CHAPTER 2

Against Popular Societies and Faction: Transatlantic Discourses of Moderation in the American, French and Dutch Republics of the 1790s

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Of all the political virtues moderation is perhaps the most context-bound. In his *A Virtue of Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748–1830*, Aurelian Craiutu rightly stresses the 'situatedness' of moderation, stating in Skinnerian fashion that 'we can only write a history of the various *uses* of moderation and of the varying *intentions* with which it was employed over time by actors placed in specific political, social, and cultural contexts'.[1] Drawing inspiration from this guideline, this chapter turns to the American, French, and Dutch Republics of the mid-1790s. It focuses on the efforts by American Federalists, French Thermidorians and moderate (Dutch) Batavian revolutionaries to discredit popular societies as the embodiment of faction and party spirit. They equated factionalism with fanaticism, the pursuit

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of partial interests (instead of the common good), social conflict, and more generally, immoderation. Notwithstanding their local flavours, I argue that their attempts to temper political divisiveness and factionalism can be seen as a shared transatlantic discourse of moderation in times of revolution.[2]

Such a comparative exploration sheds new light on the study of the historical variations of moderation for two reasons. On a methodological level, this chapter makes a case for the study of moderation from a comparative and transnational perspective. As we are currently living in an age in which a turning of political tide in one corner of the world can impact 'national' political climates and public opinion in another, such a perspective seems all too relevant. During the 1790s, too, American Federalists and Dutch moderate revolutionaries staked out their political positions by situating themselves not only in national contexts—that is, in relation to local adversaries—but also within a larger, transnational ideological realm. For both, the dismissal of the radical phase of the French Revolution was central to their rhetoric of moderation; their argumentative toolbox was formed in an Atlantic revolutionary context. One fruitful and important context, then, in which to examine (local) manifestations of moderation—and as an approach might be applicable to other cases—is the transnational ideological realm.

My reconstruction of a transatlantic discourse of moderation does not merely consist of an accumulation of isolated, nationally based groups of politicians and publicists who reflected on a similar phenomenon. The rowdy Atlantic world of the 1790s witnessed an intense circulation of ideas, symbols, concepts, people and practices.[3] Popular societies in particular cultivated the idea of partaking in a grand transatlantic revolutionary project that transcended national boundaries. Some of the American democratic-republican societies mushrooming in 1793–1794, for example, corresponded with their French Jacobin *frères*, others even entered into formal affiliations with societies from across the ocean. They celebrated French revolutionary successes, sang French songs and displayed French revolutionary symbols during their feasts. With the arrival of the French ambassador Edmond-Charles or 'Citizen' Genet in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 8, 1793, the radicalized French Revolution literally seemed to land on American shores. It would not take long before those Americans, frightened of what to them seemed an influx of radical democratic disorder, started to use the term 'Jacobin' as a term of abuse.[4]

Dutch Batavian revolutionaries in their turn, some of whom had spent time in revolutionary France, realized from the very beginning that the French mother republic had bequeathed an ambiguous example. For both French Thermidorians and Batavian revolutionaries, the legacy of the French Revolution was troubled, not uniform. In the language of the time, the French Revolution was both a 'college of patriotism and revolutionary education', as the Dutch publicist Gerrit Paape famously put it, and a 'college of revolutionary disaster', as the former Patriot exile and representative Johan Huber declared.[5] Many Batavian revolutionaries were keen to embrace the French Thermidorian moment. It represented to them France's return to constitutional government. The *Discourse préliminaire* to the 1795 constitution, one of the most important statements of Thermidorian centrist politics by François-Antoine de Boissy d'Anglas was avidly read and appeared in Dutch translation. But for Dutch revolutionaries, an unreflective import of French ideals was never an option. Ideas and practices circulated, but they were re-appropriated, criticized and amended. The transatlantic discourse of moderation took shape in a world of both similar and connected events.

