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# A Modern Perspective on Hamilton and Jefferson

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**A Modern Perspective on Hamilton and Jefferson**

**Or, Why Comparing Classical Politicians to Modern Politics is Misleading**

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## Abstract

The Broadway Musical *Hamilton* has created a newfound interest in the life of its title character, Alexander Hamilton. One notable trend has been that Hamilton has grown as an icon on the American left. Simultaneously, Thomas Jefferson, Hamilton's main antagonist in history and the musical, has seen his position within the Democratic Party, and as such the American left-wing, diminish. Using a broad literature review of each man's work, this paper seeks to analyze where Hamilton and Jefferson would actually fit within the modern political landscape, based on their own political views. My research finds that this effort is in vain, as neither man fits neatly into a modern political movement.

## Introduction

### *Introduction*

Described by John Ferling as “the twin strands of DNA in the American body politic” (2013, Loc 86)<sup>1</sup>, the legacies of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson have created twin indelible impacts upon American history. Their names have been evoked throughout our political history, as examples of why one side is right, and the other wrong. The shared legacy of Hamilton and Jefferson is one of rivalry and conflict, of two men in a zero-sum battle for the nation's future. In these terms, this rivalry feels very real to modern audiences, as the two main political parties have shifted to become ideologically coherent<sup>2</sup>, meaning that one ideology's win is, marks the loss of the other's ideology. In essence, we have shifted away from the coalition-based political parties that saw, for example, Southern Conservative Democrats<sup>3</sup>, and moved to a

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<sup>1</sup> Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry That Forged a Nation*, 2013

<sup>2</sup> Noel, *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America*, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Noel (2013) references a 1947 study that found a majority of people opposed ideologically-based parties (pg. 181).

situation in which “the organization of ideologies... ends up being the organization of parties” (Noel, 2013, Pg. 181). Hamilton and Jefferson worked in an era of intense “anxieties as to the very character the new republic was to assume” (Elkins, McKittrick, 1995, Loc. 211). This quote could, with the exception of “new,” easily be used to describe modern, Trump-Administration politics<sup>4</sup>, in which people throughout the political landscape express very real concerns about the direction of the country.

It is only fitting, therefore, that Hamilton and Jefferson have regained mainstream attention by way of the musical *Hamilton*, by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Miranda first debuted what would become the title song of the musical in 2009 for then-President Obama at the White House. The musical itself debuted off-Broadway in early 2015, moving to Broadway later that year. Based on Ron Chernow’s biography of the Founding Father, *Hamilton* gave both new life to the legend of Alexander Hamilton, and a sense of villainy to Thomas Jefferson.

The musical’s popularity has brought a new perspective to the changing perceptions of the Founding Fathers prevalent both today, and in analyses of the last several decades. Hamilton has moved from nearly being removed from the ten-dollar bill to being an icon, particularly on the left, while Jefferson’s popularity has diminished within the Democratic Party in recent years<sup>5</sup>. The irony in this is that Hamilton, to many, is regarded as a conservative<sup>6</sup>, while Jefferson has, for generations, been a legend to Democrats<sup>7</sup>. Joseph Ellis framed the pair’s rivalry as “[casting] Jefferson and... Hamilton in the lead roles of a dramatic contest between the forces of democracy (or liberalism) and the forces of aristocracy (or conservatism) (1998, Loc.

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<sup>4</sup> Or, as Noel explains, Obama-era politics (2013, Pg. 167).

<sup>5</sup> Berman, *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2015

<sup>6</sup> Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 1953

<sup>7</sup> Berman, *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2015

237)<sup>8</sup>. This shift is remarkable, because it demonstrates political realignment on both a micro and macro level scale. The Democratic Party has clearly shifted away from the Southern Conservative Democrats who would count Jefferson among their ranks, while Hamilton's conservative views have, in ways, brought him almost full circle back to modern Progressivism. That being said, information showing that Hamilton was not a twenty-first century progressive and Jefferson was not a twenty-first century conservative has been lost in the modern discussion. It is this divide that gets to the point of this paper; demonstrating the inherent difficulty in trying to slot politicians from past eras into modern political movements.

### *Research Methods*

This analysis will be run almost exclusively with qualitative data. One concern that must be addressed with political qualitative data points is source bias. By using clearly partisan sources like *Mother Jones* and *National Review*, the analysis of modern political movements throughout is meant to gain added credibility by using analysis from each movement about itself, and the other side, rather than about each one.

A credible analysis, however, requires a clearly-unbiased literature review. As such, this paper is largely based upon a literature review of the works of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. The writings of each referenced throughout are original public documents and private letters, and were referenced based on content alone. These writings were backed, when necessary, by peer-reviewed works and biased, yet well-studied, writings. A similar approach was taken with the analysis of *Hamilton*, which originates largely from Lin-Manuel Miranda's own thoughts on the musical, and its subjects.

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<sup>8</sup> Ellis, *American Sphinx*, 1998

Using modern political movements in the discussion presented two major issues. The first, and larger, issue is that American political movements are not constants. The 2016 election cycle revealed two large shifts, one in each party. Shortly after Nancy Reagan passed away in March 2016, former Republican Presidential staffer Peter Wehner wrote on the death of the Reagan Republican Party, attributing the death both to Trump, and to trends within the Party away from Reagan-style compromise and pragmatism<sup>9</sup>. In the Democratic Party, longtime *New Yorker* writer John Cassidy saw a significant leftward, progressive shift from the Democratic Party in 2008 to the party of 2016, referencing the impact that Democratic-Socialist Bernie Sanders had in igniting a progressive movement within the party<sup>10</sup>. The shifting nature of political movements makes long-term analysis challenging, as neither the modern Democratic nor Republican Parties, nor the movements reflected in each, completely reflect the movements of ten years ago. There are two clear ways around this challenge; analyze over a long period of time to account for shifts in ideology, or analyze a particular moment in time to eliminate the factor of shifting ideology. This paper will take the second route.

The second issue in analyzing modern political movements is in nomenclature. To simply the across-era analysis, the paper was designed to utilize a consistent set of terminology across eras. The simple, modern answer would be to use Republican and Democratic. As the two parties have little ideological overlap, the names have become synonymous with conservative and liberal thought respectively<sup>11</sup>. To avoid confusion between the modern Democratic and Republican Parties and Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party, however, this paper will use ideology to provide consistency. For conservatism, this is easier, as the term has

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<sup>9</sup> Wehner, *Time Magazine*, March 10, 2016

<sup>10</sup> Cassidy, *The New Yorker*, July 29, 2016

<sup>11</sup> Pew Research Center, June 12, 2014

been used throughout American history, and the broad definition<sup>12</sup> applies to both eras being analyzed. The other side presents a greater challenge because modern classical liberalism is typically associated with modern conservative movements<sup>13</sup>. For the purpose of this paper, the term “progressivism” will be used to reference left-wing thought both in classical and modern settings. Progressivism is not necessarily a historically accurate term for early America, but the dictionary meaning, “Favouring [sic.] change or innovation,”<sup>14</sup> does reflect left-wing post-colonial thought. In this, “progressive” will be used as a unifying term for left-wing thought, specifically to avoid confusion between modern and classical liberalism.

