask is: if we consider the fundamental rights, such as freedom and life, can the use force over the subjects be considered from a wider perspective, which would entail a more psychological and "moral" point of view, and thus extending the reasoning to the concept of slavery? During the permanence under the British Monarchy, former thirteen colonies directly experience the use of force, both from a legislative and military perspective. The abuse of legislative power was considered, in Lockean terms, a mere attempt to safeguard the economic interest of the British Monarchy. Moreover, as already mentioned in the first chapter, the degeneration of the tensions between the tyrannical British government and the former colonies reached a military dimension that lasted even well beyond the 1776 Declaration of Independence. We also should recall the Jefferson's personal writings where he accused the British Government to have deliberately attempted to "enslave" the American population. However, as the following chapter will thoroughly

[284] J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. An Historical Account of the Argument of the ' Two Treatises of Government'*, pp.165-184.
[285] R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, p.199.
[286] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments,* Book 2, Chapter 18, Paragraph 202, p.193.

examine, words and epithets referring to slavery would not limit only to a context where the American population passively experienced it, but it would extend also to the new republican American society that actively maintained such an institution after becoming independent. The American and the Haitian leaders would implement two centralized regimes which reflects key features of the tyrants. In the next chapter we will notice that both governments had relevant interests in the maintenance of a slavery-based economy, which significantly hampered the implementation of the Lockean perspective that tended to increase the bias toward the conception of those governments as tyrannical regimes. It is within the use of force that Locke rejected the intensity and centralized nature of power in the hands of rulers: he was in favour of implementing "law" as an instrument to guarantee liberty against oppression and subjection of the individual [287].

Therefore, the "law" appears to be required to overcome the injuries resulting from the use of the repressive power and force in the hand of the rulers. Laws are necessary to mitigate the injuries resulting from the misuse of repressive power and force by those in power. However, it seems that this principle was applied only in theory, or at least not consistently in practice: the American and Haitian revolutions aimed to defeat the repressive power that subjected the American colonies and the Haitian population. The tyrannical regimes were thus the common enemy to overthrow. Nevertheless, the implementation of the new American and Haitian revolutionary political project will reveal just a different facet of what are likely to be perceived as tyrannical regimes. Therefore, as Dunn underscores, the enslavement of the population is the direct consequence of the centralization of the power and force in the hands of the governor [288]. Locke faced this situation in the society in which he lived, and he provided a direct solution to the problem. The government had to be pivot around the centrality of the population, which could not be free from any laws, but it had to create a community in which consent would be given to be governed in order to regulate the society.

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[287] J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'*, pp.165-184.
[288] *Ibidem*.

To recall the key distinction between Rule of Law and rule by law provided in the introduction, Locke seems provide an accurate demonstration of the fact that the Rule of Law should prevail over the rule by law to avoid tyrannies and oppressive regimes. According to Locke, the population had the specific right to rebel against their rulers in the event of a violation of their fundamental rights. To recall the language of the Declaratory Act, this Lockean solution could not be applied in all the cases whatsoever. Then, what are the circumstances that authorizes the revolution? According to Locke, the answer lies in the perpetration of the violation. The possibility of having a rebellion legitimized by the contest in the aftermath of few, scarce, and mild violations of those rights in the exercise of governmental power is exceedingly low. Instead, as Dunn underscores, the moral quality of the rulers determines the outcome: the more the violations of fundamental rights and the perpetuation of violence occur, the more legitimate is for the individuals to embrace the rebellion[289]. Thus, Locke authorized the population to overthrow the tyrannical regime in case of consistent perpetration of the "(…) long train of abuses, prevarication, and artifices"[290]. This is a key passage in the Lockean perspective to deal with a tyrannical regime, which also constitutes an example of how Locke inspired the American Founding Fathers as they readapted it in "(…) long train of abuses and usurpation (…)[291]. Therefore, the former thirteen colonies seemed to be legitimate to embrace the revolution to dissolve their political ties with the motherland as a result of more than a decade of abuses and prevarications occurred as a consequence of the thirst of power and prestige the motherland aimed to achieved.

The rule by law may prevail over the Rule of Law even when the consent is given by the population. As Tully argues, Locke played a vital role in underscoring the relevance of the population and their consent within the political activity of the community. To do so, the

[289] J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke. An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'*, pp.165-184.
[290] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments,* Book 2, Chapter 19, Paragraph 225, p.203.
[291] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.

political power has to be exercised by a corporate body, in which the population will have representatives to whom they delegate their sovereignty [292]. In a tyrannical regime, power is exercised in an arbitrary, authoritarian, and centralised manner by the tyrant. The same situation may occur even when a body of individuals is charged by consent to implement the power. In that case, the fact that consent is given to a body of individuals does not automatically prevent the implementation of a tyrannical regime. As the first chapter clarified, the former thirteen colonies recognised the sovereignty of the British government, but they were still forced to denounce the abuses perpetuated by the government for more than a decade. However, once they declared their independence from the British Empire, they failed to implement a democratic government as they barely opposed the maintenance of slavery. Similarly, Louverture would gain consensus among the Haitians, but he would use the popular satisfaction as a key factor to reinforce his tyrannical regime. As the following chapter will prove, abuses and usurpation still occur even when the consent is given. Both the American and Haitian economies heavily relied on agriculture, which subsequently required a significant labour force to work the land. Hence, the reinforcement of slavery confirms that the interests of the governors prevailed over the ideals promoted by the Lockean doctrine.

To better understand the Haitian perspective, Ashcraft provides a vital focus on a peculiar concept introduced by Locke, the one of the "fathers", to contextualise and determine the sphere of action and authority of the ruler: Locke believed that the father had no sovereign authority over this prole [293]. Specifically, as Locke affirmed, a father has "no rights over his sons' property or actions"[294]. Here comes a crucial point in the context of Haiti: as the third chapter will reveal, Louverture often defined himself as the father of his children, over whom he maintained a strong and authoritative approach. In the Lockean perspective, this tendency would exceed the sphere of action of the father, not from a biological point of view but rather from a political one. Indeed, Ashcraft explains Locke's position by clarifying two

[292] J. Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, pp.18-29.
[293] R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, pp.152-154
[294] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments,* Book 2, Chapter 6, Paragraph 69, p.134

fundamental issues. First, natural law obligations prevail over the sphere of action of the father, and so does the respect for the children's rights over his authority to enforce his power in a way that can endanger the respect of their rights. Moreover, the authority of the father over his children is only temporary, not eternal, and it ceases to have an effect when children would develop rationality [295]. Therefore, if such a guiding figure was required to be temporary, we may notice from the following chapter that Louverture's paternal rhetoric was often coupled with and implemented through tyrannical practices. The Haitian leader would often manipulate his "children" by means of his highly developed communication skills which would allow him to acquire the consent by the population to exercise an unlimited and unrestricted power to satisfy his personal needs.

After giving prominence to the centrality of the individual within the Lockean political thoughts, we may ask if Locke provides a specific definition of what a tyranny is. Essentially, the philosopher believed that a tyrannical regime begins when "wherever law ends (…)"[296]. This powerful affirmation seems to be at least vague and misleading if contextualized within the context in which the former American colonies were subjects. Specifically, the Declaratory Act formally recognised the British Government the right to impose legally binding law in "(…) all the cases whatsoever"[297]. Thus, if tyranny arises when the law ends, the Declaratory Act seems to have set no barriers to the end of the law. Throughout this analysis, we should have realized that the centralization of power in the hands of those individuals who only act on behalf of their own interests, even at the cost of using the power of the beast, was the enemy to defeat. Therefore, pursuing the private interests of the rulers rather than the one of the population is a powerful affirmation of what a tyrant is according to the Lockean view. It is so within this perspective that Locke's definition of tyranny will be completed. Locke believed that tyranny was the exercise of the power "beyond right (…) not for the good of those who are under it but for [the ruler] own separate advantage"[298].

[295] R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, pp.152-154.
[296] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments,* Book 2, Chapter 18, Paragraph 202, p.193.
[297] Great Britain: The Parliament, *The Declaratory Act*.
[298] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Governments,* Book 2, Chapter 18, Paragraph 199, p.192.

Can the "separate advantage" be defined, or at least can we circumscribe the rather abstract "end of law" to a more concrete context? According to what Locke affirms in his work, the imposition of an arbitrary and irregular commands from those owning the power (like as the *Decemviri* in Rome) is an example of what he considered to go beyond the limits imposed by the laws. Subsequently, the commission of the acts became illegal when it violated people's properties, life and freedom[299]. Once again, Locke's conception of tyranny permits to determine key common characteristics which are helpful to define what a proper tyrant could be conceived: political leaders/rulers who only prefer their personal interests instead of the good and well-being of the population, even at the cost of exceeding the limits imposed by the law, which would subsequently violate the respect of the fundamental human rights, namely liberties, properties and life.

Ashcraft notes that the proper balance must be achieved to prevent from the implementation of a tyrannical regime: rules have to be written and implemented, but it has to happen within the boundaries of the legitimacy, where the consent to the government is provided by the population and not brutally acquired by the rulers [300]. Hence, Locke pursued the preservation of human mankind through a central and active role of the population, which entrusted the government to regulate society. Therefore, by conceding part of their sovereignty to governmental entities, the burden of conserving such sovereignty and respecting the fundamental rights lies with the rulers, who must act in the interests of the population.

2.7- Thomas Paine: closing the door to the eternal enemy of liberty.

Thomas Paine directly lived and experience the onset of the American Revolution as he became the chief writer and editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine since he moved in Philadelphia in 1774 after losing his job as a tax collector in England [301]. Considered by J. Israel a "giant" of the radical enlightenment writers, Paine contributed to radically change

[299] *Ibidem,* Book 2, Chapter 18, Paragraphs 201-209, pp.192-196.
[300] R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, p.160.
[301] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, p.154.

radical the social and political dynamics of the American colonies [302]. Among the key characteristics of the radical enlightenment, Israel argues we may conceive the powerful package through which becoming more familiar with the key points of such thinkers, Paine included, as a conjunction of elements such as equality, democracy, and freedom which entailed both the physical and moral dimension, so corporal liberty as well as freedom of opinion and thoughts[303]. Precisely, Paine's relevance became even more noticeable to the public in 1776, when he published his pamphlets *Common Sense* where he directly denounced the tyrannical features of the British Monarchy and prompted the colonies to achieve their independence from the motherland.[304]

The *Common Sense* constituted the ultimate game changer that prompted the American revolutionaries to take concrete actions against the motherland. The pamphlet does not provide a universal definition of the concept of tyranny, but it directly addresses British King George III as a tyrant. Moreover, it works as an exhortation to the population to realize that they had to cut ties with the motherland in order to achieve their own, sovereign government, otherwise they would remain subjected to a long-lasting tyranny. Despite not dealing with the Haitian Revolution as he specifically addressed the American context, Thomas Paine played a key role in providing a solid guide against the tyrannical regime that may be adapted generally to more contexts in more general terms, namely the Haitian one. His pamphlet contributes to highlight that an authoritarian and repressive government would not lead to democratic government, but instead it would limit the implementation of a government based on the sovereignty of the individuals and their human rights.

The pamphlet spread in a context full of tensions that had already reached the military dimension Paine's main purpose was to stimulate the population to ponder upon the urgent necessity to write a new chapter in the history of the colonies given that "The last cord is

[302] J. I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790,* pp.10-14.
[303] *Ibidem*.
[304] *Ibidem*, pp.450-454.

now broken" [305]. The philosopher encouraged the Americans to ponder upon the fact that, after the Lexington and Concord upheavals, it was no longer tolerable to deal with the injuries perpetrated by the British government and stimulated the population to believe to the establishment of a new political reality as "A government of our own [was] our natural right (…)"[306]. With his pamphlets, Paine paved the way towards the formalization of the fracture with the motherland, that would be achieved only a few months later. Published on the 10th of January 1776 in Philadelphia, the pamphlet had an enormous success as Taylor claims that more than 150.000 copies were sold by June 1776, which is an astonishing number if considered that the population amounted to 2 million, slaves excluded. Moreover, the fact that only seven months after the publication of Paine's masterpiece both the Lee Resolution and the Declaration of Independence were already signed and ratified by the Congress is the undeniable proof that the pamphlets radically changed the dynamics of the dispute[307].

Initially, as Maier claims, the Americans were at least sceptical, not to say frightened, to set an independent government since they barely had concrete plans for their independent future [308]. The main purpose of Paine's pamphlets was to stimulate the part of the American who were sceptical about the implementation of independence and to shift the political focus away from the reconciliation and move it on the independence and the future government[309] . For Paine, it was the only way to defeat the British tyranny: had the colonies refused the independence, they would have gifted an "open door" to the British Government to consolidate even more their already long-lasting "eternal tyranny"[310]. Paine reiterates the idea that the independence was the only feasible solution to deal with the tyrannical British government, defined by Paine himself as the "(…) enemy to liberty", the

[305] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, 10th of January 1776, edited by E. Haldeman-Julius, published by Girard, Kansas, 1920, p.59. Retrieved from: The Common Sense.
[306] *Ibidem*, p.57.
[307] A. Taylor, *The American Revolutions*, pp.153-154.
[308] P. Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, New York, Vintage Books, 1998, pp.56-58.
[309] *Ibidem.*
[310] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, p.58.

one who contributed to maintain the tyrannical features of the British Constitution [311]. The philosopher argued that the achievement of the independence was a matter of time, that would be achieved sooner or later.

Rosenfeld contributes to support the view of the *Common Sense* as a game changer in the American Revolution for his specific contribution in prompting a dramatic shift in the public opinion and in the conception of the American national identity [312]. Rosenfeld argues that the idea of the population as the new sovereign entity in the future union of states was the point core of the whole pamphlet, which steered the public opinion towards the implementation of a new sovereign and democratic regime within which there was no conceived room for any kings. Therefore, the power exercised by the previous tyrant would then be transferred to the population, which would retain the sovereignty. However, as the following chapter will reveal, the implementation of the new democratic American society would not occur in universal terms because not all the human beings were supposed to be part of the active population that would exercise the sovereignty. A vital limitation was applied: slaves were not conceived to be part of such a democratic and non-tyrannical project. Similarly, the Haitian population was free but enslaved as well: Paine does not deal with the Haitian Revolution for chronological reasons, but his principles could apply even to it. Although from a different perspective, the Haitian Revolution was rooted on the same ideal of freedom promoted by Paine, which would lead the former slavery-based population to break the chains of slavery in the name of freedom. However, such freedom would be only a theoretical achievement rather than a concrete outcome, which would allow to compare both regimes on the ground of the limitations imposed to the liberties of the respective population.