Secondly, on a more substantial level, this chapter aims to provide a corrective to the view, most prominently defended by Craiutu, that political moderation necessarily involves some form of constitutional complexity and balance. Instead, I will show that the political moderates discussed in this chapter aimed at institutional simplicity and the centralization of power. The American Federalists, French Thermidorians and Batavian revolutionaries who are at the centre of my account envisioned political moderation in terms of the supreme authority of representative government and the underlying principle of an undivided citizenry. In their view, the thriving political clubs and popular societies of the age of revolutions bred party spirit and faction, and could unleash immoderate and tumultuous politics. They dismissed popular societies as dangerous and illegitimate platforms of public will formation. Only the representative body—representing the citizenry conceived as a unified whole—was in their view the true centre of public authority and as such could counter passionate conflict and political divisiveness. These moderate voices of the 1790s remind us that moderation has 'many faces' indeed.[6]

Faction and Moderation

Before we turn to the dismissal of factional popular societies in the mid-1790s as an expression of moderation, some remarks on late eighteenth-century evaluations of faction are required. In the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, faction or 'party' was generally considered baneful and evil. Faction or party (the terms were often used interchangeably) were first of all associated with 'partial' group interests instead of the common good; the terms invoked the spectre of discord, turbulence and instability. Political factions, moreover, ran the risk of becoming instruments in the hands of their leaders. Those who were infected with the 'spirit' of faction or party lost their capacity of disinterested, unbiased judgment.[7]

This is not to say that the phenomenon was undisputed. Already in the sixteenth century Machiavelli in his *Discourses on Livy* had made the startlingly original argument that civil discord between the *popolo* and the *grandi* was not only inevitable, but even conducive to the creation of laws 'made in favour of liberty', and hence to the stability of the city.[8] Yet few in the eighteenth century followed up on his claim. Some of the most influential eighteenth-century works of political thought, including Viscount Bolingbroke's *On the Idea of a Patriot King*, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's *Cato's Letters*, and Rousseau's *Du contrat social* vehemently rejected the formation of political associations, factions and parties. In 1789, the leading French revolutionary publicist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès likewise dismissed the 'factional interest [...] by which one citizen combines with no more than a small number of others'. One of Sieyes's key arguments was precisely that only the *common* interest, that is, from the point of view of the whole mass of citizens, was the sole legitimate object of representative government. The very idea of factional interest contradicted his conception of the unity of the representative body.[9]

The most famous late eighteenth-century reflection on faction was articulated by James Madison in no. 10 of the *Federalist Papers*. Madison's intervention in support of a constitution for a federal United States stands out because it turned on its head the commonplace that faction was merely lamentable and ought to be avoided. Instead, Madison believed that the problem of faction was ineradicable. The best that could be for wished was 'controlling its effects'. His famous 'cure' was twofold: instituting a scheme of representative government and

establishing a large or 'extended' republic in which it should take hold. The reason for adopting a system of representative government, Madison maintained, was that a 'chosen body of citizens' is more likely to act in the common interest; he believed that there is a great chance that ordinary citizens will elect representatives with 'enlightened views and virtuous sentiments'. Yet Madison confessed that a representative scheme of government does not rule out the possibility that 'factious leaders' may still arise. The second element of his antidote to faction therefore consisted of the establishment of a large republic: by extending the sphere of the republic, Madison claimed, 'you take in a greater variety of parties and interests' which makes it 'less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens'. Opposing factions in large countries, Madison thought, cancel each other out, perhaps not entirely but at least sufficiently so as to secure the stability of the republic.[10]

Madison's solution has been subject to various, sometimes opposing interpretations.[11] Here I merely wish to draw attention to the centrality of the system of representative government in both Madison's and Sieyès's arguments. Although Sieyès was categorically dismissive of faction (unlike Madison) and propounded a more monolithic conception of public will formation, his solution to the emergence of factionalism, too, broadly consisted of the institution of representative government.[12] As shown below, it was to these ways of thinking the critics of popular societies as embodiments of factionalism and immoderation had recourse. Representative government, these critics believed, could temper, channel, or even prevent factionalism and hence immoderate politics, at the expense of popular societies.

Such rhetoric was of course highly political: by dismissing popular societies as factional (or radical) and claiming the 'moderate high ground', these critics sought to bolster their own legitimacy. To such accusations, the members and advocates of popular societies replied that their societies actually consisted of 'the people' and that they offered the people a platform for public opinion formation, education and sociable interaction. The equation of faction and moderation should therefore not be taken at face value. During the 1790s, furthermore, as the spectrum of available political positions widened to an unprecedented degree, it was by no means always clear what 'moderate' (or 'radical', for that matter) meant. Rather, it meant different things to different people.[13] For French royalists or Dutch Orangists, the self-proclaimed

'moderate' revolutionaries weren't moderate at all. This confirms, again, the situatedness of (ascriptions of) 'moderation', especially in times of revolution, as well as the diversity of forms it could assume. The central contention of this chapter is that during this decade for the first time a form and rhetoric of moderation emerged that dismissed the factional nature of popular societies as a form of political immoderation.