In summation, this paper will use a literature review of the writings of Hamilton and Jefferson, with scholarly writings included for verification of analysis, to establish each man’s views on four chosen areas of analysis. These areas are foreign policy, which was Jefferson’s prime role as Secretary of State, financial policy, which was Hamilton’s prime role as Secretary of the Treasury, the role of government, which was the background issue in all of Hamilton’s and Jefferson’s feuding<sup>15</sup>, and worldview, which will represent the social views of each man, and of each modern movement. These issues will then be compared to the views and opinions of the two aforementioned political movements, with the goal being to find parallels between Hamilton, Jefferson, and modern politics.

### *Research Goals*

This analysis will focus upon the roles that the legacies of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson play in modern American politics, whether that be in the parties, the

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<sup>12</sup> “Averse to change or innovation and holding traditional values,” according to the *Oxford Living Dictionary*

<sup>13</sup> Niskanen, *Cato Journal*, November 2006, pg. 612

<sup>14</sup> *Oxford Living Dictionary*

<sup>15</sup> Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry That Forged a Nation*, Loc 84

movements, or the overall political system. This analysis will be performed by first looking at the modern setting, analyzing how and why the legacies of Hamilton and Jefferson have recently become very significant. Secondly, an analysis of the beliefs of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson will be undertaken. This will largely use their own writings, with reviews of modern and classical literature about each man adding to their words. Thirdly, the current, Trump-Administration-era American progressive and conservative movements will be analyzed in more depth, to set a baseline with which to compare the Founding Fathers. Finally, this information will be synthesized to not only critique a musical, and the societal movement it joined, but also the modern movements that claim each man, and the overall idea of placing historical figures in modern movements. The paper will provide evidence that comparisons between past and present political figures should be taken lightly, as those that make a definite comparison tend to ignore other facets of the person's political or social views.

### **Pop Culture, Hamilton, and Jefferson**

#### *A Musical Phenomenon*

Since opening on Broadway, *Hamilton* has become nothing less than a world-wide phenomenon. The show offers the highest-priced tickets on Broadway<sup>16</sup>, and, as of June 2016, was tracking to earn over one billion dollars in a decade, the fastest in musical history<sup>17</sup>. The show has become well known throughout society, and many quotable moments have joined the public lexicon. In addition to its critical acclaim<sup>18</sup>, *Hamilton* gained notoriety for its almost entirely diverse cast. Every American or American ally is played by a person of African, Asian,

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<sup>16</sup>Paulson, *New York Times*, June 8, 2016

<sup>17</sup> Paulson, Giles, *New York Times*, June 8, 2016

<sup>18</sup> Brantley, *New York Times*, August 6, 2015

or Hispanic descent (like Lin-Manuel Miranda, a Puerto Rican), with the only white member of the primary cast playing King George III. The casting choice was seen as revolutionary, and has provided an entirely new way to look at the Founding Fathers<sup>19</sup>. All told, the story of Alexander Hamilton has gained a powerful, and potent, new medium, one that promises to tell his story to millions of people around the world.

It is important to note that *Hamilton*, glosses over many slavery-related points that could be present in the show. While Thomas Jefferson and James Madison are both called out for owning slaves<sup>20</sup>, George Washington is only shown to be a slaveholder in passing<sup>21</sup>. A more complicated omission lies with Hercules Mulligan. Mulligan, who holds a great deal of credit (in real life, not in the musical) for bringing Hamilton into the revolution, was a slaveholder<sup>22</sup>. While spying for the Americans, Mulligan's slave, Cato, was often the one dispatched with intercepted information. Though Mulligan eventually helped found (with Hamilton) an abolitionist movement in New York, describing him as an abolitionist in 1776, as the musical does, ignores reality<sup>23</sup>. Hamilton himself was, and is, regarded as being one of the most pro-abolition Founding Fathers<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Daveed Diggs, the biracial rapper who originated the role of Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson, alluded to the thought "that seeing a black man play Jefferson or Madison or Washington when he was a kid in Oakland might have changed his life." *Hamilton The Revolution*, pg. 149.

<sup>20</sup> Sally Hemmings, Jefferson's alleged mistress, is the only slave mentioned by name

<sup>21</sup> *Hamilton The Revolution*, pg. 208

<sup>22</sup> CIA, 2016

<sup>23</sup> IBID

<sup>24</sup> Chan, *The Review of Politics*, Spring, 2004

*Hamilton as a Liberal Icon*

Even during its off-Broadway run, *Hamilton* had already entered into the political discussion<sup>25</sup>. Politicians such as Barack Obama<sup>26</sup>, Hillary Clinton<sup>27</sup>, and Dick Cheney<sup>28</sup> have all expressed admiration towards the show. Its guests also included then-Vice President-Elect Mike Pence and his family, which sparked the most political moment of the show's history. Before and during the show, Pence was loudly booed. After the show, a member of the cast read a prepared statement asking Pence to look out for all Americans, with the clearly implied message being against now-President Trump's rhetoric on minorities. Though the now-Vice President listened to the message, and expressed not being upset or offended by the delivery, some conservatives criticized the incident<sup>29</sup>. As an example, American Enterprise Institute fellow Mark Thiessen wrote a scathing commentary for *The Washington Post*, saying that a great way for Democrats to help President Trump is "[having] a crowd of wealthy, out-of-touch Manhattan liberals (who can afford \$849 tickets to "Hamilton") boo Vice President-elect Mike Pence while the cast of the Broadway show lectures him on diversity" (2016)<sup>30</sup>. In contrast, progressives saw the incident as a powerful example of speaking out against the incoming administration<sup>31</sup>. *Hamilton*, as stated by Nancy Isenberg in 2016, became "newly celebrated as a hero of the progressive left."<sup>32</sup>

The adoption of Alexander Hamilton as a progressive icon is logical, given the musical, but actually stands at odds with years of beliefs about the Founding Father. To many

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<sup>25</sup> Schuessler, *New York Times*, March 27, 2015

<sup>26</sup> *Hamilton the Revolution* Epilogue

<sup>27</sup> IBID

<sup>28</sup> Schuessler, *New York Times*, March 27, 2015

<sup>29</sup> Bradner, *CNN*, November 20, 2016

<sup>30</sup> Thiessen, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 2016

<sup>31</sup> Kreps, *Rolling Stone*, November 19, 2016

<sup>32</sup> Isenberg, *The Washington Post*, March 30, 2016

conservatives, the original Treasury Secretary should be taken as a member of their ranks. This belief stretches from modern writers like University of Nebraska at Omaha professor Charles Holloway, to classical conservative writers such as Russell Kirk. Much of this paper will be dedicated to sorting out this divide.

### *Jefferson the Democratic Legend*

For decades, each of the major political parties has adopted past presidents and other political figures as their ideological role models. For Republicans, this includes recent leaders of the modern conservative movement like Barry Goldwater, Bill Buckley, and Ronald Reagan. For Democrats, this modern list includes Franklin Roosevelt and the Kennedy family. Above these men, however, have stood the figures that each party traces its roots back to. On the Republican side, this man is Abraham Lincoln, hence the phrase “the party of Lincoln” used when speaking both favorably and unfavorably about the GOP. For years on the Democratic side, this role was held by Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, as evidenced by the prevalence of “Jefferson-Jackson Dinners” used as fundraisers across the country. However, in recent years, some factions of the Democratic Party have moved away from the two slaveholding presidents. This has sparked a debate over Jefferson’s legacy, and whether he has a place in the modern liberal/progressive movement that the Democrats represent<sup>33</sup>. The answer may run in parallel with the musical. As Alexander Hamilton has become a progressive icon off of a *Hamilton* wave, Jefferson, who is an antagonist in the musical, has lost popularity. This paper will also delve into Jefferson’s place in modern politics.

