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Four Founding Fathers on the Road: New Government Design in the United States and the Netherlands, 1776-1815

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Cet article se concentre sur l'échange continu et réciproque d'idées et de personnes qui a existé tout au long de l'ère révolutionnaire entre la Hollande et les États-Unis. Nous soutenons tout d'abord que l'influence américaine aux Pays-Bas ne se limitait pas au Parti Patriote, mais incluait également les partisans du stathouder. Deuxièmement, l'influence de la Révolution américaine sur les penseurs politiques néerlandais ne s'est pas arrêtée au tournant du siècle. Ces deux phénomènes sont le résultat de connexions transatlantiques qui semblent étranges d'un point de vue idéologique mais font sens lorsque le véhicule d'échange est pris en compte. Nous démontrons, troisièmement, que l'accent mis sur les rencontres et les expériences personnelles permet de saisir le caractère transnational de l'ère révolutionnaire.

On August 1st, 1816 Thomas Jefferson wrote John Adams a letter which discussed poetry, as well as the pleasures and woes of old age. In an aside, Jefferson asked "there is a mr Vanderkemp of N.Y. a correspondent I believe of yours, with whom I have exchanged some letters, without knowing who he is. Will you tell me?" Adams' response a week later was telling: "The Biography of Mr Vander Kemp would require a Volume which I could not write if a Million were offered me as a Reward for the Work". After summing up the most important facts about Van der Kemp—a Dutch revolutionary who fled to America in 1788—Adams concluded: "His head is deeply learned and his heart is pure. I scarcely know a more amiable Character" (Cleave, 2014 1; TJ to JA, 1 Aug. 1816).[1]

1. Correspondence by the American Founding Fathers and Van der Kemp is published on *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov. Letters of Van

The friendship between Adams and Francis Adrian van der Kemp went way back. They had first met in 1781, when Adams visited the Dutch Republic to secure financial support and recognition for the American Republic. Van der Kemp was a Dutch revolutionary who played a prominent role in the Patriot Revolt against the Stadtholderate and aristocratic government in the 1780s. He hoped that the American pursuit of liberty would also inspire his compatriots to seek revolutionary change. In turn, Adams was impressed by the way Dutch Patriotism had rapidly grown into a mass movement. Adams noted in 1786 that "the Designs [the Dutch Patriots] entertain are interesting to Mankind in general as well as to their particular Country" (JA to John Jay, 3 Oct. 1786).

The American Revolution had a great impact on the Dutch Republic. The end of the eighteenth century was marked by a spirited exchange of ideas on liberty, political rights and state-building between the two Republics (Polasky 24-36). But it was not merely ideas that travelled freely. People from both sides of the Atlantic sailed across the ocean for professional, political and personal reasons, and testified to the great revolutionary events that were unfolding. This led to numerous exchanges between American and Dutch politicians. In this article we will focus on the exchanges between two Dutch and two American Founding Fathers and show the lasting impact of these contacts on their political ideas.

Historians have paid attention to the American influence on the Dutch patriots. J.W. Schulte Nordholt published multiple studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Schulte Nordholt 1982a, 1982b), which are part of the groundwork foreshadowing the transnational turn in the 1990s (McDonnell & Waldstreicher 650-651). Schulte Nordholt's older and rather negative view of the Dutch Revolution somewhat colored his interpretation of the exchange between Dutch and American travelers. Historiography on the Dutch Revolution has been thoroughly revised since then (Oddens 378), focusing more on the continuous and reciprocal exchange of ideas and people during the revolutionary era. The American Revolution served as an important point of reference for the Dutch Patriots (Polasky 230-231; Jourdan, 2008; Oddens; Koekkoek; Velema; Sas, 2004). These works have acknowledged the revolutionary contribution of the Patriots—later called Batavians—to the replacement of the decentralized Dutch Republic with a unified "modern" nation state based on a written constitution in 1798.

