

## **Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?**

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“The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth,” These are the words written by Thomas Jefferson on the Declaration of Independence, the formal notification to the British crown that the Revolution taking place in the colonies was not a one-time uprising of disgruntled peasants. It was a revolution, and the colonies would now be free of British rule. This vision held by the Founding Fathers was translated into various other founding documents of the United States such as the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The nation created by the founding fathers, the United States, still bears resemblance to its original framework, however key elements have shifted. This manifests itself in examples including the expansion of the executive branch and the rise of politicians from a more elite class than their constituents. The evidence shows, this is not the nation the founding fathers envisioned.

The changing of the founding vision for the United States is represented very clearly in the executive branch. Anti-federalists feared too strong an executive branch would result in a position which held supreme power over the nation, much like a king. Bearing this in mind, the Constitution was constructed in such a way that the judicial and legislative branches would check the power of the president. However, the “Vesting Clause” and the “Take Care Clause”, state “The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.” and that the president “take care that laws be faithfully executed.” These clauses are subjective and give the president the power to interpret them and determine for himself how laws should be executed. This led to the creation and excessive use of executive orders, executive agreements, and executive privilege. These allow the president to do basically whatever they please and shape national and international affairs. The number of executive orders per year skyrocketed from less than one at the time of George Washington and John Adams’

presidencies to 290 by the time Franklin D. Roosevelt was president. It is safe to say that the president of the United States has become the single most powerful person on the planet.

When looking at a Representative Democracy such as the United States, three different categories can be used to characterize the nation's government. Participatory democracy is a democracy where all citizens fulfill their duties and obligations, stay informed, and partake in the political process so it reflects their needs. A pluralistic democracy is where the political agenda is set by non-governing interest groups. These are groups that seek to shape how political decisions are made in the government, which shifts the government from serving the needs of the people to those of an interest group. Finally, there is an elitist democracy. An elitist democracy is a government where power is in the hands of the same few elected officials. In an elitist democracy, citizens have limited voice in government because the same politicians continue to run and serve their own agenda rather than that of the people electing them. The latter is becoming more and more prevalent in modern politics with families such as the Kennedys, the Clintons, and the Bush's having long-standing political dominance. It has continued to exemplify itself with Senators treating election like a lifelong appointment rather than a 6-year appointment. For example, Senate Republican Mitch McConnell has been in the senate since 1985. This habit of politicians cycling through the government for a lifetime has created a class of ruling elite and disconnected elected officials from the needs of ordinary Americans.

One could counter these facts and say that the Constitution is a living document that can be adapted and reinterpreted for whatever situation may arise in the nation. The founders did not anticipate all the events to come but did accommodate for them by creating a form of government that is flexible enough to maintain order within the nation, even if it is not the nation the founders intended to make. Though a valid point, the nation has still experienced levels of corruption and misuse of power which is the opposite of what the founders intended. The founders never intended to create a president with the power to wage war, create laws, sign

treaties, withhold information from the public, or derive its power from precedent rather than the constitution. They had not envisioned creating a class of modern aristocrats, cycling through political offices for personal gain, and not acting on the will of the people.

Though the United States has undeniably strayed from the vision of the founders, this is not to discredit the unprecedented accomplishments of the nation, which the founders had also not envisioned. The founders had not envisioned their country putting a man on the moon a mere two hundred years after its creation. They had not envisioned creating the most powerful economy the world had ever seen. They had not envisioned their nation being the most powerful contender on the international stage. So even though the founders did not create the nation they originally intended, what they did create was the foundation for something far more complex and prosperous.