Paine had vital mission that he aimed to attain through the *Common Sense*: he aimed to create a sense of communal understanding based on basic principles that will be common to the

[311] *Ibidem*, pp.19-50.

[312] S. Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History*, Cambridge (MA)- London, England, Harvard University Press, 2011, pp.137-143.

individuals, which will play a vital role when a political crisis might arise [313]. Recalling the already-mentioned principle from the first chapter of this thesis, the philosopher argued that "a government of our own is our natural right"[314], which contrasts with the dynamics of subordination that determined the relationship between the former thirteen colonies and the motherland. Paine encouraged the population to embrace their freedom from the tyrannical chains of the British Empire in what should be conceived as a stance of the centrality of the individual in the political sphere of their future nation. Notwithstanding, this inclusivity would turn into exclusivity as not the whole population could have access to such a democratic project. By definition, tyranny refers to the imposition of an authoritarian regime over the population which limits the individuals' freedom and compels them to abide by the rigid laws established by the rulers. Therefore, if we consider the long list of parliamentary acts and facts that prompted the American Founding Fathers to define the British Government as a tyranny, we may agree on the fact that the motherland was actually a tyrannical regime. At the same time, much of these similar dynamics would be found also in the post-revolutionary American context and Haitian regime under the leadership of Louverture, where arbitrary use of justice and imposition of repressive and authoritarian laws and rules were common practices. Therefore, Paine's words can be used to describe and summarise the regimes in which both the Haitian population (the vast majority) and a segment of the American one were trapped. Precisely, Paine defined King George III as "(…) an enemy to liberty [who] discovered a thirst for arbitrary power (…)" who turned the population into "(…) prisoners without hope of redemption"[315].

As Rosenfeld notes, Paine's ability lied on the fact that he wrote a manifesto that prompted community of ordinary people to establish a new political order based on common perceptions, judgments and assumption that created the perception of a common identity to all the individuals in the American states [316]. For Paine, the population had the power to

[313] *Ibidem*.
[314] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, p.57.
[315] *Ibidem*, pp.45-50.
[316] S. Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History*, p.146.

defeat and overturn the tyrannical regime to which the population was subordinated. This power was necessary to achieve a more democratic and republican form of government that goes in antithesis to its opponent, the tyranny. This form of government originated from the monarchy, and it was considered just a traditional social construct that could be overturned[317].Nelson contributes to reinforce the revolutionary role played by Paine by underscoring his relevance in overturning the general conception, typical of that age, that the King was perceived as the God's chosen one, the personification of the nation in a single individual [318].

We should consider a key message in the *Common Sense*: Paine encourage the population to ponder upon the fact that the sovereignty of a government resided in the population as a whole, and not on a single and individual, who can be both a King and even a leader. The new, democratic, and republican America was supposed to be the result of the breakaway from a tyrannical motherland, which would, however, evolve into an authoritarian regime. There may be differences in terms of how the two regimes were implemented but, in more practical terms, both were tyrannical in different ways: while the motherland adopted a tyrannical approach in legislative terms mainly, the tyrannical America referred to the limitation of the personal liberties of the individuals. As Rosenfeld argues, the evocation of the common sense among the population always favoured a determined segment of the social ladder, which is what happened in the "democratic" American society. Within this society, Paine was a vital contributor of the wave of populism that was spreading among the population[319]. In terms of sovereignty, it may appear quite clear that the new key element around which the sovereignty pivoted was the population, and no longer the king. What should be considered is the fact that, in a supposed-to-be democracy, the popular representation is one of the cardinal pillars, if not the foremost one. Therefore, the fact that the colonies repeatedly reported the lack of parliamentary representation is in line with their

[317] *Ibidem*.
[318] C. Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of the Modern Nations,* New York, Viking Penguin, 2006, p.84.
[319] S. Rosenfeld, *Common Sense: A Political History*, pp.154-158.

conception of the imperial government as a tyrannical one. However, after the formal recognition by the British Empire, the United States of America would fail respect to the premises of the popular sovereignty in universal terms. As the colonies were only subjects in the Empire, then also slaves remained subjects within the American republican democracy. The population was a pivotal point is Paine's pamphlet also from a lexical point of view: he preferred a common lexicon in order to make his pamphlets accessible and readable to the vast majority of the population, which belonged to the low and middle class. Therefore, this specific choice reflects his main idea to foster the creation of a common American identity among the individuals [320]. Neither the Parliament nor the Monarch could have the same degree of powers and influence in the decision-making processes as the individual must have had. Paine prompted the population to eliminate the "devil" with which they would dwell if the revolution hadn't been achieved. In Paine, the tyranny has a specific architect: the King. The government of the Kings, symbolically represented by the royal palace, is defined as a prosperous invention by the Devil who act in antithesis of the paradise: "Palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise"[321]. This a powerful metaphor contributes to strengthen even more the Paine's dissociation from the king and the monarchical government as, according to the philosopher, without kings there would not be wars [322]. It is within this assumption that the central role of the individuals takes place. There is no natural distinction between rulers and ruled, or in Paine's words, between Kings and subjects [323].

In concrete terms, Paine paved the way for the implementation of a democratic project, which would be, however, adapted and reshaped in the American context: slaves, especially in the southern states where the agricultural economy prevailed, were not considered to be part of that sphere of human beings whose human rights were violated during the permanence within the British Empire. In other words, the colonies sought to achieve the

[320] C. Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of the Modern Nations*, p.82.
[321] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, pp.15-24.
[322] *Ibidem*.
[323] *Ibidem*.

independence in order to establish a democratic government which respected the fundamental human rights; however, the following chapter will prove that such a purpose would matter only for the "Americans" and not for the slaves. Slaves were a category apart as they were not even considered as human beings and therefore excluded by the enjoyment of the human and unalienable rights mentioned in the 1776 Declaration of Independence. Moreover, slaves could not benefit of political representation as they were excluded from the civil society, which means that they subsequently had no representative in the decision-making process. Therefore, if one the one hand the colonies had considered the lack of parliamentary representation as an instrument in the hands of the ruler to enslave them within a tyrannical regime, then the fact that they would fail to concede the same representation to a specific segment of the population seems to provide further evidence of the tyrannical nature of the U.S. Similarly, the lack of a democratic structure in the Haitian government seems to provide a fertile ground to label even the Haitian regime as tyrannical. There was only one leader, Louverture, who would exercise the whole sovereignty on the island and leave no room for the popular representation invoked by Paine in general terms.

Kaye is fundamental in underscoring the prominence of the popular sovereignty in Paine's thoughts and the rejection of every possible form of centralized, authoritarian and repressive government. Kaye notes that Paine associated King George III to the criminal actions perpetrated by the British Government that led to the establishment of a condition of war and hardship rather than prosperity and peace [324]. Subsequently, the fact that Paine did not provide any general definition of tyranny, but he directly associated it to the person of the King of England, it is not that surprising. The British Government had no concrete interests as to the well-being of the colonies since they were central in the plans of the motherland only for purposes that concerned revenues and goods to trade, which substantially diverged from the ideals promoted by Paine. Precisely, Paine believed that the most relevant goals to achieve were freedom and security, which could never be reached if

[324] H. J. Kaye, *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*, New York, Hill and Wang, 2005, pp.43-50.

the colonies would not sever the ties with the motherland [325]. Kaye's contribution allows to clarify that the political view shared by Paine serves to reinforce (once again) the idea that a tyrant shares precise characteristics: a ruler is therefore a tyrant when he/she pursues only his/her own interests which often prevail over the collective good. The well-being of the population and their security and liberties would have the priority over the needs of the rulers. If required, the tyrannical ruler acts without scruples by imposing a centralized and repressive political system in a way that may severely limits the fundamental rights of the subjects. Moreover, Kaye argues that both Paine and Jefferson shared similar idea in terms of governmental centralization: both the philosopher and the politician agreed on the idea that the government should have been as less centralized as possible, in order to provide each state with a degree of authority and sovereignty that would have prevented from the implementation of a centralized and authoritarian government [326]. However, the fact that the betterment of the quality of each citizen's life was central in such a revolutionary project was more a prerogative of Paine rather than an ambition shared by the same Jefferson. In other words, the actual implementation of the new American society would fail in keeping up with the theoretical background of both Locke and Paine, reinforcing the idea that, although with different features, it was as tyrannical as the British Empire, if not even more.

However, it is also true that there would be no universal application and legitimation of what Paine considered the principal purposes of a government. In the specific case of the United States of America, freedom and security would be implemented in a very restrictive perspective. Not all the human beings would benefit of those rights as a specific segment of the population would be prevented from the enjoyment of those ends, which means that the democratic government would turn into a tyrannical regime as well, which ideologically frustrates the whole process of separation from the motherland. Therefore, to recall Paine's words, we should conceive the thirteen colonies, as well as the Haitian slaves, as just "(…) prisoners without the hope of redemption (…)"[327]. To provide that hope, Paine proposed the

[325] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, p.18.
[326] H. J. Kaye, *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America* p.97.
[327] T. Paine, *The Common Sense*, p.45.

election of a specific number of representatives per each colony in the so-called Congress, which would grant a mechanism of rotation in the election of the President. By doing so, every colony would have the same relevance, which would reduce the risk to implement a centralized, authoritarian government. This proposal reinforced Paine's vision of the monarchy as a tyrannical government which would challenge the popular sovereignty, reinforcing his idea to create free and independent States.

Kaye reinforced the relevance of Paine's pamphlet by underscoring how he made the population reflecting on the fact that the British Government was just a criminal committing cruel actions. On account of this, the revolution was a vital and moral action that would have ensure a more democratic form of government[328]. This intervention by Kaye is essential to commence the consideration that will be examined in depth in the following chapter: to reduce to the bare minimum the analogy between the American pre- and post-revolutionary and the Haitian context, the revolutionary Americans were fighting against a tyrant to have their independence recognised, which would in turn safeguard the fundamental human rights such as liberties, life, and freedom. Similarly, the Haitian population joined their revolutionary leader in a slave revolt that would culminate with the abolition of the institution of slavery in the island. At the same time, in both context such "Enlighted" premises would not be respected and applied to the whole societies. So, may the fact that slaves were denied of such rights determine the tyrannical nature of a repressive government? The following chapter will provide the answer.

This chapter aimed to provide a historical evolution of the concept of tyranny and the characteristics that define a tyrant. The primary purpose of the chapter is therefore to attempt to "influence" the analysis and steer it towards what the following chapter will clarify. On the one hand, the sovereign is required to rule the state to achieve its maximum expression of well-being and common good. It may seem clear that when personal interests

[328] H. J. Kaye, *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*, pp.43-50.

prevail over the collectivity, the positive image of the ruler may acquire a darker and more negative connotation.

Therefore, before delving deeper into the next chapter, we should reflect on what we have discussed in this chapter. Rulers (regardless of whether one or a plurality), when "drunk" with power and desirous of pursuing their interests, often tend to overlook the concrete outcomes of their political actions and how those tendencies contribute to increasing the malaise of the governed. Here is the crucial point at issue: is it possible that such dynamics could also impact the segment of the population that has been historically omitted from being considered part of the civil society, namely that of the slave? Or, in other words, may two rulers who often acted in order to safeguard their personal interests be considered as tyrants for not abolishing slavery, and actually obtaining considerable benefits from such an institution?

If the path to follow is that of a tyrant as a repressive ruler whose impositions and actions prevail over the well-being of society and favour only his personal interests, the answer may be affirmative. Precisely, the following chapter will make us ponder upon the fact that historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Touissaint Louverture appear to have favoured their interests, and the interests of the "strongest", rather than the whole societies.

Chapter 3: Shades of colours.

3.1- Premises

It is widely recognized that the American Revolution represented the guiding light for many revolutions and decolonization processes from the end of the 18th centuries. Such a significant achievement, which made possible for a combination of multiple factors as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, was not the only one across the Atlantic Ocean though. In 1789, the French Revolution commenced, and it rapidly reached the Caribbean, where the French Monarchy (which would become a Republic by 1792) had colonized a part of the Hispaniola Island and named it Saint-Domingue. As Popkin suggests, the French and the American Revolution offer a solid background to discuss about the ideals of freedom and independence, which permit to comprehend also the Haitian Revolution [329]. Following the events of the French revolution, Popkin reveals that the French white colonists of the island realized that the black slaves had learnt that the three colours of the ribbons or cockades that white people used to wear, namely white, red and blue, had a specific meaning: liberty and equality [330]. From that moment, the black slaves in the northern part of the Island rapidly began to desire and concretely fight for those ideals that spread due to the French Revolution. What was supposed to be an ordinary slave revolt in the north set the ground for what would escalate into proper revolution. The Revolution, which lasted from 1791 to 1804 [331], acquired a sensational meaning for the active role played by the slaves, among which one key figure distinguished himself for his determinant contribution to the cause: Touissaint Louverture.

The prominence of Louverture in the history of the Haitian Revolution, especially if considered that he went from being born from enslaved parents to being the Chief General of the colony, provides the basis for a comparison with another character that played a vital

[329] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012, p.5.
[330] *Ibidem*, p.30.
[331] *Ibidem,* p.5.

role in the revolution of his nation, namely Thomas Jefferson. This comparison will provide an intertwining analysis of their approaches and experiences within the institution of slavery which aims to highlight the complexities and contradictions of each character, as well as to focus the attention on a peculiar aspect.

Apparently, in both the American and Haitian revolutions the two guiding lights exaggerated the idea that the respective populations were entitled to enjoy their life as free and equal human beings. However, the practice might offer a different scenario in which the ideas of liberty, freedom, and equality were implemented by their leaders, which contributes to increase the sensation that both characters acted tyrannically in the concretization of such pillars. This chapter aims to reveal that a tyrannical government may acquire different forms in relations to the context in which it is applied. The American Founding Fathers denounced the tyrannical government imposed by King George III when they still were British colonies. However, as the first chapter analysed, that concept of tyranny seems to refer mainly to the legislative dimension rather than a more humanitarian one. In this context, the revolutionaries in both the U.S and Haiti attained to break the ties with the respective motherlands and declared their achievement on the ground of their freedom; however, this chapter reveals that the implementation of the supposed-to-be less tyrannical regime, grounded on the idea of freedom, was mainly a theoretical achievement rather than a concrete outcome.