We aim to add three crucial dimensions to this growing field of scholarship. First, the American influence in the Netherlands was not

Hogendorp (GKH) are published in Hogendorp 1866, letters of Van der Capellen tot den Poll (VDC) are published in Capellen 1879.

limited to the "progressive" Patriots. It also included "conservative" supporters of the Stadtholder. Secondly, this influence did not stop at the turn of the century. These two elements seem odd from an ideological perspective, but they make sense when the vehicle of exchange is taken into account, namely, the American and Dutch architects of the new states that traveled across the Atlantic. This approach fits in the transnational, de-centered and networked approach to early America in the twenty-first century (McConville 540). American and Dutch constitution-makers discussed matters of state in person, but also corresponded with each other. "You have obliged me by your questions respecting the Netherlands. In answering them I have learned myself", Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp—the constitutional architect of the Kingdom of the Netherlands—wrote to Thomas Jefferson (GKH to TJ, Apr. 1784).

We will demonstrate, thirdly, that a focus on personal encounters and experiences can help us grasp the transnational character of the revolutionary age. These personal forms of exchange complemented the circulation of publications and diplomatic correspondence between the US and the Netherlands (Tieleman). In this article we will focus on the exchanges between four Founding Fathers: Francis Adrian van der Kemp, Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. These four men all wrote extensively about their encounters. This transatlantic perspective helps better understand their pivotal contributions to the American and Dutch constitutions.

"De grande utilité pour le Congress": Van der Kemp & Adams, 1780-1782

John Adams arrived in the Netherlands in August 1780. For the next eight years he would divide his time between this country, France and England, looking for international recognition and loans (Ferling 228-242; McCullough 233-283; Gould 14-44). This was easier said than done. Adams was confused by the authority assigned to various Dutch government institutions. His diary testifies to his confusion about the power of the *Raad van State*: "how many members? Who appoints them? Are they for Life, or Years, or at Will? When do they sit? What objects of Administration have they? Is their Power Legislative, Executive or Judiciary?" (Adams, 3 Oct. 1782). Adams had to depend on locals to gain a better understanding of Dutch politics. It was the national leader of the Patriot revolt Joan Derk van der Capellen who recommended Van der Kemp to Adams: "Van der Kemp […] peut être à l'avenir de grande utilité pour le Congress. Il a beaucoup de connaissances, de la droiture et une intrépidité que l'on ne chercheroit pas chez un prédicateur Mennonite" (JDC to JA,

16 Oct. 1780; Van De Bilt 45). Van der Kemp was a Mennonite preacher of the radical sort. After a brief stint with deism, he became a minister of the large Mennonite congregation in Leiden in 1777. He spent most of his time writing about politics, however. Adams asked Van der Kemp to come spend an evening with him and "a chosen few of honest Americans" on April 17, 1781 (JA to FAK, 17 Apr. 1781; Postma, 2011 92). What they exactly discussed that evening is unknown, but it was a meeting of hearts. Together they set out to propagate the recognition of America. Two days later, Adams wrote an address to the States-General and the Stadtholder to this end. When both parties refused to receive the documents, Adams had them translated into Dutch and French and disseminated publicly, a tried-and-true method frequently employed by Van der Capellen and Van der Kemp.

For Van der Kemp, meeting Adams was instrumental for rousing a revolutionary spirit in the Dutch Republic. "In America, the sun of salvation has risen", he preached to his congregation, "it will also shine upon us, if we want to." (Van der Kemp, 1782 239) In the summer of 1781, Van der Kemp helped Van der Capellen write the infamous pamphlet *To the People of the Netherlands*, which was anonymously published and spread throughout the country. By far the most famous pamphlet of the Dutch revolutionary era, it called the Dutchmen to fight the tyranny of Stadtholder William V. He simultaneously worked on a *Collection of Papers Concerning the Thirteen United States of North-America* that he published the same year. Adams helped Van der Kemp with this collection, which included translations of the Articles of Confederation, the constitution of Massachusetts and speeches by John Hancock and Samuel Cooper. In the introduction Van der Kemp makes clear that the Dutch should study these documents to better understand their own constitutional rights. To Adams, Van der Kemp confided "Je serois charmé, si je serais [sic] en état, de montrer par de faits [sic] l'intérêt que je prend [sic] dans la cause de l'Humanité en Amerique" (FAK to JA, 5 June 1781; Van der Kemp, 1781).