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<sup>33</sup> Berman, *The Atlantic*, July 28, 2015

*Perceptions of Hamilton and Jefferson*

It is important to keep these changes in perspective with recent macro-level trends. John Ferling, for example, noted that “in the past half century Hamilton’s reputation has been on the uptick while Jefferson’s has plunged” (2013, Loc. 161)<sup>34</sup>, for the reason referenced above; his civil rights record<sup>35</sup>. However, Ferling also notes that, during the Great Depression, “New Dealers willfully styled Hamilton as a ‘fascist’... who had evinced only loathing for ordinary citizens” (Loc 154)<sup>36</sup>. These examples are used to demonstrate that “if history is a guide, the lofty ascent of Hamilton’s reputation and Jefferson’s corresponding decline will not last forever” (Loc 191)<sup>37</sup>. The importance of Ferling’s work, for this paper, is as a reminder that perceptions change over time, and that this paper’s framework of modern Progressives claiming Hamilton and casting off Jefferson is unlikely to survive indefinitely, and therefore, this paper’s analysis should only be taken as accurate in modernity.

*Historical Accuracy of the Musical*

It is important, given the role that *Hamilton* has played in the modern American dialogue about its titular Founding Father, to keep in mind the play’s grasp of history. One of the values of the previously-referenced book about the writing of the musical *Hamilton: The Revolution* is that Lin-Manuel Miranda openly admits where he deviated from the history. The musical featured Ron Chernow, the author of its source material, as a historical consultant. Chernow openly praises Miranda’s commitment to historical accuracy in the musical, stating “Lin ‘starts with the presumption that he’ll use the historical facts and see if they work’” (Miranda/McCarter,

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<sup>34</sup> Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry That Forged a Nation*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Loc 168

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

2016, pg. 33)<sup>38</sup>. Miranda, for his perspective, told Chernow early in the process that ““I want historians to take this seriously”” (Miranda/McCarter, 2016, pg. 32)<sup>39</sup>. Despite these efforts, poetic license was taken throughout the show. Aside from the aforementioned slavery issues, the musical merges events<sup>40</sup>, drops historical figures and moments<sup>41</sup>, and changes the historic timeline<sup>42</sup>. In general, the musical maintains historic accuracy on broad topics, but should not be classified as a purely historical work.

In contrast, Chernow’s *Alexander Hamilton*, published in 2004, is a pure biography. Stephen B. Presser, of Northwestern University, reacted to the biography in 2006 by saying “this book is one of those happy rarities: a popular biography that should also delight scholars” (pg. 192)<sup>43</sup>. Despite this assertion, there have been issues documented with the biography. Andrew S. Trees, in *Reviews of American History*, accuses Chernow of “falling prey to the biographical trap of seeing history too much through his protagonist’s eyes” (2005, pg. 13). Naomi Caiden of California State University was laudatory, but, significantly for this paper, saw a lack of discussion about Hamilton’s role in government<sup>44</sup>. The Chernow biography provided a strong historical base from which Miranda wrote the musical. Though the musical should not be taken as completely historically accurate, the depiction of Hamilton and Jefferson within it are, at minimum, based upon history.

As an important aside, and further justification for the primary-source methodology of this paper, the subjective nature of historical writing cannot be forgotten for this paper. The

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<sup>38</sup> *Hamilton: The Revolution*, 2016

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 33

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, pgs. 83, 153

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 137

<sup>43</sup> *The Journal of American History*, June 2006

<sup>44</sup> *Public Administration Review*, pg. 291, March-April 2006

subjectivity of history, centered on the cliché “history is written by the winners,” is, in part, widely debated. Authors such as Marco Portales<sup>45</sup> question the validity of histories past, wondering whether “our histories [are] no more than stories... that need not be taken too seriously” (1987)<sup>46</sup>, in the sense that our written history consists solely of stories told over time that may, or may not, be factual. Others, such as Wilson Muoha Maina, referencing Paul Ricoeur, state findings that subjectivity and objectivity must go hand in hand in the study of history<sup>47</sup>. Regardless, it is essential when studying history to keep this subjectivity in mind. As such, this paper will intentionally remain based upon primary-source documents whenever possible.

### **The Politics of Hamilton and Jefferson**

As the literature surrounding each man’s work is largely separate, the analysis of each will remain segregated in this section. First, the analysis will look at Alexander Hamilton’s political views, focusing upon foreign policy, finance, the role of government, and, finally, Hamilton’s personal worldview. Secondly, a similar analysis will take place with Thomas Jefferson, looking again at his foreign policy views, views of the economy, beliefs on the role of government, and his worldview.

#### Hamilton on the Issues

##### *Foreign Policy*

Though Hamilton never served in an official foreign policy-deciding position, his role in the Washington Administration gave him a voice in America’s early foreign decisions. Coming

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<sup>45</sup> *New Literary History*, Winter, 1987

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 466

<sup>47</sup> *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 2012, pgs. 18-36

out of the Revolution, America held foreign treaties with France and Spain, stemming from each country's role on the American side of the Revolution. Hamilton, throughout his political career, was often critical of France, regardless of who was ruling. Though *Hamilton* depicts this critique as being spurred by the Revolution, the man's writings reveal that Hamilton was skeptical of France's true motives from the outset. Hamilton saw those who viewed the French as friends to be ignorant, expressing concern that "he must be a fool, who can be credulous enough to believe, that a despotic court aided a popular revolution" (Hamilton, 1796, Loc 21113-21234). Hamilton also accused the French of trying to influence the 1796 election (December 6, 1796, Loc 21240 - 21426). Hamilton is well known to have been an advocate of neutrality for the fledgling nation, a position that President Washington also took up. In general, the Treasury Secretary expressed concern with foreign treaties, seeing America over time as needing to be unified internally before working outside (1796, Loc 21240 - 21426), and as a force to be used to bring freedom and equality to Europe (1799, Loc 22885 - 22900)<sup>48</sup>. In general, Hamilton advocated for the use of arms when America was directly threatened, and for neutrality on issues that did not directly affect the fledgling nation. His advocacy most closely reflects an isolationist perspective, but is more militaristic than most view isolationism to be.

Hamilton's view of foreign affairs was undoubtedly linked to his views on the military. In 1783, the then-General detailed his ideal peacetime standing army, believing that the Articles of Confederation, which mandated that the states must provide their own peacetime defense, was foolish for doing so. Elkins and McKittrick note that Hamilton, as early as the Federalist Papers, openly questioned arguments against standing armies<sup>49</sup>. Hamilton later spent much of the

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<sup>48</sup> Loc 22885 - 22900

<sup>49</sup> Elkins, McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800*, Loc 686

Adams Administration serving as Inspector General, with a rank of Major General, in the Army under Secretary of War McHenry in 1799 and 1800. This army was created after the XYZ Affair, which ended a diplomatic mission Hamilton anonymously convinced Adams to send to France<sup>50</sup>, resulted in the United States' Quasi-War with France<sup>51</sup>. Hamilton, who became the commander of the Army upon President Washington's passing<sup>52</sup>, planned to use his forces to defend America's borders, but lacked the funding to do so<sup>53</sup>.