As the white, red, and blue served as a source of inspiration for the Haitian black slaves, two other colours will be essential to this analysis as well. Now, we should imagine a line comprised between two extremes. At the one extreme, we collocate a white point, while at the other extremities a black point will be issued. Each colour is associated with a precise judgement: the white extremity stands for the categorization of the two leaders as heroes, while the black extremity would depict them as tyrants. By considering the extremization of the two characters, either at the white or black point, as reductive and misleading in terms of final judgement, the many shades between the two extremities might be more exhaustive.

3.2- Social classes.

By comparing the *American Declaration of Independence* and the *1801 Saint-Domingue Constitution* – also known as *Louverture's Constitution* as it was signed by the Haitian revolutionary leader Touissaint Louverture [332] – it is possible to notice that both documents mention the abolition of slavery. Here is the key point at issue: if it is undeniable that both Constitutions deal with the abolition of slavery, then the paths that led to such an achievement seem to radically diverge.

Starting with the Haitian Constitution, despite the fact that it was issue in 1801, the Haitian Government was still under the influence of the French Republic, and Louverture was not even authorized by the French Government to promulgate the Constitution. As noticeable from Article 1 of the Constitution, Louverture cleverly recognised that Saint-Domingue was still of the French dominions, but he also proceeded in affirming that it would be "under particular laws". In other words, the Louverture's Constitution should be conceived as his formal (self)recognition as the unquestionable leader and authority on the island, which led also to the formalization of the abolition of the institution of slavery and the confirmation of equality among all the citizens within a society that was deeply fragmented not only between blacks and white, but also between free men of colours and slaves[333]. Indeed, as the following pages will reveal, equality among all the people of colours should not be taken for granted as, especially at the onset of the revolution, free individuals of colour and black slaves were not combatting for the same purpose. Therefore, as Popkin argues, the recognition of the equality among individuals and the abolition of slavery transformed a colony of slaves into what was supposed to be a colony of citizens [334].

Despite this, Louverture managed to balance the employment of both blacks and whites in the constitutional assembly: the whites occupied key positions, such as the direction of the fortification, the private secretariat and the diplomatic envoy, which was part of Louverture's strategy of making such unauthorized document more acceptable by the

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[332] T. Louverture, *Saint-Domingue Constitution of 1801*, 4th of February 1801. Retrieved from: 1801 Constitution.
[333] *Ibidem*, Art 1.
[334] J. D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, Cambridge (UK)- New York, Cambridge University Press, pp 2-3.

French government. The other members were all of mixed race and aimed to reinforce what Girard defined the "back bone" of his regime. However, despite the fact that equality among citizens was formally granted by the articles of the constitution, the assembly was composed only by whites and people of mixed race, so no representatives of the blacks were employed [335].

We may notice that the 1801 Haitian Constitution officially abolished the institution of slavery through Article 3. More precisely, the 1801 *Louverture's Constitution* states that "There cannot exist slaves on this territory, servitude is therein forever abolished. All men are born, live and die free and French"[336]. It is within this document of remarkable relevance that Louverture granted the equality among the citizens: as the following pages of this chapter will analyse, Louverture's abolition of slavery, coupled with the formal recognition of the equality of all men, would be two pivotal elements that would contribute to rewrite the social and political history of the colony. On the other front, the *Constitution of the United States of America* was written back in 1787, and it has been serving the United States of America since 1789 [337]. Differently from the Haitian Constitution, at the moment of the promulgation neither the word "slave" nor "slavery" were mentioned. This linguistic choice was not a fortuitous omission for which slavery would not be addressed in the document. Rather, it was the result of a compromise between northern and southern states which would reveal the different approach the American states adopted with regards to the manumission of slavery. Indeed, as Finkelman claims, the states in the north were reluctant to mention the word slavery within the text of the constitution, while states in the south were more willingly to satisfy the moral need of the northerners as long as the protection of the institution of slavery was guaranteed [338]. Therefore, slaves were simply defined as "persons". Here is a crucial difference with the Haitian constitution: the American one did

[335] P. Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoléon. Touissaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence,* Tuscaloosa (AL), University of Alabama Press, 2011, pp.13-14.
[336] T. Louverture, *Saint-Domingue Constitution of 1801*, Art.3.
[337] The Founding Fathers, *The Constitution of the United States,* 1787. Retrieved from: Constitution.
[338] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson,* Armonk (N.Y), M.E Sharpe,1996, pp.3-4.

not abolish the institution of slavery at the moment of its promulgation, but it rather reinforced it through specific clauses such as the fugitive-slave clause introduced in Article 4, Section 2, Paragraph 2. This clause would heavily limit freedom in all the American states as slaves who escaped from a slaveholding state to a free one had to be "delivered" back to the state from which he or she escaped [339]. Not surprisingly, the American Constitution would feature no references to the abolition of the institution of slavery for more than seventy years. Only by the 18th of December 1865 the word slavery would officially enter the constitution and abolish the institution through the amendment XIII, which states that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude (…) shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to its jurisdiction" [340].

As to the nature of the Constitution itself, the contribution of Waldstreicher reveals that the Constitution has a proslavery dimension, which is reflected by an opaque approach adopted when the issue of slavery had to be addressed. Precisely, Finkelman claims that there are specific factors that contribute to "crystallization" of the antiabolitionist nature of the Constitution. First and foremost, the consistently increasing political weight acquired by the southern states within the Congress was a direct consequence of a compromise between them and the northern states. Specifically, the so-called "three-fifth clause" allowed southern states to include three fifth of the population of slaves in the count for purposes related to the representation in the Congress [341]. As a consequence, the southern states were likely to be even more incentivised from the slave trade, which would contribute to reinforce the proslavery nature of the constitution. Furthermore, Article 1, Section 9, strengthened even more slavery within the American society by prohibiting the Congress from banning the importation or migration of slaves until 1808, which was reinforced by Article 5 according to which no amendment to this clause could be passed until the same year[342].

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[339] This note only contains the link to the original text of the Constitution of the United States of America, prior to the ratification of each amendment. Retrieved from: U.S. Constitution.

[340] The Founding Fathers, *The Constitution of the United States*, Amendment 13.

[341] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson,* pp.3-4.

[342] The Founding Fathers, *The Constitution of the United States,* Art.1-5.

Thus, as Waldstreicher claims, the Constitution can be defined as an operationally proslavery document [343].

The diverging aspect is not limited only to the American Constitution, but it also extends to the American Declaration of Independence. From a chronological point of view, the U.S. Constitution was written eleven years after the Declaration of Independence that was issued on the 4th of July 1776 which does not any specific passage on the institution of slavery for a precise reason. In the draft of the original text of the Declaration, Jefferson directly addressed British King George III by accusing him of having conceived America as a land where enslaved people would be bought and sold, therefore violating the liberty of the individuals[344]. He initially proposed a version which comprised a specific and direct charge against King George III for contributing to the slave trade by "(…) carrying them into slavery in another atmosphere"[345]. However, this whole passage was entirely excised for a specific reason: Armitage claims that this omission permitted the formal denial of parity between Africans and Americans that Jefferson proposed [346]. Onuf reinforces this view by claiming that such a passage would have not only determined a condition of parity between Africans and Americans, but it would have also established a condition for which all the Africans had to be considered as people [347].

The dynamic for which slavery and freedom can be said to have been (historically) in complete antithesis, both from a moral and physical point of view, seems to be nothing new in the context of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary America. As claimed by Waldstreicher, not all human beings were considered as people, which means that many were labelled as something different, like a property of the owner, such as slaves [348]. As Baptist specifies, slaves were limited not only by their social conditions for which they were

[343] D. Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification*, New York, Hill and Wang,2009, pp.108-121.
[344] T. Jefferson, *Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence*. Retrieved from: Rough draft of the Declaration.
[345] *Ibidem*.
[346] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, p.60
[347] P. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood,* Charlottesville, The University Press of Virginia, 2000, pp.160-165.
[348] D. Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification,* pp.8-14.

considered as inferior individual, but also from chains that bound together neck and wrists[349]. Therefore, it seems to appear quite clear that slaves were not people but rather property so, subsequently, a law which safeguarded properties automatically would safeguard and reinforce also the institution of slavery [350]. Similarly in Haiti, slaves were bounded by heavy chains to which masters often attached balls to hamper the physical movement as well as iron collars to which spikes were attached in order to create physical arms. Moreover, as argued by Dubois, it happened that on many occasion slaves were punished for insubordination with lashes and burnings on the body [351].

On the contrary, the Haitian Constitution would establish equality among all the individuals regardless the colour of the skin: all men would be eligible to all employment as virtue and talent would be the only criteria that would allow distinctions among the members of the society [352]. In Haiti, equality was achieved after years of tension, particularly between free men and slaves; nonetheless, those efforts were ultimately rewarded by the attainment of a common goal, as we will comprehend in the following pages. The reason behind the stratification of slavery in the Haitian society needs to be found back in the 15th century, when the island of Hispaniola was colonized by European settlers. As Dubois argues, European Empires' tendency to bring slaves from Africa in other regions of the globe was part of their wider plan to expand their imperial prestige worldwide through the possession of colonial dominions worldwide. The slave trade functioned as compensation for the extermination of the indigenous population due to execution as a form of punishment, overwork, diseases, and even suicides the locals committed to escape the brutality of the colonizers. Therefore, it was not only a question of prestige, but also a concrete necessity to counterbalance the loss of workforce. In doing so, the colonial powers relied on the productive system of the plantations, which required a massive amount of

[349] E. E Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, New York, Basic Books, 2014, p.1.
[350] D. Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification,* pp.8-14
[351] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Cambridge (MA), Belknap press of Harvard University Press,2004, pp.51-56
[352] T. Louverture, *Saint-Domingue Constitution of 1801*, Art.4-5.

labour force to work the land from which European masters would collect the agricultural product that would be imported in the motherlands [353]. So, as the territories in America constituted what was defined in the first chapter of this thesis as the British Empire's "mere basin from which collecting extra revenues", then this tendency was reflected also in the Caribbean as they were contended mainly by the Spanish Crown, France and Britain. Formerly known as Saint-Domingue, Haiti was a French colony with a population composed principally by black slaves deported from the African coasts, who began populated the Caribbean Island as a consequence of the Atlantic Slave Trade. As the consistently increasing number of imported slaves reflects, Haiti was conceived and shaped to be a mere sugarcane factory for the French Republic. In principle, both the American and Haitian societies shared similar features in terms of slavery as such an institution was well fortified and consolidate. However, what radically differ was the distribution of the social individuals within the respective social ladders.

Dupuy provides concrete data as to the race-based Haitian social ladder. At the top of the social pyramid, the class of *Grands blancs* was composed by wealthy planters, absentee owners, colonial administrators, and members of the bourgeoise. The second position was occupied by those who belonged to the middle class, which included little plantation owners, few slaves, and many other professionals such as lawyers and artisans. However, the middle class initially included also the so-called *Affranchis*, which refers to the slaves born free or freed, which would acquire later on an own status during the coffee revolution in the 1750s. Within the middle class, the whites were part of the so-called *Petit Blancs* to distinguish themselves from both the *Grand Blancs* and the *Affranchis*. Finally, the last position was destined for the (black) slaves, which composed the vast majority of the population, which amounted to 452.000 [354]. However, there is no confirmation as to the precise number since Dubois argues that, by 1789, slaves were 465.000[355]. The reason why slavery acquired a more relevant and different meaning in the context of the revolution

[353] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp. 1-16.
[354] A. Dupuy, *Haiti: From Revolutionary Slaves to Powerless Citizens. Essays on the politics and economics of underdevelopment, 1804–2013.*, London-New York, Routledge, Routledge, 2014, pp.51-57.
[355] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, p.30.

refers to the fact, if on the hand the multi-level composition of the Haitian society may refrain from properly depicting the global Haitian social context, then the fact that the 90% of the total Haitian population was composed by slaves, as Girard argues, should be emblematic in revealing the influence exercised by the slave movement during the revolutionary war[356].

On the American front, the composition of the society acquires a different perspective. In 1810, Charles Jared Ingersoll provides a quite peculiar description of the American society: according to him, there was no distinction among the people as he argued that "There is no populace. All are people. (…) Were it not for the slaves of the south, there would be (…) one rank"[357]. This peculiar assertion was highly criticized by Wood as he claims that it was pointless to describe a classless American society since the it was a pyramidal society where both aristocracy and middle class occupied a specific position in the social hierarchies[358]. However, the description provided by Ingersoll perfectly resume the dynamics in which slavery evolved and stratified. We should conceive the American society in astronomic terms: there were two orbits in the American social ladder, the one composed by the white Americans, and the other where principally black slaves, but also servants, dwelled. These orbits would never meet as one seem to have excluded the other. The orbit of the whites would tend to push apart the orbits of the black slaves as there was no conceived room for them within the same society. The point at issue is that the Ingersoll's view perfectly positioned within the sphere of actions of Thomas Jeffersons, and it reflects his tendencies to act passively against slavery.

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[356] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, New York, Basic Books, 2016, p.21.

[357] C. J. Ingersoll, *Inchiquin, The Jesuit's Letters, During a late Residence in The United States of America: Being a Fragment of a Private Correspondence Accidental Discovered In Europe*, Printed and published by I. Riley, New York, 1810, p.120. Retrieved from: The Jesuit's Letters.

[358] G. S. Wood, The *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, pp.347-349.

3.3- The Fair Touissaint and the Dark Thomas.

3.3.1 The Fair Touissaint?

Touissaint Louverture was the widely celebrated Haitian leader who dedicated his life to fulfilling his project to abolish such an institution and declare the freedom of the individuals from slavery. He was the guiding light for the slave revolts that commenced in 1791 and led to the proclamation of the new nation of Haiti in 1804.