"The best-informed man of his age I have ever seen": Van Hogendorp & Jefferson (1783-1786)

The Dutch Republic was the first country to acknowledge the independence of the United States in 1782. The Dutch Republic sent an official delegation to Philadelphia the following year. Van Hogendorp informally joined this convoy. His journey was a kind of revolutionary Grand Tour: the Old World visiting the New (Polasky 9, 50). He composed an extensive collection of thematic and philosophical letters. He

would later draw on these ideas when writing the constitutional drafts for the Dutch Restoration government in the 1810s. In this constitution he kept the institutions of the Batavian Revolution intact, while giving them traditional names. Van Hogendorp is usually credited for being a master of invented traditions (Sas, 2005 398-403; Lauret 153-157). We will demonstrate that his US experience was an essential step for Van Hogendorp to design the Dutch constitution in this way.

After meeting Van Hogendorp in Annapolis, where the Congress was assembled, Jefferson recommended him to George Washington "as the best-informed man of his age I have ever seen" (Nicolaisen 111, TJ to GW, 6 Apr. 1784). Jefferson could not foresee that this man would become the main author of the Dutch constitution in 1814-1815, but he already thought that his intelligence "give[s] your country much to hope from the continuance of your life" (TJ to GKH, 30 May 1784). At twenty years old Van Hogendorp entertained limitless intellectual ambitions and relished in exchanging ideas and information on government design with Jefferson from the moment they met. At first glance, Jefferson and Van Hogendorp form an unlikely pair of friends. They stood at each end of the spectrum concerning fundamental questions for the American and Dutch patriots, such as the division of power between the people, the legislature and the executive. Whereas Jefferson championed popular sovereignty and individual state power, Van Hogendorp believed that the people should be firmly kept in check and that the lack of congressional authority harmed the American Republic (GKH to his father, 10 Mar. 1784; Wood 170-86). However, Van Hogendorp learned crucial lessons from his discussions with Jefferson: "One Evening in the Yerseys, riding on very slow on my fatigued horse, I conceived an idea that gave me great Satisfaction. It leads to develop the history and destination of man. In consequence of it I have drawn a rough sketch of a system of Nature, of Society, of Government and of Politics" (GKH to TJ, 22 May 1784).

A central concept running through Van Hogendorp's notes is the "simplicity" of the American people. This would also become a key term in plans to reform the government of the Dutch Republic (Verberne 122; Sas, 2004; W. P. Adams, 1980 266-69). Van Hogendorp carefully observed how the Massachusetts legislature went about simplifying State legislation in December 1783:

> Committees do most of the work really, or the main combatants walk up to each other during a debate and settle the matter. They do not always turn a committee report into a state law, nevertheless the report is influential. Several matters are trusted in the hands of committees elected outside of the assembly:

> this way the most-esteemed are elected to study the laws to simplify them. Seventy [bills] were listed, three of those were presented to the assembly, and all of them spoiled by lucid comments.
>
> (Archive G.K. Van Hogendorp, [AGKH] no. 54, Dec. 1783)[2]

Public finance was one such element of government that needed simplification in the relatively 'old' Dutch Republic *and* in the young American Republic. In the Netherlands, most Dutch provinces had been unwilling to adjust their share in the tax burden to changing circumstances (Landheer 193-197). It should be no surprise that Van Hogendorp studied American banking. Jefferson commented on his "short account of the finances of the United States" and Morris—the initiator of the Bank of North-America—commented on his note on the "Bank of North-America" (AGKH 36, n.10-h; Verberne 134; Wood 247). The fact that the United States, like the Dutch provinces, wanted to maintain the quote-system as a sign of their independence must have been an important reason for Van Hogendorp to conclude that the young American Republic was at risk of making the same mistakes as his homeland (Schulte Nordholt, 1975 51; GKH to TJ, 2 & 25 Aug. 1786).