### *Finance and the Economy*

As America's first Treasury Secretary, Hamilton's views on finance are well documented. Hamilton fought vehemently for his financial system, which, upon completion, became the basis of the American economy for the nation's formative years. This system was controversial because it called for the assumption of state war debts into a single national debt. This provided relief for the debt-choked north, but placed an increased burden on the debt-free south. This would be accomplished through the creation of a National Bank, justified with the Constitution's Necessary and Proper Clause<sup>54</sup>. In addition, the system called for the creation and trading of stock, which Hamilton believed would help spur trade, create capital, and lower interest rates<sup>55</sup>. Also important was Hamilton's currency system, which he believed should be backed by precious metals (as all currencies were at the time), and was conceived to be compatible with European coinage, showing Hamilton's belief in the necessity of trade<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> de Carolis, *A Biography of Alexander Hamilton*

<sup>51</sup> IBID

<sup>52</sup> Dorn, *National Museum of the United States Army*, July 16, 2014

<sup>53</sup> de Carolis, *A Biography of Alexander Hamilton*

<sup>54</sup> Hamilton held a very broad view of the Necessary and Proper Clause in general, writing in *Federalist 33* that the clause should be used to achieve any end given in the Constitution, despite what powers it might grant.

<sup>55</sup> *First Report on the Public Credit*, January 14, 1790, Hamilton

<sup>56</sup> *On the Establishment of a Mint*, January 28, 1791, Hamilton

Hamilton's views on the economy are not without controversy today. As Russell Kirk explained, Hamilton expressed fascination in planned productivity and government involvement in the economy<sup>5758</sup>. Kirk attributes this not to pre-Marx socialist beliefs, but rather a belief in the British Mercantile economy of the seventeenth century. To Kirk, Hamilton was attempting to replicate the British imperial system of wealthy aristocrats, and a robust planned economy supplying the rest of the citizenry. However, Kirk argues that Hamilton failed to anticipate any other effects that could come from government intervention in the economy. Fierce Hamilton critic Thomas DiLorenzo uses a quote by historian William Graham Sumner to make the same connection between the Hamiltonian economy and the British Mercantile economy<sup>59</sup>, giving the analogy weight with critics and followers alike.

*The Role of Government: The Federalist Papers*

Perhaps the biggest impact that Alexander Hamilton had on the new Republic was the Federalist Papers. The papers, written by Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, were essential to convincing the people of New York to support the Constitution. The eighty-five essays, more than fifty of which were written by Hamilton<sup>60</sup>, were meant to justify both the text of and the need for the new Constitution. Each essay addressed a specific topic, meaning that these papers provide a very public look at what Hamilton valued in the new Constitution. His topics ranged from taxation, to the economy, to the role of government.

The two most influential portions of Hamilton's Federalist Papers are on the Executive and Judiciary, specifically Seventy and Seventy-Eight, respectively. In Federalist No. 70,

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<sup>57</sup> Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, Loc 1185, 1953

<sup>58</sup> Put another way, government mandated production goals and limits.

<sup>59</sup> *Hamilton's Curse*, pg. 99

<sup>60</sup> Fifty-one were written by Hamilton alone. He split three essays with Madison, and eleven might be by Hamilton. Hamilton could have written as many as sixty-five of the eighty-five essays.

Hamilton presented his argument in favor of having a single Executive. Though prior Federalist Papers had expressed the importance of having multiple voices involved in decision-making<sup>61</sup>, Hamilton explained that a stand-alone executive would assist in preventing potentially dangerous disagreement among leaders. Rather, having a single executive, susceptible to votes yet autonomous to make his own decisions, would allow misdeeds to be seen, forcing that executive to behave well.

Hamilton was not necessarily supportive of the Judiciary, as shown by the best-known quote from Federalist No. 78, “the judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power” (1788, pg. 381). Hamilton did, however, explain the necessity of having an independent judiciary<sup>62</sup> in a limited Constitutional system, as it would allow judges to make judgments based solely on the law, rather than on how political winds may blow. Federalist No. 78, in describing how courts had the duty to protect the Constitution against legislative overreach<sup>63</sup>, provided legitimacy for judicial review, which was first used by Hamilton ally John Marshall in *Marbury v. Madison*.

The overall argument made through the *Federalist Papers* was that the expansion of government from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution would not inherently allow for the federal government to become tyrannical. The two aforementioned papers show that; 70 balances the risk of tyranny versus the checks held over a single executive, and 78 explains the necessity of an independent judiciary to maintain independent rule of law. With that said,

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<sup>61</sup> In Federalist No. 62, either Hamilton or Madison defended having State Legislatures choose Senators by describing how it would force any passed legislation to be approved both by the People, represented in the House, and States, represented by the Senate, hence giving multiple voices the ability to defeat legislation.

<sup>62</sup> And attributes part of the Judiciary’s weakness to its independence. Like today, the Judicial Branch lacks any enforcement mechanisms, but also has near-autonomy from retribution.

<sup>63</sup> Pg. 383

Hamilton clearly advocated for a powerful federal government, his financial system demonstrated that, as did his to-be-mentioned views on Washington remaining in power. He endorsed limits on the government, but those limits were relatively widely spread.

### *Hamilton's Worldview*

There are two main issues that, given the popularity of the portrayal of the title character in *Hamilton*, might be surprising. Hamilton, as is now well known, came to America as a poor immigrant from the Caribbean. The musical plays up Hamilton's immigrant past, and generally portrays immigrants as important to American history<sup>64</sup>. What the musical does not show, however, is that Hamilton himself likely did not agree with this view. Hamilton, at times, supported anti-immigration legislation, with the most notable being the Alien and Sedition Acts<sup>65</sup>, which lengthened residency requirements for citizenship, and allowed for deportation based on perceived disloyalty. Hamilton provided a more nuanced argument in a series of 1802 publications attacking then-President Thomas Jefferson. He suggested that allowing foreigners into America would damage the country's growing identity<sup>66</sup>. That, in his words, "the safety of a republic depends essentially on the energy of a common national sentiment; on a uniformity of principles and habits; on the exemption of the citizens from foreign bias, and prejudice; and on that love of country which will almost invariably be found to be closely connected with birth, education, and family" (*Examination, No. 8, January 12, 1802*)<sup>67</sup>. Though Hamilton expressly stated that immigrants should be welcome, it is made clear that they should not be treated equally until they fully assimilate into American society. The fear was justified with talk of foreign

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<sup>64</sup> "Immigrants/ We get the job done," *Yorktown (The World Turned Upside Down), Hamilton*

<sup>65</sup> Frank and Kramnick, *The New York Times*, June 10, 2016

<sup>66</sup> A view similar to that of mid-Eighteenth Century British politician Edmund Burke, with whom Hamilton shared many views.

<sup>67</sup> From *Population and Development Review*, March 2010

revolutions (namely France's) being hijacked by foreigners with different beliefs than the rebelling citizens.