Louverture left an enormous legacy after his death which served as an inspiration for many Africans independentist model. Former President of the Haitian Republic Jean-Bernard Aristide publicly honoured the memory of Louverture by paraphrasing his words in March 2004 when he denounced the overthrow of his Presidency. He argued that, by overthrowing him, they might have removed him from the government and undermined the peaceful living of the nations. However, peace will shine again as it is rooted in the legacy of Toussaint Louverture[359]. A further contribution that properly describes the essence of Louverture's dedication to the Haitian cause are reconstructed by Popkin: he reports the words spoken by French Colonel Charles Vincent deployed in Haiti, who affirmed that Louverture was the only man who could have saved the country, who had to be trusted otherwise everything would be lost [360]. In addition, Nesbitt contributes to celebrate the Louverturian causes by arguing that Haiti provides the most emblematic demonstration of the idea that the universal emancipation was achievable even during the colonial age. Nesbitt depicts Louverture as the guide who steered the slaves towards the realization that they were human beings who had to combat to achieve their universal freedom from slavery[361]. Moreover, Hazareesingh described Louverture as the individual who provided

[359] J-B Aristide, speech reported by the journal The New Humanitarian, March 2, 2004, accessed on the 2nd of March 2025. Retrieved from: President Aristide Speech.
[360] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, p.115.
[361] N. Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, Charlottesville, S.L., University of Virginia Press, 2008, pp.46-57.

history with a concrete example how diplomatic abilities, cleverness, and governance can be attributed also to black people who were racially abused and limited in their universal freedom as human being under a regime of slavery[362]. Louverture's charismatic personality and image allows him to seat at the same table as other great historical figures, such as Washington, Napoleon, and even Spartacus, to whom the epithet was inspired. His relevance in terms of leadership, personality, and abilities to guide a population was fundamental not only within the geographical borders of Haiti, but also abroad as many revolutions were inspired by his legacy, such as in the Venezuelan Revolution when Bolivar named himself President for life on the ground of what Louverture had done some year before. Bell contributes to underscore the prominence of the Haitian leader by claiming that Louverture dominated the white aristocrats [363]. This insight finds further application on the claim proposed by James, who argued that Louverture's troops were composed by blacks and ex-slave, but at the same time his major personal advisers who had to deal and refer to him were, surprisingly, whites [364].

As Bell notes, Louverture's legacy is due to his sensational contribution in the most important and successful slave revolt not only in the eighteen centuries but also in the whole history [365]. In addition, Louverture's legacy and personal abilities permits him to sit at the same table of other charismatic characters, such as Napoleon Bonaparte. Two charismatic leaders, who radically differ from each other, although they shared common aspects. For instance, both leaders' governments reflected their charisma as their regime were considered rather authoritarian, and both figures died in a condition of exile after being prominent characters in the respective contexts for several years[366]. Louverture exploited his acquaintance of the Creole which allowed him to establish a direct channel of

[362] S. Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus. The Epic Life of Touissaint Louverture*, New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020, pp.353-357.
[363] D.Bell, *Men on Horseback. The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution*, New York, Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2020, pp.139-173
[364] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, introduction and notes by J. Walvin, London, Penguin Books, 2001, p.202
[365] D.Bell, *Men on Horseback. The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution,* p.13.
[366] *Ibidem*, p.135.

communication with the black population, which, coupled with his natural courage, forged his fascinating image as the island's revolutionary hero, who also received unconditioned support and trust from the popular assemblies [367].

As Bell argues, Louverture was even compared to Spartacus by his orators during the majestic ceremonies to celebrate the promulgation of his own Constitution in 1801[368]. Strauss reveals an important detail about Spartacus' personality that can be extended also to Louverture's sensational communicative capabilities: when Spartacus talked, men listened [369]. Similarly, Hazareesingh clarifies that the epithet is not casual, but it refers specifically to the analogies that combine both figures. Spartacus and his allies gathered support among the slaves by relying on ideals of freedom and honour. Spartacus, a slave from Tracia, arrived in Rome as part of the business of Vatia, a Roman entrepreneur involved in the commerce of warriors and gladiator for entertaining purposes on the arenas. Spartacus, who would move enchained to from Rome to Capua, a city which was already familiar with slaves and revolts, had already developed military acquaintance as he was employed in a unit of the Roman Army, likely as a cavalryman[370]. Spartacus and other eighty cavaliers were part of a school of training for cavaliers in Capua, the place from which his outstanding legacy would become. Once reached the peak of the Vesuvius in the aftermath of a revolt against the officers in the schools, Spartacus and the other gladiators were joined by other slaves, poor farmers, and former gladiators which contributed to the consistently growth of the led-by-Spartacus army. Spartacus would then move towards the northern region of Italy, leading a triumphal expedition in Modena against the army of Roman consul Valerius Publicola[371]. However, the autumn in the 72 B.C. marked the beginning of a new era for Spartacus: Marcus Licinius Crassus was appointed as the new Roman commander of the

[367] *Ibidem*, pp.146-147.
[368] *Ibidem*, p.165.
[369] B. Strauss, *The Spartacus War*, London, Orion Publishing Group, 2009, pp.16-24
[370] *Ibidem*.
[371] T. Gnoli, Spartacus, article published in the La Treccani's website, accessed on the 28th of May 2025. Retrieved from: La Treccani: Spartacus.

legions [372]. In 71 BC, two years after the first upheaval led by Spartacus, Crassus killed Spartacus in Lucania[373]. Despite not making it in murdering his final rival, Spartacus is widely considered the example of courage, bravery, and commitment to the anti-slavery cause.

Many centuries later, in the late eighteen century, Louverture would accomplish to guide a successful slave revolt that would mark the beginning of the Haitian Revolution and, more generally, of the Louverturian government in 1801. Born in a context of extended slavery, Louverture would then become the Revolutionary image of the Island of Saint Domingue. He controlled his soldiers not only through to his excellent communicative abilities but also thanks to his physical bravery and courage. As James argues, it is said that Louverture was wounded seventeen times, which did not prevent him attaining the final success at the guide of his army composed by former slaves and black people [374]. Despite his physical strength, Louverture impressed more for his diplomatic ductility and cleverness: it is still unsure if the physically participated in the upheavals that occurred on the 14th of August 1791, but he certainly inspires the conspirations and the tactical plans through which the revolts commenced [375]. Moreover, Girard maintains that Louverture would prove his resilience from a diplomatic point of view when he decided to join the Spanish Troops to then switching to the French Army as it represented a better opportunity for his career. Louverture also guided several sieges, such as the one in 1795, when he ordered the siege of Saint-Marc after having his hand crushed by the wheel of a cannon and the 1800 siege of Jacmel, where the first military intervention in a foreign nation by the U.S proved vital for the Haitian victory[376]. In the same year, Louverture would also conquer the southern of the Island thanks to the siege of Caye, which concluded what Girard defines as the "bloodiest conflict in Saint-Domingue History" [377]. Symbolically, Louverture followed the way paved

[372] B. Strauss, *The Spartacus War*, p.43.
[373] *Ibidem*, p.69.
[374] C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution,* pp.202-204.
[375] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, pp.114-120.
[376] *Ibidem*, pp.148-152.
[377] *Ibidem*, p.186.

by Spartacus as his last mission coincided with his capitulation: following in the failure in the negotiations with Leclerc, and the betrayal of Henri Cristophe (his chief lieutenant) Louverture would agree to resign from his position as governor. He would then be betrayed for the second time, when the proposal for a meeting turned out to be an ambush to arrest and deport him to France, where he died in 1803 [378].

Louverture, at least in principle, was able to combine vital elements in his revolutionary republicanism, in which the collective good and the popular sovereignty should have intertwined in order to determine a new government under his leadership. Deeply influenced by the military practices, Louverture would also prove his abilities not only as a military commander but also as a Constitutional governor in a way that was supposed to extend even further his legacy as a Caribbean Spartacus [379].

The concept of slavery assumed a revolutionary meaning in the broader context of the Haitian society since its historical evolution had undergone a completely different path to the American one. The very first turning point in Haitian history has a specific year with three specific dates. Specifically, the very first milestone in the path towards the manumission of slavery was set on the 21st of June 1793. Though extended to a restricted part of the widely populated category of slavery, the two French commissioners Leger-Felicite Sonthonax and Etienne Polverell marked the history of Haiti (at the time Saint-Domingue) by formally abolishing slavery but extending it only to those individuals who had accepted to join in the army in the occasion of the military crisis devasted *Cap-Francois*[380]. If on the one hand only a restricted minority of the population would have benefitted from such a concession, it is also remarkable the fact that, within few months, the measure would have been extended to whole class of slaves by October of the same year, as Popkin meticulously argues. The second milestones in the Haitian path to the abolition of slavery is dated the 29th of August 1793, when the Commissioners issued a decree known as "*Emancipation Proclamation*". By stating that "The French Republic wants all men without

[378] D. Bell, *Men on Horseback. The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution,* p. 167.
[379] S. Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus. The Epic Life of Touissaint Louverture*, pp.1-12.
[380] J.D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery,* pp.2-3-247-248.

distinction of colour to be free and equal", therefore extending the privilege of the freedom enjoyed by French whites, the commissioners officially extended the emancipation to the whole class of slaves[381].

The achievement acquired an incalculable relevance for two specific reasons. First and foremost, freedom and equality were recognised and extended universally to the whole class of slaves. Specifically, with that measures, enslaved people underwent a process of moral and legal transformation that moved them from being conceived only as properties to being elevated to "people". If on the 21st century the fact that all the human beings are also people seems to be realized, such a concept seemed to be a disturbing issue back at the time, especially because the European Powers were not prepared for that betterment as, if it was formulated as an equation, slaves equal properties.

The Haitian population, those usually called by Louverture "Brothers", underwent a process of general improvement since Louverture's takeover, with radical transformation into a rural and farmer-based society, where the number of slaves considerably decreased. Since his emancipation, the number of free-black people almost quadrupled: Girard claims that from the 6,897 free blacks at the moment of his emancipation, the community would then amount to 27,548 emancipated blacks at the moment of the revolution[382].It represents the indisputable confirmation of Louverture's incidence to the cause: Louverture is a hero in the Haitian context, not only for the successful outcome of the slavery cause, but also because he contributed to the social unification within the black population in the Island.

Before the revolution, the vast majority of free men of colour were highly discredited and distrusted due to racial prejudices; however, the racial issues did not limit the consistent expansion of the freemen of colour, both in terms of demographic growth and prominence,

[381] Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, *Proclamation au nom de la République*, 29th of August 1793. Retrieved from Sonthonax's decree.
[382] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, p.56.

within the Haitian society[383]. As Dubois underscores, the category of the free men of colour was a peculiar one because it differentiated both from the whites and the black slaves. Indeed, free individuals of colour were involved in commercial activities, such as the trade of primary goods like indigo, and they also owned some properties and slaves. They could also trade slaves, find better occupation and have access to education; hence, they could attain higher benefits than the black slaves, with whom they always maintained a relationship of conflict and distrust[384]. Worthy of note is the fact that despite having African origins, many slave women took care of the white colonists and begot with them, who in turn left them their lands and slaves after freeing and marrying them.

Despite this, the vast majority of them managed to find employment on the Island, as they were hired to form militias to address security issues in Saint-Domingue. Notwithstanding the growing relevance the freemen of colour had been acquiring (and would continue to acquire), they were still excluded from the public arena, as they were not conceived as citizens [385]. However, the situation slowly began to improve by 1785 when Julian Raimond, one of the most relevant free men of colour in the Island, began to pressure the French authority in the motherland to improve the conditions in which the freemen of colour were living. In addition, the number of slaves traded to the Island was consistently increasing and reached a rate of almost thirty thousand individuals traded annually, which means that the relevance of the militias would continue to improve [386]. What must be clarified is that there was a clear distinction between free men of colour and slaves: free men of colour, despite being racially abused and excluded from every political activity until the 1790s, were still employed in the militias and, initially, would not choose to support the revolutionary army of the slaves. One of the most inspiring and relevant free men of colour was Vincent Ogè, who played a vital diplomatic role as an intermediary between the black community in Haiti and the French Government in France. Indeed, as Dubois argues, Ogè appeared in

[383] L.Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, p.89.
[384] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.28-74.
[385] J. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan ,2006, pp.110-162.
[386] *Ibidem*, pp. 227-228.

the National Assembly in October 1789, demanding a radical transformation in Haitian society. Indeed, Ogè denounced the humiliating conditions in which many citizens were living in the colony since many of them were still enslaved [387].

Ogè did not limit his actions to the National Assembly, but he also played an active role on the field. As maintained by Popkin, Ogè threatened the white opponents that he would easily solicit the population to insurrect as, after returning to Saint-Domingue, he coordinated an expedition of mulattoes which ended up fomenting also the slaves. Notwithstanding, it required not much time for the authorities to arrest and sentence him to death. Despite being a point of reference, especially for the community of free men of colour, Ogè's attempt to solicit the blacks to demand better conditions was not followed by many. He had consistently demanded the extension of the rights, at least for those who could adhere to the financial requisites. However, the number of those blacks who could have enjoyed the privileges of the Decree was scarce, and so his military efforts were not adequately supported on the ground [388]. Nevertheless, Ogè became an icon on the island. From the moment of his execution, a series of upheavals commenced among both slaves in the North and free people of colour in the West [389]. Girard argues that Ogè's plan was that of soliciting slave revolts against their master only if the white troops would annihilate his troops. Popkin confirms that Ogè's intention was not to coordinate the actions of slaves to demand their freedom, but instead to demand equality for all free men of colour. Here is the key turning point of the story: Girard affirms that Louverture, somehow, was informed of Ogè's intentions. Louverture, a man of knowledge and experience, realised that the execution of Ogè was a clear message sent by the whites: the revolution was the only possible way to achieve their purpose [390]. Moreover, since the passing of the April 1792 decree, the free blacks were included in the local political assemblies, and therefore they could benefit from their direct representation. Within this tense political scenario, the free

[387] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.80-81.
[388] J. D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, pp.71-72.
[389] *Ibidem*, pp.41-43.
[390] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, p.103.

blacks implemented what Ogè had commenced [391]. Slaves and free men of colour's destiny would intertwine, although not on purpose, when further insurrections and violent reactions would begin.

What may be more controversial refers to the fact that, as argued by Girard, free people of colour and French colonists initially allied: French troops were supposed to support the troops in Haiti, but the geographical distance between the motherland and the colony forced the colonial army to request the freemen of colours in exchange of the recognition of their political rights [392]. In fact, free families of colour in the south joined the whites to fight against the slave rebellions that commenced in August 1791[393]. At that specific stage period, tensions were growing in Cap-Francais and, within a year, the effort of Ogè to extend the rights of the Decree issued on the 15th of May 1791, would become a reality on the 4th of April 1792 when a law to extend political rights to all free men of colours, which was not limited only to elite men of colour, was passed[394].