In his notes, Van Hogendorp reflected on how both countries could help each other. "The lack of money is a general complaint in America", he generalized in his observations. He noticed the desire of inhabitants and several American States to establish a bank, but neither owned sufficient funds to do so. Irrespective of who supplied the funds, however, Van Hogendorp thought "the power invested in that bank should be placed in the state" (AGKH 36). He believed that Dutch capital would be a good source, as "we would benefit from strangers, while we pay them a service." Prices in the Dutch Republic would go down, which would support the industry, while the wealthy merchants' surplus would find its way out of the country in a secure and profitable way. In return, Amsterdam trade houses became the driving forces behind most US loans in the 1780s and 1790s (Jonker 191-232). This case study is also a fine example of an idea that Van Hogendorp would translate to the Restoration state of the Netherlands in 1814: the Dutch Bank had close ties with the government (Jonker 168; Postma, 2017 330; Pfeil). Van Hogendorp and Jefferson only briefly maintained their correspondence after the first returned to the Netherlands and Jefferson was stationed in Paris in 1785. Jefferson sent Van Hogendorp a copy of his *Notes on the State of Virginia* and of the

2. Our translation from the Dutch. All subsequent quotes from Van Hogendorp's Archives have also been translated into English.

revised laws of this state (TJ to GKH, 29 July 1785).[3] Jefferson's natural philosophy informed these proposals for gradual, yet comprehensive political reform as well as his thoughts on the composition of republican constitutions. Van Hogendorp hoped "to communicate some reflexions" as soon as he could read them entirely. For the time being, he found the "article of natural history" very pleasing, because he full-heartedly agreed with Jefferson that "every natural production, in similar circumstances, generally speaking, [was] the same with you as with us" (GKH to TJ, 8 Sep. 1785; Verberne 164-65; Gish & Klinghard 42). In September, he told Jefferson which other documents about the US he would still like to study:

> The Code of laws Your friend will send me As I am now studying more particularly the civil law; that of a people understanding its rights, that which is built on common sense, rather than on authorities of former times, that which takes its origin from an enlightened nation (which You Surely allow the English to be), must be peculiarly interesting and worthy of my whole attention.
>
> (GKH to TJ, 8 Sep. 1785)[4]

This letter shows where Van Hogendorp picked up one of his trade characteristics as author of the Dutch constitution in the early nineteenth century: continuing Batavian government institutions under an early modern name (Sas, 2004 398; Lauret 153-157). Van Hogendorp could not have done this if he had not learned that historical authorities were not the only source of political legitimacy. In this case, Van Hogendorp studied civil laws that used common sense as a source of legitimacy. From the *Notes* Van Hogendorp must have learned that Jefferson, too, believed traditional forms of authority must yield to human reason and common sense (Gish and Klinghard 38-42).

The other crucial lesson Van Hogendorp learned in the United States was that popular influence on government was indispensable for the formation of stable governments. He documented this lesson in a reaction to the Dutch translation of Richard Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*. For Van Hogendorp, the political equality of men was an illusion, since he regarded an equal distribution of possessions as a necessary prerequisite for such a state (AGKH 71; Schulte Nordholt, 1975 50-51). In America he had witnessed wise men fall victim to "that tendency of the people" to believe in the future equal distribution of

3. Van Hogendorp had read a draft version of Jefferson's *Notes* when he was in America.

4. The practical purpose of Jefferson's papers was Van Hogendorp's final chapter in his modest dissertation on equal taxes in confederate states, see Verberne 172-173.

wealth and possessions. Van Hogendorp feared that the potential growth of the United States would satisfy only the most ambitious: "Interest and custom form the bond which connects rulers to the ruled (AGKH 71)." This mechanism was also present in the United States, because the Americans regarded the wealthy free states of Mexico and Peru with suspicion. Rulers should therefore consider that the people they ruled would always have conflicts of interest. And growing possessions among the population could challenge, or even topple, those already in power. Therefore, a government would act wisely if it gave the people a legal influence over itself.

How to accommodate the people's influence as a check on the balance of power was one of the main issues of state building. Van Hogendorp openly doubted whether the value of possessions or nature should determine how to distribute the power of the people over the government. In any case, America had given Van Hogendorp an ingenious example of how to solve this matter:

> In the new governments of the American free states, every independent inhabitant has the right to elect members of the commons. But not everyone has the right to elect members of the Council or the two bodies of the legislature. One has to possess a certain property, or double the amount of money, to be elected to the commons; and more so to sit in the Council; and most to be Governor.
>
> (AGKH 71)