Though Hamilton's immigration views seem out of place against the musical, they are indicative of a larger anti-egalitarian worldview. It is important to remember that Hamilton's "new form of government"<sup>68</sup> consisted of a head of state serving a life term, essentially an "elected monarch" (Frank/Kramnick, 2016). This idea was brought back almost a decade later when Hamilton openly vouched for President Washington to serve until he was unable<sup>69</sup>. Hamilton openly admired the British aristocratic system, and built his financial system knowing that it would create an American aristocracy. Russell Kirk, the aforementioned conservative writer, referred to historian Vernon Parrington's description of Hamilton as "a Tory without a king" to describe the latter's societal views, and Frank and Kramnick were, arguably, less kind by describing Hamilton as "[clearly envisioning] the greatness of a future empire enabled by drastic inequalities of wealth and power" (2016). This is not meant to condemn the Treasury Secretary, but rather to frame the man's political views.

### Jefferson on the Issues

#### *Foreign Policy*

Thomas Jefferson, who served both as a diplomat, and as the first Secretary of State, was well known for his foreign policy ideals. The fact that Hamilton got a say in the Washington Administration's foreign politics was, as depicted in the musical, a constant source of frustration for Jefferson. This frustration was aided by the two men's vastly different views on foreign policy. The prime divider between the two was the French Revolution. As stated before,

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<sup>68</sup> *Non-Stop, Hamilton*

<sup>69</sup> A fact shown in the musical.

Hamilton was exceptionally skeptical of the French, and was happy to be relieved of the Revolutionary-era treaties with France once Washington's statement of neutrality was released. Jefferson, in 1793, made the losing argument<sup>70</sup>. Though he certainly acknowledged the danger that the treaty could hold<sup>71</sup>, and that the United States had "that right which exists at all times of liberating ourselves when an adherence to the treaties would be *ruinous* or *destructive* to the society,"<sup>72</sup> Jefferson concluded that this danger was not present. Hence, as the United States had, in his mind, made the treaty with the country, not the ruler<sup>73</sup>, they could not pull out, and, therefore, not be neutral. It is important to remember that Jefferson was the American Diplomat to France as the French Revolution began, and was involved in the early stages of it. While in Paris, Jefferson wrote of his hope that the French Revolution could help usher liberty into Europe<sup>74</sup>, showing his belief in revolution as a positive force.

Connecting both foreign relations and economics, Jefferson also wrote in favor of open trade. In his December 16, 1793 *Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries*, Jefferson wrote "it must be repeated that friendly [trade] agreements are preferable with all who will come into them" (448), and that the United States should actively work to enter into trade agreements with foreign nations. Jefferson's stance is similar to Hamilton's, in that both believed that trade was a necessity for the country to grow. In general, Jefferson argued for America to play an active role on the international stage, in contrast to Hamilton's semi-isolationist neutrality. However, Jefferson was not as willing to use of force as *Hamilton* makes him seem. In 1788, he wrote that "I am decidedly of opinion we should take

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<sup>70</sup> *Opinion on the French Treaties*, April 28, 1793

<sup>71</sup> A fact the musical leaves out.

<sup>72</sup> *Opinion on the French Treaties*, April 28, 1793. Emphasis original.

<sup>73</sup> The reverse argument is portrayed as Hamilton's winning one in the musical.

<sup>74</sup> *The First Chapter... Of European Liberty*, ce 3<sup>me</sup>. Aout 1789

no part in European quarrels, but cultivate peace and commerce with all” (pg. 930). An important qualifier to this quote, however, is that it comes in the context of Jefferson expressing a willingness to level taxes to protect the country, as “who can avoid seeing the source of war, in the tyranny of those nations who deprive us of the natural right of trading with our neighbors?” (1788, pg. 930)<sup>75</sup>. In addition, it is important to note is that in 1798, as the aforementioned XYZ Affair began the Quasi-War with France, Jefferson successfully fought against Adams and Hamilton to avoid full-out war, though he was lambasted in the press for doing so<sup>76</sup>.

### *Finance*

While talking about finance, it is important to note that Jefferson made a point of avoiding the issue during the system’s initial creation. In a 1792 letter to the President, Jefferson wrote that “when I embarked in the government, it was with a determination to intermeddle not at all with the legislature, & as little as possible with my co-departments” (pg. 993).<sup>77</sup> As such, his writing on issues surrounding finance are relatively scarce. What he did write, at least as Secretary of State, was primarily centered around attacks on Alexander Hamilton’s system. In the same letter, Jefferson wrote that “[Hamilton’s] system flowed from principles adverse to liberty, & was calculated to undermine and demolish the republic, by creating an influence of his department over the members of the legislature” (1792, pg. 994). Jefferson was, from the beginning, opposed to the idea of Hamilton’s National Bank, believing it to be unconstitutional<sup>78</sup>, and threatening to the people of the new Republic<sup>79</sup>. It is important to note, however, that Hamilton’s system survived Jefferson’s presidency, and his *Third Annual Message* to Congress

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<sup>75</sup> Both quotes from: *Commerce, War, and Revolution*, Dec. 4, 1788

<sup>76</sup> Peterson, *Jefferson Writings*, Pg. 1525

<sup>77</sup> *The Conflict with Hamilton*, Sept. 9, 1792

<sup>78</sup> *Opinion on the Constitutionality of a National Bank*, February 15, 1791

<sup>79</sup> Gutzman, *Thomas Jefferson – Revolutionary*, 2017, pg. 67

(the pre-speech version of the State of the Union Address) mentions the success the financial system had in repaying the country's debts.

Aside from the financial system, Jefferson, as mentioned before, was in favor of limited taxation before his presidency. In addition, Jefferson warned Washington against taking on an increased national debt, in a letter entitled *A Stepping Stone to Monarchy*<sup>80</sup>. During his Presidency, however, Jefferson did spend money to go to war with the Barbary Nations, but, more notably, expanded the nation, the national debt, and the powers of the Presidency with the Louisiana Purchase.

### *The Role of Government*

Jefferson's default view on the role of government can best be seen in his opposition to Hamilton's financial system. While Hamilton believed in a broad interpretation of the Necessary and Proper Clause, Jefferson, in contrast, sought a narrow one (with the biggest exception being the Louisiana Purchase). In general, Jefferson's view was that the government should be limited in its power to what the Constitution explicitly provided<sup>81</sup>. In fact, much of Jefferson's initial trepidation about the Constitution was that it failed to limit government enough. To John Adams, Jefferson commented on his fear of the President not being term limited<sup>82</sup>, though Jefferson, once the two-term precedent was established, admitted being wrong about four year terms<sup>83</sup>. To James Madison, Jefferson made more nuanced critiques, namely about the lack of a

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<sup>80</sup> May 23, 1792

<sup>81</sup> Gutzman, *Thomas Jefferson – Revolutionary*, 2017, pg. 9

<sup>82</sup> *More on the Constitution*, Nov. 13, 1787

<sup>83</sup> *The Two-Term Precedent*, Jan. 6, 1805. Jefferson wrote in the letter about his single, seven-year term idea, and acknowledged that it would not provide a fast-enough check on a bad President. He still stressed the need for the two-term precedent, and discussed a potential Constitutional Amendment making it official, something that happened over a century later.

Bill of Rights<sup>84</sup>. Jefferson found this to be absolutely essential to a new government, as he felt that a Bill of Rights would “guard us against their abuses of power within the field submitted to them” (1789, pg. 944)<sup>85</sup>. The importance of these protections would remain a staple of Jefferson’s political life. His value of the Bill of Rights demonstrates an intense belief in limited government, one that goes well beyond that of Hamilton. The Bill of Rights is a negative<sup>86</sup> document, meaning that government is told what it cannot do. Jefferson, who believed in giving the citizens as much power as possible, liked the idea of having rights that could only be abridged if the people consented by way of an Amendment. He saw this as an invaluable way to avoid governmental overreach, such as, in his mind, the National Bank.