The decree issued in April 1792 was a game changer in the relationship between white colonists, free men of colour, and indirectly, slaves. By May 1793, a tense relationship between General Galbaud, the new governor of Cap Francais, and the two Commissioners was already on the verge of degenerating. Galbaud, who was supported by all the whites who disagreed with the recognition of the extension of political rights to all free men of colour, placed himself in a position of contrast with Sonthonax and Polverell[395]. In parallel, the army led by the two commissioners had to face a second threat: the attempts of foreign powers, such as Spain and Britain, to conquer the Island. It was in that moment that Sonthonax realized that he would have to issue the decree on emancipation: frightened by the double threat, the commissioners planned to obtain tremendous support from the slaves in exchange for some recognition. As the free men of colour were also enthusiasts of the decree, the French colony was embracing the path towards the establishment of a new

[391] J. D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, pp.41-74.
[392] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, pp.101-117.
[393] J. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, p.269.
[394] J. D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, pp.41-81.
[395] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.56-57.

society. In this context, Louverture would betray the Spanish front the following year, and join the French Republican Army in the aftermath of a military attack against a Spanish garrison in Gonaives[396]. Notwithstanding, the conflictual climate between slaves and free men of colour was yet to terminate, but it reveals how the destiny of the two Haitian factions intertwined. Precisely, the 4,000 soldiers under the leadership of Louverture were incorporated into the troops led by two free individuals of colour, namely Andrè Rigaud and Jean-Louis Villatte. Louverture would later face and annihilate the army led by Rigaud in a conflict that established the complete superiority of the Louverturian army in the colony and marked his willingness to attain control of the whole colony[397].

By 1801, when Louverture proclaimed his constitution, there would no longer be any distinction based on colour, but only an egalitarian society based on the abolition of slavery[398]. Louverture accomplished to transform the outrageous in reality when no single individuals had attempted – let alone attained– to do before: he transformed slaves into people. If this claim might sound hazardous, the contributions provided by Girard and Nesbitt may even reinforce what argued so far. Girard certifies the transformation into people by arguing that Louverture was able to radically modify the Haitian society from the roots, moving from the tyrannical model of a slavery-based colonial dominion into a colonial dimension where the population was no longer a property of the motherland, but it acquired a new status. Slaves were no longer slaves as they were converted to "cultivators", paid for the workforce they provided in the plantations. Moreover, the idea of liberty was eventually reinforced not only by a moral, as well as ethical, point of view, but also by concrete solutions applied physically to the individuals. For instance, Louverture introduced the abolition of chains and expulsion of violent plantation owner who exercised physical violence over the former slaves[399].

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[396] *Ibidem,* p.67.
[397] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.233-235.
[398] *Ibidem*, pp.243-244.
[399] *Ibidem*, pp.196-198.

Louverture was the illuminated man, the chosen one who transformed utopia into reality, the divine guide who provided the population with a class conscience. He was the surprise the European Empire were not expecting as he materialized the Enlighted ideals of universal liberty and freedom. This idea is confirmed by Nesbitt, who claims that Louverture was able to extend the application of the *Declaration of The Rights of Man* even to the blacks, who were initially excluded by the remote hope to be conceived as individuals gifted with reasoning and mental abilities.

The decree serves as a further demonstration of the pressure exercised by Louverture over the French colonial regime. Louverture was able to consistently shift the sides to which he aligned. Indeed, as Popkin claims, the Haitian general first flanked with France in the occasion of the Cap-Francois debacle, to then cleverly influenced his followers to take the distance from the illusionary project promised by the French as it was considered unrealistic by Louverture himself. He then adhered to the Spanish cause, which would have offered more concrete solutions and liberties to the black. Finally, he flanked the Frenchs only in May 1794, after the National Convention's approval of the abolitionist decree on the 4th of February 1794[400]. To be more specific, Popkin contributes to increase the meaning that such measure acquired by claiming that, initially, the French National Convention did not accord the power to the Commissioners to approve it. Apparently, it was rather a desperate, as well as strategic, decision made by Sonthonax and Polverell: on the ground of the prominence that Louverture had been acquiring among the population, the Commissioners cleverly realized that the slave movement was growing, and nothing on earth would have refrained them from attaining the well desired and predicated freedom. On the 5th of November 1793, Sonthonax confirmed his willingness to ensure the implementation of his promise by stating that he would defend the slavery cause with an even greater degree of commitment as he would "support until death the civil rights and independence of those with mixed blood" [401].

[400] J. D. Popkin, *You're All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*, pp.249-258.
[401] *Ibidem*, p.282.

What must be properly clarified is that Louverture himself did not abolished slavery, at least not until his personal proclamation as the Haitian Chief General in 1801. Therefore, until 1801, the emancipation of the whole population of former slaves was formally permitted only by the French National Convention. If analysed in this perspective, the pivotal role played by Louverture seems to have been underestimated. On the contrary, the motherland, by formalizing the emancipation of the slaves in the French portion of territory of the entire Island, directly increased the value of the role played by Louverture. He impressed both for his ability in the diplomatic negotiations with the officials and for the facility with which his consensus rapidly spread among the population, which compelled the motherland to renounce to a part of its sovereignty on the island. As Popkin argues, the French Republic believed that it was a better option to have him and his army of riotous slaves allied, even at the cost of renouncing to a part of their power.

Louverture's diplomatic and tactical allowed him to rapidly retain political power and key officials around his orbit of interest. The return of Sonthonax to France, in 1797, prepared the way for Louverture's definitive ascent. He demonstrated, once again, his diplomatic capabilities by posing the French Republic a dilemma: accepting a policy of confrontation with his army, or accepting the new government under his rules, leaving with France with no better options than accepting his future role as Haitian leader[402]. The succession was on the verge of being achieved, and history made.

Emblematic was the conversation Louverture had with the wife of a white colonist, who was attempting to retain an occupation as a storekeeper in the Island. Specifically, as reported by C.L.R James, Louverture argued that "The French Revolution has enlightened Europeans, we are loved and wept over by them, but the white colonists are enemies of the blacks (…)"[403]. This passage is vital in demonstrating once for all Louverture's commitment to the black cause. The Haitian leader guided his "children" as the "father who adores

[402] *Ibidem,* pp.63-84.
[403] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution,* pp.210-212.

(…)"[404] of all of them towards the establishment of a radically revolutionary society, where a new ruling class composed of black people was consistently gaining power. Louverture, as Dubois argues, was making his own law within his personally shaped society where African-descendant individuals would be treated as human beings[405]. The relevance of Louverture impact on the Haitian society rapidly spread across the Atlantic Ocean. If on the one hand his impact undeniably benefitted the condition of living of the Haitians, then it also complicated its foreign relationship with the other nations.

Louverture's prominence should not limit only to his concrete actions during his "regime", but it would even acquire greater prominence in futuristic terms. Haiti declared its independence from France in 1804, ten years later the slavery manumission. Within this period, Louverture well defended his ideological position and purposes, so the fact that the power in French part of Hispaniola was mainly retained by a former slave was already a well-known story in 1804. From that moment, Haiti officially became independent from France at the scream of "to prefer death to anything that will try to place you back in chains"[406]. However, if on the one hand the Haitian independence was deeply rooted in the Louverturian contribution to the cause, at the same time the Haitian revolutionary could not assist to the proclamation. Indeed, after being deported in France, Touissaint Louverture deceased in a prison cell in the Jura Mountains, France, on the 7th of April 1803[407]. Despite this, Haiti was treated with scepticism and racial prejudices especially by France, which recognize the legitimation and the sovereignty of the Haitian government only in 1825[408]. Following in France, even the United States of America were reluctant in conceding the proper recognition to the Haitian government. As the analysis will reveal in the following pages, Thomas Jefferson was deeply frightened by the slave upheavals that led to the born

[404] T. Louverture, *Proclamation*, 25th of April 1796, in D. Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2014, p.85.
[405] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, p.242.
[406] J. J. Dessalines, *The Haitian Declaration of Independence*, 1804. The document was translated by Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus. Retrieved from: Haitian Declaration of Independence. English version.
[407] D. Bell, *Men on Horseback. The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution,* p.167.
[408] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, p.7.

of Haiti as he feared that the same could happen in the US if the emancipation were conceded.

Furthermore, the fact that black people had acquired relevance, power, autonomy, and, above all, emancipation from slavery, complicated the country's development on diplomatic and commercial terms with other realities.

Louverture's skilful nature was not limited to the diplomatic context as the Haitian hero demonstrated his commitment to the cause in other fields. One of this referred the economy, the very core of his revolutionary government. Given his educated background, coupled with the acquaintance of the management of the plantation he developed in during his youth, the Haitian leader elaborated a specific economic plan to revitalize the economy of the Island. On the 12th of October 1800, Louverture issued the *Forced Labor Decree*, to address Haitian population in the attempt clarify the central role that the plantations would have in his plans. Louverture declared that agriculture was the instrument to support their government that would be used to promote commerce, comfort and abundance, give birth to the arts and industry, and keep all occupied. It was the mechanism of all states, and if each member of society works, the result would be public tranquillity [409]. Moreover, the agriculture performed a vital role in the Leader's plan as it would have served to maintain the absolute freedom on the island. Such conditions were also determined by the fact that the plantation economy was the only productive system the island had benefitted from, since it was initially conceived to be the machinery in support of the French Republic trade and prestige worldwide. As well, as Dubois shares, the Haitian economy had been dependent on the importations of goods for many decades, which contributed to the solidification of the plantation economy as the only economic means of production and, reasonably, survival [410]. The amount of tradable goods required an efficient and organized productive process, and Louverture centralized this in his hand, by even reinforcing it in his Constitution. Specifically, Louverture only allowed commerce of locally produced goods as

[409] T. Louverture, *Forced Labour Decree*, 12th of October 1800. Retrieved from: Forced Labour Decree.
[410] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, p.238.

it would increase the productivity of the agricultural system and maintain the freedom the Haitians had fought for. In addition, the Declaration should be considered as an extraordinary, and at the same time, the very first example of a constitution that entails the "unlimited, universal right to freedom from enslavement", which certifies the commitment by Louverture to the abolition of such a pillar institution [411].

3.3.2 The Dark Thomas?

Thomas Jefferson has been widely considered as one of the pioneers of the American Democracy, but it might appear as a deeply controversial character rather than a universally-recognized hero. Jefferson, within the original text of the *Declaration of Independence*, directly addressed the tyrannical government enacted by King George III and interpreted it as the political and moral condition the former British colonies had fought against for many years. It was the Imperial British political system that prompted the *Declaration of Independence* as a consequence of the restriction and abuses over the unalienable rights of the American colonies, among which liberty was explicitly included. However, such liberty would acquire a different conceptualization when it should have been extended also to the other sphere of the population, where slaves would be confined.

As the Declaration itself proves, there is no reference to slavery, which would be officially addressed only in the 1865 thirteenth amendment hold in the Constitution, which had already been serving the country since 1789[412]. This issue reveals the preponderant influence of Thomas Jefferson in the drafting of the text. To be more specific, as Onuf argues, Jefferson's conception of the individuals as human beings was deeply compromised by his racial beliefs, such as in the case of the African slaves in Virginia. Precisely, he believed that

[411] T. Louverture, *The Haitian Revolution*, edited by Nick Nesbitt, introduction by Jean-Bernard Aristide, London-Brooklin, Verso, 2019, p.32.
[412] The Founding Fathers, *Constitution of the United States of America*.

all the individuals of African descent and genes constitute a different nation within the American one[413].

Thomas Jefferson gave an emblematic and transparent proof of his racial prejudices in his own work, the "*Notes on the State of Virginia*". The Virginian-born politician was firmly convinced that such a racial distinction would continue to exist throughout history, so an essential abolition of slavery and the subsequent recognition of civil rights and citizenship to the enslaved people would be "painful" in the sense that it would only increase the racial disparity among the two "nations". In Jefferson's native state, Virginia, slaves used not to suffer physical injuries and bad treatments, but they were still in a condition that would not have allowed their emancipation in universal terms. If emancipation had been attained, then whites and blacks would have contributed to feed even more the perpetual Lockean state of war in which they found[414]. However, it seems that there was no conceived space for enslaved people in his ideal country, as he affirmed that enslaved people should decide to live in a country where they would not be an income source for the others[415]. Specifically, the former third US President provided a description of the physical, moral, and cerebral characteristics of black people, and the result seems to be a purely Jeffersonian affirmation and condemnation of the conditions of inferiority of the black people. He provided many details of both their physical and mental abilities, and he focused especially on their mental and intellectual paucities that would render an eventual comprehension of classical authors, such as Euclid, difficult, if not impossible[416].

As noted by Garret Sheldon, Thomas Jefferson was heavily inspired by of John Locke's philosophy, but he meticulously adapted and re-shaped Locke's politics of the "Two Treatises of Government" based on what we should call "Jeffersonian necessities". Emblematic seems to be the passage of Sheldon's "The Political Philosophy of Thomas

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[413] P. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood,* pp.147-150.
[414] *Ibidem*.
[415] Jefferson, *Notes on The State of Virginia,* Query 18-19, edited by J.W Randolph, Richmond, 1853. Retrieved from: Notes.
[416] *Ibidem,* Query 18-19.

Jefferson", where he claims that there has been a quite strategic and peculiar use of the Lockean political theory[417]. Armitage recognized the influence of Thomas Jefferson's logic within the structure of the text, which the historian himself considers a remarkable bricolage. Accordingly, Jefferson wrote the text on the ground of many other documents: the Virginia Constitution he had written himself, Lee's Resolution, as well as the Virginia Declaration of Rights written by Mason. It is within this outstanding bricolage that Armitage reveals that Jefferson had received severe pressure from all the members of Congress, according to their relative interests. However, they all agreed on formalizing the conspiracy theory they had developed in 1774, according to which the British Monarchy attempted to establish an absolute tyranny over the colonies [418].

The focus on the institution of slavery is revealing of both the hidden nature of the Declaration of Independence and the degree of manipulation of many key concepts that served a different purpose. In terms of influences on the content of the text, Armitage's analysis reveals that there was no single influence on the Declaration's content, but rather an intertwining flow of notions that the Founding Fathers owed to several writers of their time. Indeed, James Maddison received a letter on the 17th of October 1774, where the First Congress official printer William Bradford informed him that when it was a question of dealing with issues affecting the rights of the colonies, writers and philosophers such as "(…) Vattel, Barlemaqui, Locke and Montesquieu (…)" would be the sources of inspiration to deal with the dispute [419].