In return, Jefferson received important information from Van Hogendorp about the risk of concentrating power in the hands of one executive officer for a longer period of time. According to Van Hogendorp, the Dutch Republic was like England, where "inequality of fortunes had confined the greatest share of power to a few hands" (GKH to TJ, 20 Jan. 1785). He explained how the Orange family had come to regard the highest public office, the Stadtholdership, as a private possession: "It has become necessary with us to place at the head of the executive an illustrious family which excludes for ever any other one, and prevents a kind of civil war at every vacancy." Originally, "the first Stadholders held from the king the same power and in the same way as Your Governors do from the people at large." In the sixteenth century, the Dutch Revolt made them Stadtholders of the State instead of the King. Since then, the power of the Stadtholders had grown steadily. In 1747, the office of Stadtholder had been declared hereditary and only one Stadtholder would serve in all provinces. This final adaptation had been a mistake according to Van Hogendorp, as this declaration was accompanied by a serious extension of the Stadtholder's privileges to distribute local and provincial offices. "The nation at that epocha has heaped on her new Stadtholder's head every honour and advantage almost that she was able

to bestow. She now has been repenting of her former profusion" (GKH to TJ, 20 Jan. 1785).

Stadtholder William V knew his constitutional privileges thoroughly. He used his command over the army and privileges in the provincial and local governments to build a network of supporters. The nation's defeat in the Fourth Anglo Dutch War (1780-1784) unleashed a flow of pamphlets and periodicals blaming the Stadtholder for the military and economic misery of the Dutch Republic. Upon his return from the United States, Van Hogendorp found his homeland on the brink of civil war (AGKH 50, 21 Nov. 1785). Dutch society had become politicized and everyone had to choose a side between the so-called Patriots party and the Orangist party. After an incest scandal within the Van Hogendorp family, they had been dependent on the benevolence of William V (Hogendorp, 1866 385-392; Meerkerk 94-109). Still, Van Hogendorp deemed the Stadtholderate an indispensable constitutional element to maintain the balance of power in the Dutch Republic. However, "the nation is imposed upon by some daring men who should wish to lay the foundation of their own greatness on the ruin of the Stadtholder's constitutional authority" (GKH to TJ, 20 Jan. 1785).

"A living warning to our United States": Adams & Jefferson, Utrecht/Paris (1785-1786)

John and Abigail Adams witnessed an important victory of the Patriots over both the Stadtholder and aristocratic government, when the new city council in Utrecht was installed in August 1786. According to Schulte Nordholt, Adams overdid it when he wrote to Jefferson that "in no instance of ancient or modern History have the People ever asserted more unequivocal their own inherent and inalienable Sovereignty" (JA to TJ, 11 Sep. 1786). However, historians now agree with Adams' judgement: at the time, this was a successful democratic turnover that marked the potential of the democratic Patriots (Nimwegen 195-202). The parading civic militias reminded Adams of the American colonies in 1775, or so he wrote to Arthur Lee: "This party views America with a venerating partiality, and so much attached are they to our opposition, that they seem fond of imitating us where-ever they can, and of drawing parallels between the similar circumstances in the two countries" (JA to AL, 4 Sept. 1788).

The spectators of the festivities in Utrecht knew that the Patriot struggle for political reform was still far from over. If anything, the events in Utrecht gave Orangists and conservative regents more reason to combine forces to avert a democratic takeover. This ongoing partisanship

made both Adams and Jefferson skeptical about the future of the Dutch Republic. Adams was unnerved by the continual fighting, which he saw as a symptom of "all ill constituted Republicks" and considered this "a living warning to our United States" (JA to JJ, Oct. 9 1787; Nicolaisen, 111). Jefferson had arrived in Europe in 1784 and was informed by Van Hogendorp—a fierce critic of the Patriot movement—about the turmoil. Jefferson had come to a similar conclusion. "I feel a sincere interest in the fate of your country, and am disposed to wish well to either party only as I can see in their measures a tendency to bring on an amelioration of the condition of the people, an increase in the mass of happiness" Jefferson wrote to him (TJ to GKH, 25 Aug. 1786; Nicolaisen 115).