### *Jefferson’s Worldview*

It is difficult to discuss Jefferson without discussing his slaveholding. It is widely believed that Jefferson did maintain a sexual relationship with a slave, Sally Hemings. Hemings had six children that were believed to be Jefferson’s, four of whom survived to adulthood<sup>87</sup>. With the exception of the Hemings family, Jefferson did not free his slaves in his will, and his daughter sold them to pay off debts<sup>88</sup>. This represents one of the biggest challenges in analyzing Jefferson today. Though Jefferson’s political positions showed his clear value of the average American citizen, this descriptor only fits white people. In fact, in 1779, Jefferson wrote a bill to clarify who should be considered a citizen of the fledgling United States. It specifically states that only white persons should be included<sup>89</sup>. To Frank and Kramnick, this presents a

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<sup>84</sup> *Objections to the Constitution*, Dec. 20, 1787

<sup>85</sup> *A Bill of Rights*, Mar. 15, 1789

<sup>86</sup> For example, a positive document would say “The Government shall provide the freedom of speech.” A negative document would say “The freedom of speech shall not be abridged.” The latter, of course, is a paraphrase of the First Amendment.

<sup>87</sup> Peterson, *Jefferson Writings*, Pg. 1523

<sup>88</sup> Peterson, *Jefferson Writings*, Pg. 1531

<sup>89</sup> *A Bill Declaring Who Shall Be Deemed Citizens of this Commonwealth*, 1779

hypocritical divide between Jefferson's racism and support for personal liberties. They state that "Jefferson's republican championing of the people's liberties [depends] upon his acceptance of a permanent underclass of slave laborers" (2016). This is one point where Hamilton and Jefferson's sharp divide is vivid for a modern reader. Hamilton believed that slavery was wrong<sup>90</sup>, but was willing to create a non-biased lower class of low-wage earners while building his pseudo-aristocracy. Jefferson, in contrast, wanted to give equal opportunity to all, but believed that "all" should be limited to one race<sup>91</sup>.

Interestingly, though, Jefferson was relatively pro-immigrant. Though he believed that the Alien and Sedition Acts, which were seen as anti-immigration, were largely an attack on his Democratic-Republican Party<sup>9293</sup>, his actions to dismantle the legislation as President drastically decreased the requirements placed on aliens trying to become citizens (an act that greatly incensed Hamilton, whose response is detailed by the sources labelled in footnotes twenty-eight and twenty-nine). Altogether, Jefferson showed a clear appreciation for poorer members of society, one that Hamilton largely lacked. This appreciation, however, did not extend to anyone not of European descent<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Though, as explained by Frank and Kramnick, Hamilton certainly did not put as much emphasis on slavery as the musical would lead one to believe.

<sup>91</sup> Gutzman, *Thomas Jefferson – Revolutionary*, 2017, pg. 159

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 48

<sup>93</sup> Peterson, *Jefferson Writings*, 1525

<sup>94</sup> As a brief aside, Jefferson did write two main addresses to Native American leaders. Both were friendly, but commanding, giving the natives freedom to live their lives, but setting strict requirements upon them, which stood in contrast to Jefferson's views on personal liberties for whites (*To the Brothers of the Choctaw Nation*, December 17, 1803, and *To the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation*, January 10, 1806).

## Trump-Era American Political Movements

### *Conservatism*

The conservative movement has long been volatile, and, on several occasions, has nearly met its own death. Today's conservatism could be making its way towards that type of situation. This is, in large part, due to the effect that Donald Trump is having on the movement while leading the Republican Party. However, the conservative movement could also be said to owe its current vitality to Donald Trump, as the momentum the Tea Party Movement gave conservatism during the Obama Administration after the Great Recession could have been stalled by a third term of Democratic leadership<sup>95</sup>. However, as President Trump continues his first year, it is becoming clear that Trump's populism may not mesh with the modern conservative movement. This became clear when Republicans tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in March 2017. Though President Trump had been the Republican nominee, and as such de facto conservative movement leader, for almost a year, his failure to successfully repeal the ACA, a goal that conservatives have worked toward for seven years, demonstrated schisms within the movement. As described in *The Atlantic* by Russell Berman<sup>96</sup>, the President and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (the main backer of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), the replacement bill, in the House) placed partial blame on the far-right Freedom Caucus for the failure of the bill<sup>97</sup>. The members of the Freedom Caucus, a movement that emerged in large part because of outrage over the ACA, blamed moderate opponents of the bill, and many blamed the Administration and Speaker Ryan for writing bad legislation. It is not uncommon for legislation to fail, but what made the fight over health care reform so unique was

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<sup>95</sup> And the liberal Senate Majority and Supreme Court majorities it likely would have brought.

<sup>96</sup> Berman, *The Atlantic*, March 31, 2017

<sup>97</sup> In addition to blaming the Democratic Party

President Trump's willingness to blame members of his own party, and supposed own movement, for the failure. After the AHCA failed, the President grouped the Freedom Caucus together with Democrats as people to defeat in the 2018 Midterm elections<sup>98</sup>. This stunning condemnation of members of his own party, and supposedly own movement, suggests growing schisms within the conservative movement.

Another important question facing the conservative movement is whether Donald Trump, its de facto leader, is a conservative at all. The answer seems to depend on whether a person agrees with the President or not. *National Review*<sup>99</sup>, for example, was fiercely anti-Trump prior to the election. A large part of their objection was very simple; that Trump was not sufficiently conservative. In a May 5, 2016 *National Review* article, written shortly after Donald Trump clinched the Republican nomination, Charles Krauthammer asked, "why in a field of 17 did Republican voters choose the least conservative candidate?" During the Republican Convention, National Review Institute Senior Fellow Andrew McCarthy wrote that "the party was formally taken over by an incoherent statist whose 'conservatism' is not done justice by scare quotes."<sup>100</sup> This skepticism goes well beyond *National Review*. *Daily Caller* chief Bill Kristol was vocally anti-Trump throughout the campaign and strong conservative Republican politicians like Senator Ben Sasse (NE)<sup>101</sup> openly sought third-party choices. Even *Breitbart*, an organization seen as directly linked to the Trump Administration through former Editor-in-Chief and current<sup>102</sup> Trump Advisor Steve Bannon, ran articles expressing concern over Trump's conservative

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<sup>98</sup> Tweeted on March 30, 2017

<sup>99</sup> A magazine founded by William Buckley to be a new center of the post-New Deal conservative movement. It has, to many, served as a "gatekeeper" of Conservatism, removing groups like the John Birch Society (Justin Raimondo, *Reclaiming the American Right*).

<sup>100</sup> *National Review*, July 23, 2016

<sup>101</sup> I was employed by Ben Sasse while writing this paper.

<sup>102</sup> As of writing.

credentials, with editor Ben Shapiro openly commenting “I don’t believe Trump is a conservative” on January 24, 2016.