Furthermore, two pillars of Paine's "Common Sense" emerge: the philosopher, as the previous chapter defined, based his popular rhetoric on the ideas that the new American government had to remove from the roots the monarchical and tyrannical government

[417] G. W. Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy Of Thomas Jefferson*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, pp.16-52.
[418] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.26-50.
[419] W. Bradford to James Maddison, private letter, 17th of October 1774. Retrieved from: Letter to James Maddison.

which ruled over the colonies for the many decades, and to establish what the text of the Declaration would readapt in "Free and Independent States"[420].

Moreover, despite the logic of both Locke and Paine's reasoning, Armitage reveals that the Declaration heavily drew on the contributions provided by the Swiss jurist Emer de Vattel. Indeed, no other writer before him had placed such a perpetual emphasis on the intertwining concepts of freedom, independence, and interdependence among states, in a way that should balance both the respect of each state's liberty and the interdependence among each other. Not surprisingly, three copies of Vattel's "Law of Nations" were given to Franklin, who provided them to Congress[421]. The model would also be key in the management of slavery: as the final part of this chapter will reveal, Jefferson was a convinced supporter of creating a republican form of government, for which sovereign, centralized institutions would not limit each state but would rather preserve its sovereignty. Therefore, freedom, independence, and interdependence would be implemented in a way that deeply draws from the model theorized by De Vattel, allowing each state to deal with the institution of slavery according to its interests.

Specifically, the former thirteen British colonies addressed directly the king and the parliament in the Declaration's text by arguing that they had been victims of "Long train of abuses and usurpation (…) all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states."[422], which was followed by a long list of twenty-seven grievances committed by King George III. However, Sheldon notes that such a long list of tyrannical acts was just a mere pretext for the Americans to achieve a local and autonomous control of the legislation. In other words, the American Founding Fathers used the Declaration to justify their willingness to become a new nation, with their sovereignty, government and independence [423]. Here is a contradiction between Locke and Jefferson: Locke inspired Jefferson, and it is true as well that Jefferson readapted the Lockean theory provided in in the second treatise. Armitage highlights that the independence was "claimed for themselves

[420] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.
[421] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.26-50.
[422] The Founding Fathers, *The Declaration of Independence*.
[423] G. W. Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy Of Thomas Jefferson*, pp.16-52

and not for the others" as the Founding Fathers pursued the independence only for the thirteen American colonies, and not for other "realities"[424]. If applied to the context of this chapter, this passage proves to be of enormous relevance as it reassumes the fact that the independence from the tyrannical government that reduced the population into domestic slavery was achieved in a peculiar way: it applied only for "themselves", the free people, and not for the "others", the slaves. This "peculiar" aspect can be observed in the fact that violations of fundamental rights, such as liberty and life, justified independence for themselves, rather than for the whole human beings in their lands. Not surprisingly, the Congress would play a pivotal role in reformulating the text before its approval, with the subsequent elimination of a specific clause on the slave trade. [425]. It is within this perspective that two social orbits, which were mentioned in the previous pages, contribute to reveal the peculiar character of the Declaration. The "not for the others" argued by Armitage finds application in this context as slaves were still prevented from the enjoyment of such fundamental rights within the republican United States of America.

However, it is also true that in such an adaptation, the former third US President interpreted his view on slavery in a manner consistent with Locke's. Indeed, the English Philosopher affirmed that there can be only one justified slavery, which is the one deriving from a just war [426]. Here is the key point at issue: there was no "just war" between the Americans and Africans that could have at least aligned Jefferson with the Lockean formulation; instead, it was only a matter of racial prejudices and economic interests that prevailed. Such a conviction regarding the deportation reflected his principal goal, which was not about the concretization of the idea of freedom and liberty, but instead referred to the liberty in lands distant from American countries [427]. Jefferson stood against the amalgamation of the two nations, especially in Virginia, since he had always pursued a society based on common and shared values as part of a project that should give what he defined as "(…) more homogeneous, more peaceful, more durable." [428].

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[424] D. Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence. A Global History*, pp.4-5

[425] *Ibidem,* pp.59-60.

[426] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Book 2, Chapter 7, Paragraph 85, p.322

[427] P. S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood*, p.175.

[428] T. Jefferson, *Notes on The State of Virginia*, Query 8.

Jefferson was also frightened by the quantitative side of the slavery, such as the number of individuals who belonged to the specific population of foreigners. For instance, he provided concrete data on the number of male Pamunkies, which reveals Jefferson's tendencies to keep the natality rate at which the population reproduced themselves under control[429]. Therefore, it seems to be quite explicit how he meticulously planned a society in which there was no room for minorities as it would have somehow interfered with the white supremacy and their "pragmatic" and civilized interpretation of the life. Jefferson feared that the balanced and civilized society he had been planning to build could have been compromised by the presence of the slaves in the active social context. He was scared by the possibility that, by recognizing freedom and emancipation to slaves, there would happen a rapid escalation of tensions that would hamper the implementation of his national project.

The exclusion of African slaves from the white American society, which should be extended to other minorities such as the Indians, contributes to reinforce the racist bias of Jefferson. He believed the native population had a peculiar interpretation of civil society since they only abide by the "moral sense of right and wrong" [430], which increased the difficulty to include them within a more centralized and rational form of government as Jefferson craved to attain. Notwhistanding, the Jefferson believed that natives were comfortably corruptible and transformed them in instruments at the service of the ministerial corruption[431]. Therefore, the focus on the natives reveals the ruthlessness of Jefferson in exploiting minorities to satisfy his personal, and more generally, national interests.

Jefferson's personal writings about the natives also illuminates of his contradictory personality: it is in this context that the word "paradoxical" seems to be emblematic in depicting the whole Jeffersonian experience. Despite the fact that he aspired to create a free, egalitarian and democratic government based on a civilized society, he then proved to be relentless when it was more advantageous to overlook the beliefs of liberty and freedom he had advocated in the Declaration. He had challenged King George III's tyrannical when the

[429] *Ibidem,* Query 11.
[430] *Ibidem*.
[431] P. S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood*, pp.31-32

US were still a British colony, but he maintained a tyrannical approach towards the slaves by firmly rejecting the universal emancipation.

A further reason for which Jefferson did not take concretely acted to abolish slavery relates to his luxurious lifestyle. Finkelman strongly denounces Jefferson's lifestyle by arguing that his lifestyle was way more important than the rights of those who allowed him to afford such a high-ranking lifestyle[432]. As reported by English newspaper The Guardian, a recently founded letters reveals that Thomas Jefferson was heavily indebted, at the point that he was planning to reduce his household expenses[433]. Jefferson wrote a letter about his financial situation on the 14th of May 1802, where he addressed tea merchant John Barnes by arguing that he was forced to stay within his limits of his funds by the Bank of Columbia[434]. So far, the image of Thomas Jefferson seems to resemble that of racist, opportunist, and selfish politicians. When he signed the text of the Declaration, he directly addressed the British King to contest his tyranny, where freedom, liberties, and unalienable rights had been violated by the imperial government. However, he did not hesitate to maintain slavery when he became the US President in 1801. To resume Jefferson's approach to slavery, Finkelman's words prove a concrete but efficient depiction: "(…) his grand style was far more important than the natural rights of his slaves."[435]. Finkelman reveals also that Jefferson even owned at least 150 slaves when he wrote the text of the Declaration [436].

The fact that Thomas Jefferson was racially biased is undeniable, but the issue cannot limit only to his character since he appeared to be just the most shining reflection of the American society. As Finkelman argues, there was a deep contraposition between Northern and Southern states as to the issue of counting of black slaves for matters of political representation, which reinforce even more the idea of how racially stratified the American society was. Slaves, therefore, were conceived as properties rather than human being. Indeed, the debate between Northern and Southern states arose only for practical issues that

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[432] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson,* p.105.

[433] The Guardian, *A newly discovered letter by Thomas Jefferson shows 'a regular guy with financial burden*, 4th of July 2024, accessed on the 8th of March 2025. Retrieved from: The Guardian.

[434] T. Jefferson, *Letter to John Barnes,* 14th of May 1802. Retrieve from: Letter to Barnes.

[435] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, p.105.

[436] *Ibidem,* p.48.

involved slaves. The black population was not supposed to be elevated in the social ladders to more comfortable ranks, but they were counted only for practical issues that concerned the interests of the states. Finkelman claims that if the issue of representation was reserved only to free people, then northern states would have acquired a heavier degree of influence in the House of Representative. It is therefore, for this reason, that southern states proposed to calculate slaves just to increase the number of representatives, and it is in such a context that the racially-based society provided its most emblematic performance [437].

Two quotations from the representatives of two different states confirm. During the secret debates on the 11th of June 1787, Massachusetts representative Elbridge Gerry affirmed that "Blacks are property, and are used to the southward as horses and cattle to the northward (…)"[438]. In the same year, on the 9th of July, New Jersey representative William Paterson expressed himself about the possibility that slaves would have an influence on the popular representation, and he concluded by arguing that slaves had no rights to liberty as they were "only property of their owner"[439]. Moreover, the fact that slaves were finally being counted in terms of representation only had a negative consequence: the importation of slaves from Africa only continued growing [440].

Jefferson's contribution to the racial discourse finds application in his letter to Edward Coles, dated the 25th of August 1814, where he defined slavery as a menace to the society, which had to be carefully dealt with. In the letter, he argued that "(…) their amalgamation with the other colour produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent"[441]. This affirmation certifies once for all the racist bias that Jefferson had towards the black population and reinforce his fear to deteriorate the Virginian society.

Moreover, Jefferson perceived the peril coming from the Haitian Revolution, defined by him as the "first chapter" the story of manumission of slavery. He was firmly convinced by the

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[437] *Ibidem*, pp.8-21.

[438] E. Gerry, *Notes of the Secret Debates of the Federal Convention of 1787*. Retrieved from: Secret Debate.

[439] Madison Debate, 9th of July 1787. Retrieved from: Madison debate.

[440] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, pp.17-23

[441] T. Jefferson, *Letter to Edward Coles*, 25th of August 1814. Retrieved from: Letter to E. Coles

fact that the immediate emancipation would have brought another revolution where the blacks would take over the whites[442]. Dupuy argues that Haiti suffered from economic emancipation after the proclamation of the Haitian Republic on the 1st of January 1804. Specifically, in the following years, the new-born nation-state would face a lack of diplomatic recognition from foreign nations that would hamper the economic prosperity of the Island. Such a consideration reflects the scepticism and diffidence towards the Haitian experience that emerges from Jefferson's writings. Worried about the Haitian context, Jefferson hesitated in recognizing the independence of Haiti after its proclamation as independent nation in 1804, since the US President feared that the legitimation of the Haitian Revolution would pave the way for further slave revolts also in America. The US not only tried to limit the influence that the Haitian revolution would have on the American slaves but went further and persuaded the states in the Caribbeans to take the distance from the Haitian experience, trying to isolate the prosperous and powerful slave revolts that would have overturned the anti-abolitionist dynamics that consolidated the power of the many slavery-supporting states in America, Virginia comprised [443].

At the beginning of this chapter, the metaphor of colours to "label" the two characters was used. So far, the analysis has provided a specific perspective through which the two characters are generally interpreted. Therefore, on the ground of our imaginary line between the two extremes, Touissaint Louverture shall be labelled as total white since he embodied the image of the hero who overturned the social dynamics imposed by the motherland. Conversely, Thomas Jefferson should be associated to the darkest shade of black. He severely rejected the British tyranny in all its forms, on the ground of the strong claim with which the Declaration begins. Jefferson emphasized the idea that all the individuals were gifted by God by the same degree of equality, which allowed them to benefit from the unalienable rights that comprised also the liberties. He also proceeded with his allegation to the tyrannical British government by arguing that a long period of abuses and violations had hampered the enjoyment of the colonies of such unalienable rights and therefore

[442] T. Jefferson, *Letter to St. George Tucker*, 27th of August 1797. Retrieved from: Letter to Tucker

[443] A. Dupuy, *Haiti: From Revolutionary Slaves to Powerless Citizens. Essays on the politics and economics of underdevelopment, 1804–2013*, pp.51-57.

allowed them to overturn those tyrannical dynamics. However, the same tyrannical dynamics in terms of violation of one of those unalienable rights seems to have been overlooked by the same individual who had previously advocated those rights in 1776. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that Jefferson (in this specific case, but it must be extended to the whole American society) exercised an equivalent degree of tyranny on the subjects, namely slaves and servants, for the simple fact that they could not enjoy the freedom advocated by the Declarations. Notwithstanding, the reality of the facts seems to be much deeper and more intricated as the following section will explore.

3.4 - The Dark Touissaint and the Fair Thomas.

3.4.1- The Dark Touissaint?

The uniqueness and complexities of Louverture emerge from the fact that his plan acquires a different essence on the practice. Ideologically, he is a revolutionary, but, practically, he was less democratic as it may appear. Within his complexities, the *Louverture's Constitution* is as emblematic as eloquent in revealing that his contradictions were not even that disguised. As Popkin shares, Louverture led the Haitian population towards the consolidation of what the same Popkin describes as "(…) a system of centralized authoritarian government (…)"[444].

Therefore, if the real unique purpose of Louverture's plan was the consolidation and maintenance of freedom, rather the establishment of a political and economic environment that pivoted around his figure, the Article 5 of the *Louverture's Constitution* may be the game changer of this chapter. As the article provides, the law was equal both in terms of punishment and protection, and it had to be respected in all its functions[445]. This issue contributes to increase the scepticism towards his real democratic intention. There may be

[444] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, p.90.
[445] T. Louverture, *Saint-Domingue Constitution of 1801*, Art.5.

precise interrogatives we desire to resolve. Why would such a leader, the one who had conducted the population towards the liberation from the chains of slavery, be so restrictive, and place punishment at the same level of protection? Could such a measure be the very first move towards the formalization of a centralized, tyrannical, and authoritarian regime?

Louverture rapidly centralized the executive and legislative power on his hand, and he even formalized it through specific a section of the 1801 Constitution. Concretely, the confirmation of the centralization of power in his hands is noticeable in the "Title VIII" of the Constitution, where he determined the composition and the functions of the officials representing the Government. Louverture declared that he was entrusted to be the leader of the island for the "remainder of his glorious life" (Art.28), and to do so he retained the power to "(…) seal and promulgate the laws(...)" as the Article 34 states[446]. Louverture did not assigned himself a limited political mandate during his life, but he did so for the future Governors by imposing a five-years-long mandate. Moreover, the Haitian Leader planned his personal legacy to be long-lasting even after his life. In doing so, he decided that the individual who would replace his duties as Governor of the island would be chosen by Louverture himself [447]. Popkin contributes to certify the authoritarian governmental tendencies by underscoring the fact that Louverture received no approval by the French Government to promulgate his constitution[448].