By now Van der Kemp had become one of the most militant combatants of the Patriots. He was known all over the country. He was infamous for wearing his uniform on the pulpit, so that after finishing his sermons he could immediately join military practice. The fact that he used the Bible to promote democracy and even tyrannicide sparked major outrage (Kemp 1782b). Like many of his compatriots, Van der Kemp had celebrated the events in Utrecht as a victory, but the ongoing battle also wore on him. He tended to doubt that the Dutch people were capable of securing liberty like the Americans had. He confided in Adams: "L'état de cette République, comparé avec celle des États Unis, m'ont fait souhaiter depuis quatre ans de changer d'habitation, et la persuasion d'être dans l'impossibilité de me soutenir dans l'Amérique sans aucun biens a empêché l'exécution" (FAK to JA, 31 Oct. 1786). He asked Adams how much money he needed to buy some land in America and live a comfortable life with his family. Adams was always happy to help Van der Kemp, but by this time, America was facing a constitutional crisis of its own.

Adams used his experience in the Dutch Republic to help sort the problems with the American Articles of Confederation in the late 1780s (Smith 276-282). In view of his earlier criticism, Adams was surprisingly positive about the Dutch state in his 1787 *Defence of the Constitutions.* Adams' remarks about the "sagacity" and "wisdom" of the Dutch who "have never had any exclusive preferences of families or nobles" should not be taken too seriously according to Nicolaison, given the critical situation the state was in (Nicolaisen note 27). During the Philadelphia Convention, however, the Americans seemed to follow Adams' advice to Jefferson. Kaplan noted that the United Provinces were mentioned no fewer than thirty-seven times in 1787 and 1788 (Kaplan 44). During the Constitutional Convention the Americans used the Dutch as a negative example so as to demonstrate what the United States should *not* do. Therefore, historians searching for Dutch influence on the United States are usually left disappointed: on a governmental level, Dutch influence

can be dismissed, because the decentralized Dutch Republic was used as a warning by those who supported a close-knit Union (Smith 271; Mijnhardt 63; Watson 228).

The Dutch Republic had been referred to in a more positive way during the constitutional debates in the individual States. Adams learned about the sovereignty of the Dutch provinces while reflecting on the future form of government for the (former) provinces (JA to AA, 21 July 1777; JA to JQA, 27 July 1777). In 1775 he wrote in his diary that he "supposed no Man would think of consolidating this vast Continent under one national Government. We should probably after the Example of the Greeks, the Dutch and the Swiss, form a *Confederacy of States, each of which must have a separate Government*." Adams advised against a uniform constitutional draft for all the States, something he came to regret only a few years later (Adams, 1961 351-352; W. P. Adams, 1980 55-56; Wood 166). Other Americans deliberating on the constitution of their individual State used the Dutch Republic to demonstrate that republican government was not synonymous with religious tyranny. The Netherlands had no state church, but public office could only be obtained by members of the orthodox Protestant church. From a Dutch perspective, it is striking to note that many American State constitutions maintained a mechanism to ensure Protestant members exclusive access to public office well into the nineteenth century (W. P. Adams, 1980 104 and 158).

Van der Kemp & Adams (1788-1815)

In May 1788, Van der Kemp finally set foot on the promised land. During the critical phase of the Patriot Revolt in 1787, he had been captured and jailed for several months. In September, the Stadtholder had managed to restore his power over the Dutch Republic with the help of the Prussian army. Van der Kemp was eventually released provided he left the Republic. Whereas most political refugees left for France (Rosendaal), Van der Kemp took the opportunity to move to America—"l'objet de mes plus ardens desirs", as he wrote to Adams. He eventually settled in the remote village of Barneveld in upstate New York. Here Van der Kemp resumed his ministry. He travelled, wrote numerous historical and theological treatises and farmed his own food. He would never see the Old World again.[5]

5. Van der Kemp's years in America are very well documented in his own autobiography and several books, see Kemp, 1903; Jackson, 1963; Cleave, 2014. See also FAK to JA, 29 Dec 1787.

Van der Kemp's move was made possible with a little help from his American friends. Adams and Jefferson supplied him with letters of recommendation. Van der Kemp kept in close contact with Adams, exchanging no less than 300 letters. Adams had in the meantime started to work on his *Defence of the American Constitutions*, in which he expressed his sentiments on republicanism and his preference for balanced government and a strong executive. The turmoil of civil strife he had witnessed in Europe had a lasting effect on his political outlook. It confirmed his aversion to unchecked democracy. Van der Kemp read the work and was immediately convinced of its genius. He compared it to "the most useful writings of our best modern authors, and sincerely wished that it was perused by every sensible American, and devoured by every lover of Religious and civil Liberty" (FAK to JA, 7 Jan. 1790). The turmoil of the Patriot Revolt had also left a mark on Van der Kemp.