In contrast, large conservative organizations like the American Conservatives Union (ACU) and The Heritage Foundation<sup>103</sup> have both shown a willingness to work with Donald Trump. On February 26, 2017, Tim Alberta, a writer for *Politico*, wrote on how disproportionately supportive the crowd at the ACU’s Conservative Political Action Conference in 2017 was of the Trump Administration, especially when compared to 2016’s CPAC, when a Trump speech was threatened with a boycott. The aforementioned health-care debacle, in addition to revealing the schisms within the Republican Party, also put The Heritage Foundation in a difficult spot. The conservative think tank began working with the Trump campaign in 2015, and has gained an outsized role within the new administration. However, the AHCA, according to *Politico*’s Nancy Cook and Andrew Restuccia<sup>104</sup>, showed that differences of opinion also exist between the administration and think tank.

These examples are meant to show that there are clear questions over whether Trump can truly be considered a conservative, or a member of the conservative movement. More important for this paper, however, is that these debates reveal deep-set fractures within the movement. Generalized comments like “conservatives support small government” must, therefore, be taken with a grain of salt, because, though the comment could be true of some conservatives, it might not be indicative of how the conservative movement behaves at all times.

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<sup>103</sup> Whom I am a tenant of.

<sup>104</sup> March 8, 2017

*Progressivism*

The American Progressive Movement is in, simultaneously, an enviable and difficult position. For the first time in over a decade, the Democratic Party is entirely out of government, meaning that, though they have little power over governance, they are also in position to oppose almost everything. The Democratic Party can use President Trump's unpopularity as cover against compromising, against sacrificing some legislation for others, and against anything else that would help Trump. Just as the Republicans launched a near-full-out opposition to the Obama Agenda, the Democrats can attempt to resist Trump. The Resistance, as the anti-Trump progressive movement has become known, is pushing Democrats to do just that. Groups like the Women's March Movement and Indivisible have begun organizing grass-roots anti-Trump activities, ranging from disrupting town hall meetings<sup>105</sup> to massive protests.

The growth in these actions can be traced, in large part, back to the campaign of Bernie Sanders. A hard-left Democratic Socialist, Senator Sanders grew from a fringe candidate to a major player in the Democratic Primary, largely on his unabashedly progressive message<sup>106</sup>. The Sanders campaign ignited a desire for strong progressive reform in the country, which is, today, beginning to resemble the Tea Party movement in its strength over the Democratic establishment. This is not to say that American liberalism is fractured like conservatism is, but rather to say that the progressive movement's growth in power is shifting the overall American left further in that direction.

For an example of general progressive values, one can look towards the think tanks pursuing progressive thought. The largest specifically-progressive think tank, per a University of

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<sup>105</sup> *Indivisible Guide*, 2016

<sup>106</sup> George Goehl, *The American Prospect*, June 30, 2016

Pennsylvania ranking<sup>107</sup>, is the Center for American Progress (CAP). CAP's stated goals include economic mobility, environmental protection, globalist<sup>108</sup> trade, world-wide peace, and strength through diversity<sup>109</sup>. These general ideals, plus broader beliefs expressed in the general movement, will be used in coming analysis.

### **Federalist-Era American Politics**

#### *Classical Conservatism*

Though modern conservative thought tends to skew closer to classical liberalism, when America was founded, classical conservatism was still the modern ideology. As such, to call a Founding Father a "conservative" suggests that he was, in general, skeptical of change. This does not necessarily mean adverse to change, but rather, a classical conservative believes that change must take place over time, in a focused, orderly manner. This change should also draw from past success and tradition. Therefore, the irony of the coming discussion is that, revolution, inherently, is anti-conservative. With that being said, the American Revolution, if viewed as colonists trying to gain the self-reliant government that they held prior to the French and Indian/Seven Years War<sup>110</sup>, could be taken as "a conservative reaction, in the English political tradition, against royal innovation" (Kirk, 1953, Loc. 320). If that is taken as factual, the real divide between conservatism and progressivism in early America began after the war, as the Founding Fathers created a new government.

Following this thought pattern, a Founding Father who preferred either a system similar to the original colonial structure, as the Articles of Confederation provided, or the British

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<sup>107</sup> Penn Libraries, 2017

<sup>108</sup> Meaning open, with few restrictions.

<sup>109</sup> Center for American Progress

<sup>110</sup> French and Indian War being the American term, Seven Year's War being the international.

structure could be classified as a conservative. Once the Constitution was created, the conservative approach was for a stronger central government, mimicking the powers held in British Parliament and the Monarchy. Given Alexander Hamilton's support for a strong federal government, as well as his support for a British-style society, and potentially even a seventeenth-century British-style economy, it is only fair, and logical, to call Hamilton a classical, British-style conservative. "A Tory without a king,"<sup>111</sup> as quoted before from Vernon Parrington.

### *Progressivism*

The post-revolutionary example of progressivism would be the weaker federal government preferred by Thomas Jefferson. Unlike Hamilton's plan for an elected leader with a non-expiring term, or the eventual non-term-limited presidency, a term limited executive was, at that point, a rare historical example<sup>112</sup>. So, in this sense, Thomas Jefferson could be considered the main progressive after the Constitutional Convention<sup>113</sup>. The irony is, however, that most "progressive thought" from this era revolved around maintaining the Articles of Confederation, or a similar system. As the Articles were largely based upon the pre-revolution status-quo, Jefferson and his followers, despite being the "progressives," were also conservatives, just conservatives fighting for American tradition. As such, the Constitutional debate, and much of the debate through early America about the powers of the Federal Government, were between American conservatives and British conservatives.

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<sup>111</sup> Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, Loc. 1157, 1953

<sup>112</sup> Even in the Roman Republic, which had single year terms for its leaders, term limits did not exist. Part of the Republic's instability came from Consuls holding terms for years on end. Pompey and Caesar both used this method to increase their influence.

<sup>113</sup> Jefferson's support for the French Revolution helps to solidify this notion, though as explained before, it was not as steadfast as many believe.

### Placing Hamilton and Jefferson in Modern America

With Hamilton labelled as a classical conservative, and Jefferson as a progressive, the next important question is whether these sides have changed. Like before, this answer will be divided with analysis of each man.

#### *Hamilton*

Alexander Hamilton has recently grown as a progressive icon in no small part because of his portrayal in *Hamilton*. In some ways, Hamilton as a modern progressive makes sense. He was clearly in favor of a strong central government, in the way that modern conservatives would vehemently oppose. This government was designed to help regulate the economy, in hopes of a more desired outcome, as the progressive movement<sup>114</sup> is fighting for today. Hamilton's foreign policy, at least as Treasury Secretary, matched a growing progressive desire to focus upon domestic issues first, before tackling foreign ones.

In general, Hamilton's political views tended to match the modern progressive movement's, but only in terms of the means<sup>115</sup>. When it comes to the ends that Hamilton sought, modern progressives would struggle to recognize him. Hamilton's economy was designed to create a clear upper and lower class<sup>116</sup>, with limited mobility. Equality, aside from some late-life anti-slavery activism, was not a main goal of the Treasury Secretary. The strength of Hamilton's federal government was not based in a desire to use government to help people, but rather, a desire to replicate the British aristocratic system. Overall, though Hamilton, the musical theater

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<sup>114</sup> Phillips-Fein et. Al., *The Nation*, February 24, 2016

<sup>115</sup> An exception being immigration, an issue in which there is very little overlap.