The fact that Louverture sought to satisfy his own necessities and interests seems to be linked to the context in which he was born and raised, which appears to be rather unusual for a black individual who was born and raised in a sugar-cane plantation. Indeed, as Hazareesingh claims, the Haitian leader was born in a sugar plantation located in the Northern locality of Bredà, where his parents were enslaved. However, Louverture never experienced direct violent behaviours and inhuman treatment as the other slaves suffered from. A key figure for his education and growth was the white French colon Antoine-

[446] *Ibidem*, Art.34.
[447] *Ibidem*, Art.29.
[448] P. Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoléon. Touissaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence*, p.20.

François Bayon de Libertat, who remained surprised by the cleverness and intelligence possessed by Louverture. The French man rapidly employed him as his business partner in the Island, which conferred upon him a sense of responsibility that would be pivotal in Louverture's ascent to power.

This unconventional approach towards a black individual extends also to the other members of his family: Hazareesingh argues that, within the plantations owned by the same Bayon, many of his relatives occupied privileged positions because they were employed as cooks, valets, and housekeepers[449]. For these reasons, summed to the fact that Louverture often employed members of his family to support his missions, his self-consideration as a member of the Haitian slavery might have been distorted as such a "privileged" collocation within the society prompted him to pursue the way of the self-consecration rather than the one of universal emancipation.

When referring to the exclusion of the popular participation, Popkin's choice to use the words "had no voice"[450] appears to depict the same situation experience by the former British colonies. The American Founding Fathers contested the lack of consent to the imposition enacted by the British Empire when they were still colonies. Similarly, the Haitian front contributes to increase the perception that the Louverturian experience was regressing towards the instauration of an individual and tyrannical government, rather than a democratic and freedom-based popular society. Therefore, if the approach adopted by the British Empire to the colonial government in America was described by the former colonies as a tyranny that led to "(…) long train of abuses and usurpations (…)"[451], then there is no reason to believe that the same tyranny was, and would be, exercised by the consolidation of the Louverturian government in Haiti. Louverture undeniably overturned the political dynamics that had dominated the island since his ascent. He wrote history in many ways: he elevated enslaved people to the status of cultivators, he convinced the French Republic

[449] S. Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus. The Epic Life of Touissaint Louverture*, pp.21-32.
[450] J. D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, p.109.
[451] The Founding Fathers, *Declaration of Independence*.

to better accept his leadership on the Island, he formalized the emancipation on the Constitution.

Louverture followed the way paved by the 1789 French Revolution, and he found his main source of inspiration in Maximilienne De Robespierre. Here is the point at issue: as Nesbitt argues, Louverture was deeply influenced by the ideals shared in Robespierre's *On the Principle of Morality*[452]. If, as we noticed in the first section, Louverture tended to define himself as the "father" of his "children" (the Haitian population), the most logical conclusion is that a father would do everything for the love of his children. Therefore, the results would be that of a new nation born upon the roots of both influence of Robespierre and the Declaration of Rights. However, the reality of the fact seems to prove an alternative verdict. The population was supposed to have an influential participation in the governmental activities as part of a democratic system. As Robespierre stated on the 5th of February 1794, during his speech to the French Convention, a democracy, so the government of the population, should be "(…) trustful towards the people and severe towards itself" since "Democracy is a state in which the sovereign people [are] guided by laws which are of their own making (…)"[453]. However, the quite regressive approached adopted by Louverture reveals that his government was severe towards the population and trustful only towards his own Leader.

Therefore, the image of Louverture as a devoted architect of the new future nation continue to acquire consistently a darker shade, not only for the centralization of the power in his hands, and the exclusion of the population from the government, but also for the repressive economic system in which the vast majority of the population was employed.

As it can be noticed, the same linguistic "firmness", adopted by Louverture to declare the absolute abolition of slavery in the Haitian society (Art.3, Section 2.), was used to assert the relevance of the plantation-based economy through which he conceived the survival of the

[452] N. Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*, pp.47-49.

[453] M. Robespierre, *On Political Morality*, 5th of February 1794. Retrieved from: On Political Morality.

Island. As the Article 4 affirms, "all men, regardless of colour, are eligible to all employment"[454], which interpreted Louverture's concern of the revitalization of the economy. Louverture was conscious of the fact that Haiti could only rely on their agricultural resources, so he decided to maximize the barely efficient economic system, and only one, that could have provided at least a sort of initial economic recovery. The nature behind its colonization was purely economic as the French Republic sought to maximalise its global prestige and economic power by increasing its transatlantic trade of goods. The Island was conceived to produce sugar on large scale, which limited the development of any other economic activity and incentive. Dupuy reinforce this claim by arguing that Haiti featured all the characteristics that define a peripheral economy as those few in charge maximised the economic profits, while the population's aspiration was limited to subsistence economy. Its leader was more committed to defending its economic interests, the same as the property owner, rather than elaborating an efficient economic system that would have granted the population a sufficient degree of economic stability[455].

Through the *Labour Force Decree*, he declared that the public security and efficiency of the nation would be achieved only if everybody performed in the assigned occupation. His idea was conceived to have a consistently working agricultural system through which the Nation would acquire economic stability. Louverture, in affirming that "field-negroes are forbidden to quit their respective plantations without lawful permission"[456], preferred to safeguard the economic interests of the island at the expense of the freedom of the population. For him, freedom and liberties had for no reason the same meaning as the idleness he attempted to defeat by introducing a centralized and militarized economic system. As revealed by Forsdick and Hogsbjerg, Louverture even invited former white landowner white, Bernard Borgella, to acquire information and advice about running plantations[457]. This further

[454] T. Louverture, *Saint-Domingue Constitution of 1801.*
[455] A. Dupuy, *Haiti: From Revolutionary Slaves to Powerless Citizens. Essays on the politics and economics of underdevelopment, 1804–2013,* pp.29-36.
[456] T. Louverture, *Forced Labour Decree*, 12th of October 1800.
[457] C. Forsdick, C. Hogsbjerg, *Toussaint Louverture: A Black Jacobin in the Age of Revolutions*, London, Pluto press, 2017, pp.87-103.

paradox reveals the abilities to manipulate the population according to his own interests: Louverture warned the black population that the enemy was the white colonists, but at the same time he had no hesitation in meeting with those whites who could have proved beneficial for his plan. Louverture never sincerely pursue the establishment of a new Haitian society, independent from the motherland, with its own degree of economic and "humanitarian" prosperity. Rather, as the duo confirms, Louverture aimed to maintain a sufficient degree of autonomy within the French Republic rather than giving birth to a new, independent nation.[458]

The fact that a liberty conqueror pursued the improvement of the economic stability did not suffice to justify the repressive approach he adopted to ensure an efficient agricultural production. His tyrannical methods were covered by superb rhetoric through which he acquired consensus among the French officials and his own compatriots. Even though Louverture contributed to sensational achievements, such as the recognition of the emancipation from France, he somehow acted like even more perilous menace for the future development of the society. He acted like he concretely abolished slavery, while it was permitted only because the French government realized that, in the future, it would have been more convenient having him allied rather than combatting with his army of riotous slaves.

The point at issue seems to have acquired more clarity: slavery was only masked by Louverture as the concretization of the well-predicated freedom was only a theorical issue. Girard supports this claim by claiming that workers were forced to rest only three days every thirty of work as Louverture changed the traditional method of five days per month. The population felt betrayed by their leader, so a series of upheavals commenced: since late 1800, more than 6000 cultivators deceased, among which 5,000 of them after a rebellion near Cap in October 180. Louverture did not personally performed the duty as he used to

[458] *Ibidem.*

delegate his subordinates such as Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who was even able to kill for not meeting their production quotas [459].

Louverture seems to have operated for the love of his population, which depended on just one means of production: agricultural goods from the plantation. However, economic production was not as efficient as it may be perceived. If every farmer had the opportunity to purchase, work, and sell the products coming from their own land, the rural economy might have sufficed to satisfy at least the basic needs of the citizens. However, his centralized and authoritarian system not only enriched landowners and made farmers poor, but it also severely limited, not to say annihilated, the liberty of the population[460]. As Dubois shares, the Louverturian attempt to establish a good balance between an efficient economic mechanism of production and the implementation of the desired liberty miserably failed[461].

Put in more simplistic, and voluntarily hazardous, terms, Louverture did contribute with sensational changes, but in a quite regressive way. The only aspect that seems to have change since his rise to power was the tyrant that stayed in power. From 1794, year in which the French Government conceded the emancipation and virtually accepted the idea that Louverture could be a benefit in charge, the Louverturian takeover was accomplished. The population had a new tyrant at the government, but they would only realize it several years later. Forsdick and Hogsbjerg even claim that the former French regime was less authoritarian than the Louverturian one[462]. It may appear as a matter of the fact that Louverture paved the way for the formalization of the independence of the nation, proclaimed by Jean-Jacque Dessalines in 1804. However, his absurd centralization of all the power in his hand, Louverture was victim of his own methods, which sensibly contribute to deteriorate the image of him as a revolutionary hero. Considering the illuminating premises with which Louverture ascended in the Haitian politics, a different scenario was expectable

[459] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, pp.198-199.
[460] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, pp.225-250.
[461] *Ibidem*.
[462] *Ibidem*.

to be achieved. His relevance in writing the Haitian history is undeniable, but mainly in terms of the strategy he used to achieve the power. At the same time, undeniable is also the fact that he contributed to the consolidation of slavery under a false identity.

3.4.2- The Fair Thomas?

The former third American President has been widely celebrated as a pioneer of the American Democracy. As highlighted by Finkelman, his face has been printed on the two-dollars banknotes, or many cities and counties has been named after him, as well as many schools and high schools[463]. Thomas Jefferson undeniably demonstrated his convinced racially-biased beliefs and scepticism that refrained him from englobing blacks and whites on the same orbit of individuals as universal human being. However, Jefferson's personal writing revealed an inner side which seems to be a game changer in the historical consideration and depiction of him as a slaveholder, which will be addressed in the following lines.

What must be properly clarified is that we should not conceive Thomas Jefferson as a pioneer of the abolitionist cause as his racial bias and beliefs towards the black population was to consolidate in the whole American culture to be defeated. Nevertheless, we should at least notice the voice of his conscience who repeatedly stimulated him to reflect about a hypothetical solution to the plague of slavery. Since the black population was excluded from the participation to the American project, the fact that Jefferson still attempted to offer a concrete system, through which the achievement of the emancipation could have been realized, is emblematic in revealing the evolution of Jefferson's approach to slavery.

[463] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the age of Jefferson*, p.110.

Jefferson developed a personal conception of the idea of land which referred to a geographical territory that belonged to the natives[464]. Therefore, if this belief was applied, without distinction of class, race, or categories, and based on what he declared in Query XIX, "those who labour on earth are the chosen of God", then there would be no distinction between classes since such a project would encompass both slaves and free people without any discrimination. Moreover, if the belonging to land was a reliable criterion to establish whether citizens could be part of such a project, then the Americans could not be part of America as they were of British ascendancy, but it seems that it applied to slaves only. Jefferson idealized the United States of America as a Republican system based on the consent to establish single independent states which remained dependent on each other simultaneously due to the creation of a federal union where the states would converge[465]. Specifically, Jefferson had a view of the perfect "happy" nation and, by starting from Virginia, he proposed a process of amalgamation and cultural cohesion among the population. Individuals had to share the same values, beliefs, and moral obligations towards each other, as the nation was not a mere coexistence of many citizens in the same land. As Onuf shares, though worried about the increasing number of slaves populating Virginia, Jefferson believed that at least the children of the immigrants could be educated and integrated into the local society.

In Query XVIII, Thomas Jefferson seemed to be deeply concerned with such a state of war in which black slaves and whites were committed, which reveals a sincere and convinced devotion to the cause of slavery. Jefferson demonstrates his concerns by affirming that a punishment by God will be received, sooner or later, for the tyrannical treatment reserved for the enslaved people[466]. However, the racially-biased beliefs of Jefferson would refrain him from demonstrating that the cultural amalgamation was possible. As Jefferson himself argued, slaves had to pursue the implementation of the plan for the emancipation in a

[464] *Ibidem*, p.164.
[465] *Ibidem,* p.38.
[466] T. Jefferson, *Notes on The State of Virginia*, Query 18.

country that "(…) must be any other in preference to that in which he is born to live and labour for another (…)"[467].

The plan entailed by Jefferson may appear as an excuse not to concede the emancipation in the American states, as many of them relied primarily on the agriculture, especially in the south. Notwithstanding, Jefferson's racial beliefs were limited in a certain sense as he still conceived a solution for the emancipation of slaves. He consistently affirmed the superiority of the white population from a cognitive point of view, as well as he denied any concrete possibility for a hypothetically efficient cultural and social amalgamation, but he also acknowledged the barbarism in which the Americans were committed. Jefferson seems to have found a balance for both the Americans and the Africans: the Africans would be moved to a new land, where they would enjoyed the same degree of freedom and independence the Founding Fathers carefully articulated in their Independence document. The same time, the Americans, Virginia especially, would reduce the presence of the slaves on the territories and increase the general health of the state[468].

However, Jefferson conceived the repatriation of slaves in a quite pragmatic and reasoned way. His plan was likely to extend to the new generation of slaves as Jefferson describes in the Query XIV. Specifically, he believed that prole had to maintain a connection on the American territories with their parents until a specific year of age. During the permanence, the new generation was required to born in a state of freedom, to then acquire their education in science or art, and then finally move to the lands where freedom and independence would be recognised[469].

Although such a plan may signify almost nothing in terms of implementation of an antislavery regime, it offered the states the opportunity to be more independent in terms of internal policies. This opportunity is linked to the Constitution of the United States of America, which widely reflect Jefferson's ambition to create a republican and

[467] *Ibidem*.
[468] P. S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood*, pp.173-175.
[469] T. Jefferson, *Notes on The State of Virginia*, Query 17.

antimonarchical government. Indeed, the basis of the Jefferson's republicanism are evident especially in the first three sections: the legislative power was distributed among the two authorities that composed the Congress, namely the Senate and the House of Representatives. Within these two bodies, the relevance of the states come from the fact that it was compulsory to have two members per each state[470]. Both Onuf and Finkelman's contributions provide further support the idea that the approach to slavery was the peculiarity of each state. Onuf argues that the Jefferson pursued the implementation of a model where each state was supposed to be independent from each other as the states had to be the priority over the Union [471]. Consequently, the republican and decentralized management of the power would reduce the spheres of action of the Congress while it would increase the one of the states, as Finkelman shares[472]. This plan allowed many states, such as Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, to manumit slavery by 1787[473].