Whereas most Americans lauded the revolutionary events unfolding in France in early 1789, Adams and Van der Kemp were wary of their consequences. Van der Kemp especially held a deep distrust of the French ever since they had failed to come to the rescue of the Patriots during the Prussian invasion of 1787 (Cleave, 2014 128-150). He fiercely condemned the disorder that was brought about by the French Revolution. By the time Adams became president of the United States in 1796, the French had started to "export" the revolution to other countries, the Dutch Republic amongst them. Although Dutch historians now generally tend to stress the relative autonomy of the Dutch "Batavian Republic" vis-à-vis France, Van der Kemp could see nothing good come out of the French expansion (Jourdan, 2011).

Van der Kemp wrote to Adams repeatedly about events in the Netherlands. As president of the United States, Adams shared Van der Kemp's worries about the fate of the Dutch—if only because French expansion could endanger the Dutch loans that America heavily depended upon. Informed by Van der Kemp and by his own son John Quincy, who was now ambassador in the Netherlands, Adams began to steer a decidedly anti-French course. In May 1797, Adams even submitted some of his son's letters concerning the Netherlands to Congress to demonstrate how the French disrupted Europe. The growing hostilities between France and America would eventually result in the Quasi-War in 1798-1800 (Cleave, 2018; Perl-Rosenthal). Van der Kemp's fear that French rule would know no bounds turned out to be justified. The Dutch Republic was turned into the Kingdom of Holland at Napoleon's behest in 1806, only to be fully integrated into the French Empire four years later. The Netherlands would regain its independence as a Kingdom after Napoleon's final defeat in 1813-1815. Even though Van der Kemp had always been a critic of

monarchy, by now he was willing to accept—like most Dutchmen in fact—monarchical rule, if it established law and order in the Republic (Burg).

American Traces in the Dutch Constitutional Committee (1815)

When monarchy in the Netherlands was established, Van Hogendorp presided over the committee entrusted with drafting the new constitution and he could translate the American influence on his ideas about government design into a founding document. He had closely studied the Massachusetts Constitution, in which the executive was the strongest governor of any of the States. Van Hogendorp thought that the American Federal constitution of 1787 granted extensive power to the president. As a result, Van Hogendorp's draft constitution allocated most power to the executive, which in practice would be given to the son of the last Stadtholder: King William I (1776-1843) (Slijkerman, 2003 203).

Bicameralism was "a cardinal point" Van Hogendorp wrote to the new King (Colenbrander 221; Witte). In his defense of bicameralism in 1776, Adams refuted the argument that this system prolonged the terms of office of the sages mediating between the executive and popular powers. Whereas Adams' fellow Americans feared that representatives "like those in Holland" could stay in office for life, Van Hogendorp had to deal with members who argued that a monarchy needed nobility to keep the lower house in check. Van Hogendorp was not against the idea of bicameralism as such, but he opposed hereditary membership in the senate (W. P. Adams 265; Nifterik 28-29). After the decision on the two-chamber system had been made, the commission had to decide whether the lower house should debate in public. The majority of the committee, including Van Hogendorp, was in favour of public debates. Supporters referred to political practices in the United States to stress the benefits of public debates. Debating in public and publishing the proceedings were the only ways to maintain national trust in the legislature and nourish the public spirit (Colenbrander XLI, 488-492).