<sup>116</sup> Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, Loc. 1169

character, clearly has progressive aims, Hamilton, the Founding Father, was undeniably a classical conservative.

This is not to say that Hamilton would be a Republican today. In general, the modern Tea Party and Trump era conservative movement has largely shunned large government programs<sup>117</sup>. Regardless of the outcomes of modern conservative free-market capitalism, the goal is, in general, to create a more level playing field for both businesses and individuals<sup>118</sup>. Therefore, as a general conclusion for Hamilton, it would be difficult to put the actual man in either a modern progressive or conservative camp. The actual policies he fought for in life have largely been left in his era.

### *Jefferson*

Thomas Jefferson, the progressive Founding Father if one could be said to exist, could be fairly called a champion of a small central government, the very thing that modern conservatives claim to value most. It is fair to say that Jefferson held many views that, today, would be conservative. His value of a strong, negative Constitution is a view held dear by most movement conservatives, as is his belief in a weak federal government. In addition, his belief in minimal government spending, and a strong debt ceiling, match the deficit hawk wing of the modern right.

However, like Hamilton, there are issues with Jefferson that would put him at odds with modern conservatism. Though it is largely ignored today, Jefferson did show interest in an egalitarian state. Jefferson both saw himself and was viewed as a fighter for the everyday

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<sup>117</sup> The biggest, but not only, exception being defense, including military and homeland security funding. At time of writing, the Trump Administration has worked primarily on deregulation. New tariffs and potential infrastructure spending could render this entire sentiment moot.

<sup>118</sup> Which is the end goal for most involved in politics, no matter what ideology.

American, fighting against the power of the elite created by Hamilton's financial plan. Simply fighting for equality is not enough to disqualify one as a conservative, and Jefferson's case to be a conservative is stronger than Hamilton's to be a progressive. With that said, it is clear that Jefferson, when looking at his priorities, would not fit in fully with the modern conservative movement. Unlike Hamilton, however, clear similarities between Jefferson and modern politics, specifically the conservative movement, can be seen<sup>119</sup>. The similarities are limited, and caution should be taken in exploiting them, but the connections are certainly stronger than Hamilton's.

### **Conclusion**

If the analysis portion of this paper comes across as unsatisfying, it is not unintentional. This type of writing is enjoyable. It is entertaining to imagine the giants of our past coming back and leading our parties. This is why Republicans will often refer to themselves as "The Party of Lincoln." Regardless of what changes have occurred within the party, invoking Abraham Lincoln gives a sensation of historical righteousness.

However, the entire exercise could be called rather absurd. This can be seen most clearly with Alexander Hamilton. Though he was a conservative while living, and today is held-up as a progressive, he simply cannot be matched to any modern movement. Politics change through time and trying to shoehorn past figures into modern circumstances is, based on this analysis, clumsy, and, in all honesty, not helpful, because it often does not work when put through intellectual rigor.

To summarize, the primary basis of this paper is absurdist. It is absurdist to try to place Hamilton and Jefferson as modern political figures, or to say that "Hamilton would be a

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<sup>119</sup> This is used lightly, because, although he was known to be flamboyant at times, Jefferson would likely not agree with Donald Trump on much. Namely, their views on immigration and foreign policy stand in stark contrast.

Democrat,” for those comparisons are simply not accurate. The analysis clearly suggests this. This outcome is part of why the musical *Hamilton* played such a big role in the paper. Though the musical has sparked modern political analyses of the two Founding Fathers, with simplistic conclusions about where the leading characters would fit today, when listening to and reading<sup>120</sup> the script, the modern political comparisons do not exist. There are certainly political statements throughout the musical, but at no point does Lin-Manuel Miranda expressly try to make Hamilton a progressive, or Jefferson a conservative. It is implied at times, but not expressly said. Rather, these modern political motives are brought upon the characters by outside sources.

*Hamilton* is a fantastic work of art. Rarely does art tell so many stories, or show new possibilities, or change perceptions so well. None of that requires politics to see, and the musical deserves praise from everyone, regardless of their background, for doing so. The musical is great, but trying to fit it into the political realm clouds that greatness. That effort also stretches the musical beyond what it was intended to be: entertainment.

The same can be said for the two Founding Fathers, and trying to place them into modern politics. To make the comparison work requires the clouding of either man’s actual beliefs. This is the general lesson that I hope is taken away from this endeavor. Politics is important, but it is possible, if not common<sup>121</sup>, to take political thought to absurdist levels. When we have to turn to long-dead political figures, whose belief systems are antiquated and based on circumstances that no longer exist, to find justification for our own thoughts, we have gone too far.

It is important to discuss the limitations of this research. In specific regards to this paper, as written, polling and other means of direct research into perceptions of Hamilton and Jefferson

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<sup>120</sup> For this author could not afford/access a ticket to the musical to watch it.

<sup>121</sup> Within the public realm, not necessarily within the realm of Political Science.

within modern politics would help give the paper weight, but were not feasible given the budget and resources allotted. This paper also largely ignores the bevy of quantitative research upon partisan realignment and partisan shifts. A strong companion to this paper would be a quantitative look at how the parties have shifted over time, and how the roles of Hamilton and Jefferson in each have shift alongside them. This would also satisfy the other option for dealing with the challenge of partisan shifts mentioned on page five. Finally, this paper, by dealing specifically with Hamilton and Jefferson, leaves out other important political figures who have either been used to justify modern politics, like Lincoln<sup>122</sup>, or figures who, like Jefferson, have had their modern roles reduced<sup>123</sup>. Hamilton and Jefferson are the two primary examples of modern appropriation of thought, but they are not the only ones.

This paper's value, however, goes beyond showing that the modern analogies did not work. A major aspect of conservatism, meaning the political thought, not the political ideology, is looking to the past to find answers on how to proceed into the future. Alexander Hamilton created a strong economy. His ends did not necessarily work, but his means helped America grow into what it is today, and have been cited as positive examples throughout our history. Thomas Jefferson played an outsized role in developing the limited government principles that Americans still celebrate. These men, and all of the men and women who have played a part in American history, deserve to be researched, studied, and understood by a modern audience. As this paper demonstrated, trying to prescribe modern political views on past figures is, at best, clumsy. However, studying the works and thoughts of each man to try to find connections absolutely has value. Not in the ends, but in the means.

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<sup>122</sup> Who, today, simultaneously represents the GOP as the "Party of Lincoln," and the Indivisible Guide resisting the Trump agenda.

<sup>123</sup> Andrew Jackson is the prime, aforementioned example.

What this suggests is that our ends are often wrong. The value in studying Hamilton and Jefferson reflects the value in studying any aspect of our history; the lessons we can take from them. This returns to the original idea for this paper: to look to Hamilton, Jefferson, and their debates for ideas on how a broken political movement and system can proceed. That paper may very well be needed, and would require far more analysis than this paper could sustain. The lesson that can be taken from this paper is that, while the application of past figures to modern political movements is not necessarily ill-intentioned, it is not necessarily a fruitful endeavor beyond a propagandist goal. However, a willingness to study the beliefs of Hamilton, Jefferson, and every other major political figure of America's earliest days can provide historical precedence, historical evidence, and a historical legitimacy to modern political debate. This could raise the level of discourse in the country, which, in it of itself, is absolutely a worthwhile end. That should be the goal of studying Hamilton and Jefferson, and for any other historical analysis: knowledge.

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