When Jefferson became the President of the United States of America, on the 4th of March 1801, he addressed his inaugural speech where he argued that in that chosen country, there was abundant space for many generations, both from the past and future, in which he expressed his faith in the restoration of "the road which alone leads to peace, liberty, and safety"[474]. Such an affirmation illuminates the broader project of his desired nations. From the text, the idea of an inclusive and multicultural nation, where every individual should have enjoyed and benefitted from those ideals of peace and security claimed by the same Jefferson, seems to emerge. Within this perspective, the fact Jefferson praised the Indian population for being a society built on the pillar of personal freedom rather than on the passive acceptance of a tyrannical ruler or rulers. He believed that they represented the essence of the republican society he dreamt of, namely a society that was not ruled by a

[470] The Founding Fathers, *The Constitution of the United States*, Sections 1,2,3.
[471] P. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood*, pp.37-38.
[472] P. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, pp.6-7.
[473] *Ibidem*, p.102.
[474] T. Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address*, 4th of March 1801. Retrieved from: Inaugural Address.

tyrannical government, but rather by what Onuf defines as "spontaneous expression of man's sociable nature"[475].

Instead, he was a man who was sceptical of the possibility of immigrants, and more generally, black people and slaves, reaching physical, mental and cognitive conditions possessed by white people. This aspect, emerging from his writings, does not automatically define him as a slaveholder, although it shares a consolidated bias. On the other hand, such scepticism towards the inferiority of the slaves and their exclusion from the local society were overturned by his plan to reduce slavery gradually in order to prevent the degeneration of a situation in which slaves could have gone from absolute enchainment to total liberty, so from one extreme to the other.

However, the multiculturality and inclusivity embodied in his project highlighted on the first speech as an American president should be conceived in other terms, at least not in the sense that those words can be perceived nowadays. Jefferson's conception of "hospitality" was widely shared in American society, but it only extended to what he considered proper American individuals, or, at least, not Aboriginals

3.5– Shades of Grey.

According to what has been thoroughly discussed so far, both Louverture and Jefferson 's approaches entailed a unique degree of complexity. To solve this intricacy, we need to recall the imaginary line comprised between the two extremes of colours, white and black, which will contribute to determine the final verdict of this debate.

Both leaders were involved in the slave trade, but the reality of the facts reveals a different story. On the one hand, Jefferson, famous for his tendency to possess and commerce slaves in America, at least tried to provide concrete solution to the abolition of the slave trade. On the 25th of March 1807, the Jefferson Administration passed the *Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves* through which the US committed to ban the commerce of African slaves.

[475] P. S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood*, p.19.

Specifically, the act affirms that the "it shall not be lawful to import or bring into the United States (…) any negro, mulatto or person of colour with the intent to hold, sell, or dispose (…) as a slave"[476]. Conversely, Touissaint Louverture acted in an unconventional way for being considered the hero who guided the slaves to the achievement of freedom. As Girard claims, Louverture had secretly negotiated with British slave traders to purchase slaves required by the agricultural system he consolidated[477], before proceeding with is restoration in 1801[478]. In this context, if the objective of his project was the consolidation of the Haitian economy, he could have used a different strategy. Considering the Haitian dependence on importations of trade goods, he could have negotiated new trade deals with the British Empire, instead of relying on the illegal importation of slaves. However, it seems that his interests came mainly from the he retained a large degree power on the Island, so he could have almost entirely undisturbed. Girard argues that, before joining the antislavery cause, Louverture had owned slaves and plantations: in 1779, he had rented 13 slaves to employ them in the coffee plantation he would have managed for his son in law, Jean-Philippe Desmir[479]. Thus, the hypothesis that Louverture only attempted to collect revenues coming from what he used to work with in his early life might not surprise at all.

The Haitian leader sought to reinforce his personal control over the plantation system as he believed it was the only way that would consolidate the freedom of the population. However, his methods appeared severely restricting in terms of liberty. As Dubois argues, Louverture was an abolitionist leader whose methods fell into the reaffirmation of slavery rather than the emancipation. Louverture, according to the Dubois, sought to "consolidate and protect emancipation"[480], but this goal was pursued through the implementation of methods that led to the reinforcement of slavery instead of paving the way to the consolidation of liberty. If his project sincerely aimed to reduce the idleness in the island,

[476] The Jefferson Administration, *Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves*, 25th March 1807. Retrieved from: Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves

[477] P. Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoléon. Touissaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence,* pp.17-18.

[478] P. Girard, *Touissaint Louverture: A Revolutionary Life*, p.200.

[479] *Ibidem,* p.71.

[480] L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, p.238.

reinforce the agricultural economy, and maintain liberty, he should have applied different strategies. For instance, he could have opted for diversification of the working-shifts to have full-time employment, or maybe the introduction of production quotas that would have benefitted both the economy and the personal freedom of the cultivators. Louverture often tended to reserve privileged occupation for the member of his family, contributing to reinforce the idea that he was more focused on achieving his personal interests rather than concretely contributing to the birth of a new society based on the ideals of freedom and liberties predicated throughout his career. This perception may find confirmation on his own words. He argued that "since the blacks are free, they need a chief, and it is I who must be that chief". Again, Louverture affirmed "I felt I was destined to great things" [481]. These declarations should be perceived as a further demonstration that the will of the nation was just a mere assumption for him to cover his real intentions. The difference with Thomas Jefferson, in this context, should be contextualized on the ground of the political dimension in which both operated. The US were composed by thirteen different states, each one with its government and regulations, with more diversified and extended political and social dynamics. Jefferson reflects the racially oriented background in which he was born and raised. As Isenberg claims, Jefferson was the embodiment of the Virginian gentry: he received a European-oriented education, lived a luxurious life, read the classics, and possessed 187 slaves by the time of the Revolution[482]. Jefferson's cultural and educational background was deeply influenced by the context in which he was born. As noted by Sheldon, he belonged to the high-ranked social class in the Virginian society, which tendencies and privileges were reflected by his tendencies not to renounce to all the privileges the aristocracy was supposed to benefit from. Indeed, he inherited 5000 acres in his childhood, and this explains his tendency to be involved in the slave trade and the fact that he proposed a constitution for the state of Virginia where every citizen would have granted fifty acres of lands[483]. It is in this "agricultural" dimension that the chapter three

[481] T. Louverture, personal assertion in *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Negro Patriot of Hayti: Comprising an Account of the Struggle for Liberty in the Island, and a Sketch of Its History to the Present Period*, edited by J. R. Beard, London, Ingram, Coocke, and co, 1853, p.125. Retrieved from: Internet Archive.
[482] N. Isenberg, *White Trash. The 400-year Untold History of Class in America*, New York, Viking, 2016, pp.86-87.
[483] G. W. Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy Of Thomas Jefferson*, pp.122-125.

would delve deeper into the familiarization of Jefferson with the slavery, which introduce the focal Lockean omission implemented by Jefferson. Indeed, Jefferson's involvement in lands market since his childhood forged his personality and his economic goals in a way that reflects what reinforce the idea of his personal interpretation of Locke's beliefs, since Jefferson was one of the most influent slaveowner in the Virginian states when the Declaration was drafted. Nevertheless, he still elaborated a plan for the emancipation of the slaves and ratified the act that abolished the African slave trade. Conversely, Haiti was a small island based on a rural economy where the power was confined in the hands of a single individual, namely Louverture. The confidence he had acquired, coupled with his diplomatic abilities, and his excellent communication abilities, permitted him to acquire an undiscussed leadership. Louverture possessed all the requirements to implement the freedom-based society he advocated for, and he still failed in his attempt. The products of his "reign" was just a tyrannical government where the freedom of people was severely restricted. He promised the liberty, but he only provided a masked tyranny.

Overall, neither Jefferson nor Louverture should receive a collocation nearby the whitest extremity on our imaginary line. Despite the fact that both were contradictory characters, who seemed to have been victims of the broader context in which they operated, they both violated the premises of freedom and independence they had advocated when the matter was the secession from the respective motherlands. Precisely, both leader's main arguments to sever the ties with the respective motherland relied on the abuse of the idea of freedom and independence of the population. Yet, they reinterpreted those pillars to favour their personal interests. Even though with different proportion, neither Louverture nor Jefferson attained to consolidate a free society for the simple fact that they exercised a degree of coercion over the population. Therefore, we may desire to recall the meaning of the concept of tyranny provided at the beginning of the chapter two. Precisely, we identify a tyrannical government when the entity in possession of the power to act decides to exercise it in a way that severely and cruelly limits the freedom of the individuals. Here is the crucial issue: fact that both characters were ideologically prone to eradicate the institution of slavery from the respective society is remarkable.

However, such a theoretical consideration may not suffice to exonerate the two leaders from their accusation. If we therefore consider the practice, then the definition of tyranny does find application in both the American and Haitian governments under their architects: both leaders limited the physical and moral freedom of the population, which subsequently seems to determine a tyrannical regime. Louverture's stubbornness to exercise a centralized and repressive self-government reveals his blindness in neglecting a tyrannical reality that was exceedingly distant from the premises of freedom and liberties of the population he had advocated since his takeover.

On the other hand, Jefferson's racial beliefs seem to have hampered the implementation of the emancipation plan within the American society. However, Jefferson at least maintained clarity as to the real essence of slavery, which allowed to him to share on many occasion the necessity to proceed with the emancipation of the future generations of slaves.

Therefore, both characters should be "painted" with different shades of colours as they both demonstrate that a tyrannical government can paradoxically derive from the achievement of liberty. Thus, Louverture should be associated with the darkest tonality of grey, while Jefferson's would resemble just a lighter shade.

Conclusion.

In this journey within the concept of tyranny, we succeeded proving that when the well-being and common good of the population are surpassed by the personal interests of the rulers, even at the cost of sacrificing fundamental human rights such as life and freedom, then there may be enough circumstances to define the regime and its rulers as tyrannical In doing so, we commenced from the American Revolution and the acts and facts that led to the promulgation of the *Declaration of Independence* on the 4th of July 1776. After clarifying what led to such an achievement, we proceeded to determine the proper meaning and the characteristics of a tyranny and its tyrant, which were needed to combine both the diverging tyrannical context we analyzed in the first and third chapter.

As highlighted in the first chapter, the former challenged the British Government for the imposition of a tyrannical regime which aimed to make the interests of the government without considering the colonial needs and well-being. On the one hand, the definition tyrannical government implemented by the British Crown seems to have proved unquestionable given that the colonies suffered on many occasions sudden impositions of legislative acts and taxation which only aimed to guarantee the motherland a base from which collecting extra revenues and raw materials to contribute to the expansion of their imperial prestige worldwide**.** At the same time, we noticed that although the legislative machinery was always inclined to consistently and arbitrarily affect the colonial administration, the tyranny referred to in the *Declaration* was circumscribed principally to the legislative field. From this starting point, the analysis delved deeper into the meaning and evolution of the concept of tyranny, from which we built the identikit of a tyranny and its tyrant through the wise words of many selected thinkers. The point at issue was to prove that a tyrannical regime and its implementation through a tyrannical leader may be quite complicate to be clearly determined. For this reason**,** the second chapter commenced with a powerful comparison: as the water has its own freezing point that allows to move from a state to another, the same cannot be said for an anti-democratic regime. The same principle

can be applied to a tyrannical one. Therefore, the historical evolution of the concept of tyranny permitted to determine a precise and definite ground through which proceeding with the revelation of a tyrannical regime, which is likely to emerge when the insatiable desire for both an economic and political power surpasses the concrete and real interests and common good of the population. To address this issue, the third chapter offered a proper comparison between two key leaders who played a key role in the respective revolutions of the last decades of the 18th centuries, namely Thomas Jefferson and Touissaint Louverture. More precisely, the comparison focused on their reciprocal similarities and differences as to the approached maintained towards the institution of slavery. Such a focus revealed that, in many cases, their respective economic interests prevailed over the good of the slaves, which explains why they never made the decisive steps to concretely abolished the aforementioned institution. From the combination of the three chapters, this research aims to provide a precise definition and conception of the concept of tyranny. The first chapter highlights what we may define as "legislative" tyranny since the imposition of legislative measures limited the development and the autonomy of the colonies. If on the one hand we cannot disagree upon the fact that the both the Parliament and King George III made use of their power arbitrarily, at the same time the colonies never experienced a restriction of their fundamental rights in the same way the slaves would do in the Republican America. This does not mean that the institution of slavery was introduced in the American society only after the formalization of the independence, but it rather underscores a further facet of tyranny.

Therefore, what type of "rule "predominated throughout this thesis? Concretely, the use of the law as the instrument to manage the power was brought under the spotlight in order to reveal how the implementation of a tyrannical regime is facilitated by specific mechanism, among which the rule by law predominated over the Rule of Law.

Rule of Law and rule by law may be perceived as two almost-identical concepts, but the difference is actually deeper and much more structured. When rule by law is applied, it means that the law is used by the State (or, more generally, by the ruler/rulers) to control actively its citizens but never the state itself, which determines a mechanism of power

management that is usually associated to authoritarian regimes. The reason behind this difference appears to be very simple: the law should "stand above every powerful person and agency in the land"[484]. Throughout the three chapter of this thesis we should have comprehended that both Jefferson and Louverture, as well as the British Empire, relied on the application of the rule by law by exploiting it in accordance with their own interests and privileges. As a consequence, this permitted to label the three government under analysis as tyrannical because the law was used as a powerful instrument to satisfy the rulers' needs and not the common good of the respective societies. People were not prevented from the abuse of power, but instead they suffered from it. The thesis concludes with a key quotation: "The liberty of an individual state is not such an important value as the liberty of an individual person": this quotation is key because it encompasses the very key point at issue in the three chapters. Although through different forms and manners, the liberties of the individuals were put at risk by the abuse of power of the rulers.

Thus, if a tyrannical regime is, by definition, a condition where the ruler (or the rulers) exercises with cruelty the power in a way that limits the freedom of the population, it follows that also the regimes implemented by both Jefferson and Louverture were tyrannical as well (not to say even more). Therefore, such a comparison may be helpful to define and recognize further current and future tyrants, not necessarily in the field of agricultural slaves.

[484] J. Waldron," The Rule of Law", accessed on the 10th of September 2025.

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