Van Hogendorp's American experience could not, on the other hand, prevent him from inscribing in the design of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands a provision that would prove to have fateful consequences: the equal representation of the various parts of the kingdom in the lower house. The inhabitants of the Southern provinces—now Belgium—outnumbered the North by two to three. The Protestant North feared the prospect of being outvoted by Catholics from the South. Van Hogendorp's stance displays the American influence on his conception

of political representation. In the American Republic, the issue of representation in Congress was not addressed on a definitive basis. Another member of the committee recalled that the early American Republic had adapted its system of representation within a few years from its inception: when the thirteen States of the American Republic each had had one vote in Congress, they were "waiting for a general cadastre of the lands" to redistribute the votes accordingly (Colenbrander 328). Van Hogendorp believed that soil, possessions, and education should decide the number of delegates instead of population size alone (Nifterik 30-31; Colenbrander 245). He insisted that the Dutch colonial territories should be taken into account. The size of the Dutch population would then outnumber the Belgian South by two to one. Similarly to the Americans, the Dutch constitutional committee proposed a disproportionate representation of the Northern and Southern parts of the new state. But in a true Van Hogendorp-fashion, the Dutch constitutional committee presented this solution as a continuation of the Union of Utrecht: the North and the South should be seen as equal partners in the Kingdom, like the provinces of the Dutch Republic had been up until 1795, and therefore should have the same vote in the new assembly. Within fifteen years, the Southern representatives separated from the North during the Belgian Revolution of 1830.

Conclusion

What do these exchanges between the Dutch and American Founding Fathers tell us about the ideas of government design in the Revolutionary Era? First, the Dutch perspective and the exchanges between Adams, Van der Kemp, Jefferson and Van Hogendorp point to the importance of examining "sister republics" that existed before the French Revolution. Secondly, the personal connections between four Founding Fathers offer a transatlantic perspective that helps to better understand Adams' and Jefferson's positions in the debate on the American Constitution during the 1780s. Conversely, without the interest in the American Republic from a radical like Van der Kemp *as well as* an Orangist like Van Hogendorp, the Dutch state would have looked decidedly different in the nineteenth century. Thirdly, the exchange of constitutional ideas did not stop at the turn of the century. Jefferson documented the most vivid account about his stay in the Netherlands in his 1821 *Autobiography*. He remembered Van Hogendorp as a "royalist" who voiced critical remarks about the central role of the Stadtholder (Nicolaisen 113-116). Shortly before Jefferson visited the Dutch Republic in 1788, Prussian troops had restored the House of Orange Stadtholder. Jefferson regarded

the Stadtholder as the main problem in the constitution of the Dutch Republic, since the English crown forced the Stadtholder "to be the servile Viceroy of a foreign sovereign". This judgement should be seen as Jefferson's contribution to the New World-Old World antithesis, in which the image of old monarchical Europe as a constitutional example was rejected (Mattes 408-414).

By 1821 however, Van Hogendorp had lost his reputation as a royalist. He had made public finance the central theme of his political work. He upheld the principles of public finance he had studied in the US in the 1780s. However, the Dutch King wanted to keep the state budget away from parliamentary control as much as possible. Van Hogendorp resigned when he learned about this unintended consequence of the extensive power the constitution had assigned to the executive. When Van Hogendorp voted against the budget in 1819, William I regarded this as an act of treason and stripped Van Hogendorp of his honorific title as Minister of State (Slijkerman, 2001 44-48; Lauret 197-98). When the Belgian Revolution put constitutional revision on the political agenda, Van Hogendorp published a pamphlet on the state's credit and advocated for the publicity of national finances he had discussed with Jefferson in 1784 (Meerkerk 261-63; Hogendorp, 1830 13-14). Van der Kemp too had gone through considerable change. After living in the Land of the Free for 35 years, he no longer was the staunch Republican he once was. As Adams had already proclaimed in his *Defence of the constitutions*, liberty could come in all shapes and forms. As Van der Kemp wrote to Adams in 1823:

> You are thoroughly acquainted with my sentiments about Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. If civil and religious Liberty is sanctioned and security—justice impartially executed—and an impregnable bulwark raised against any foreign influence—I do little care about the form of Government, although that of your *Defence* would be my choice.
>
> (FAK to JA, 20 Jan. 1823)

Adams accepted these compliments without comment. But when Van der Kemp shared his remorse about the apparent success of the New World-Old World antithesis—he deeply regretted "that the real services of the Dutch towards America, have been and are yet so generally undervalued". Yet, Adams made some effort to console his Dutch friend: "If JQ—or any of my posterity, do not recognise the obligations of this Country to Holland, it will prove in them an ignorance, inattention, and ingratitude, unworthy of their Name" (FAK to JA, 20 Jan. 1823; JA to FAK, 1 Feb. 1823).

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