The Early American Republic

In the early American republic, the alleged danger of immoderate factionalism and disorder became a particularly contested issue when between 1793 and 1795 more than forty democratic-republican societies were formed throughout the country. The constitutional establishment of a national government in 1789 had left unanswered fundamental questions about how, in practice, the relationship between national representatives and their constituents would take shape, how and through what channels the 'will of the people' was to be determined, and what role citizens should play in the public sphere. Precisely because the American republic was entering uncharted waters, the vicissitudes of the new French Republic became such important points of reference.[14]

The rise of the democratic-republican societies coincided with an unparalleled increase, often inspired by and organized around key moments of the French Revolution, of public festivities, parades and celebrations, an expanding (transatlantic) book and pamphlet market, and the expansion of a democratic press.[15] The first, pioneering German Republican Society and the larger Democratic Society of Pennsylvania were founded in the nation's capital, Philadelphia. Members of democratic-republican societies were by and large drawn from the middle and lower classes, among them shopkeepers, artisans and merchants, as well as workingmen and mechanics. Local politicians, lawyers and printers often constituted the leadership of the societies.[16] By regularly organizing public or semi-public discussion meetings, celebrations and feasts, as well as by publishing pamphlets, addresses and newspaper articles, democratic-republican societies aspired to create an engaged and informed citizenry. Echoing a classical-republican vocabulary, the democratic-republican societies deemed the established Federalist government deeply 'corrupted'.[17] Consequently, as the German Republican Society of Philadelphia put it: 'In a republican government it is a duty incumbent on every citizen to afford his assistance […] by his advice and

watchfulness, that its principles may remain incorrupt; for the spirit of liberty, like every virtue of the mind, is to be kept alive only by constant action'.[18]

The democratic-republican societies' heightened presence in the American public sphere aroused suspicion and drew heavy criticisms from Federalist publicists and politicians alike. Federalists certainly did not discard voluntary citizen associations *tout court*. The revolutionary political associations of the 1770s, such as Sons of Liberty and the Corresponding Societies, by which democratic republicans were inspired, were held in high esteem. Federalists duly acknowledged the need for, and value of, such associations in times of revolution. However, under the new constitutional order there was no place for associations that in their eyes only sought to undermine, or worse, even overturn established authorities. A further disconcerting novelty of the democratic-republican societies was that they did not shy away from public controversy and actively engaged in national and international political debates through a national network of newspapers. It led one worried Federalist to decry the democratic societies which have 'invested themselves with a disproportionate degree of power' and have become 'the monopolizers of public opinion, and public influence'.[19]

When a large-scale violent uprising in western Pennsylvania broke out in the Summer of 1794 over the national government's levy of excise taxes on distilled liquors and grew into a frontier-wide movement better known as the 'Whiskey Rebellion', suspicion toward the societies aggravated up to the point of outright hostility.[20] The Whiskey Rebellion gave the Federalist fears about the societies' socially disruptive potential immediate urgency and provided them with a sharpened set of argumentative weapons to attack the societies' conception of democratic-republican citizenship.

Against the background of the gloomy news coming from revolutionary France (predominantly via the British press), Federalists began to portray the democratic-republican societies through the lens of Jacobin clubism. The association of the democratic-republican societies with both the Whiskey Rebellion and the Jacobin clubs in France—and by implication, the Terror—became a powerful charge against unbridled citizen political activism. Noah Webster's *The Revolution in France, Considered in Respect to Its Progress and Effects*, published in 1794, was perhaps the most elaborate analysis of the lessons American should take away from the violent derailment of the French Revolution. Webster, a

lexicographer, prominent Federalist publicist and editor of the widely distributed (and excerpted) New York newspaper *American Minerva*, urged his readers to take the lessons of the French excesses to heart. For '[t]he revolution of France, like that of Rome, is fruitful in lessons of instruction' and 'may be of great use to the United States of America'.[21] The most important lesson was the inherent danger of political clubs, those 'private societies of men, who are self-created, unknown to the laws of the country, private in their proceedings, and perhaps violent in their passions'. Such secluded political associations could only lead to 'party spirit' and 'faction'. And faction, Webster believed, means ultimately 'death to the existing government. The history of the Jacobins is the most remarkable illustration of this truth'.[22]

The alleged secluded nature of the societies was seen by many Federalist commentators as a potential source of sedition. In the *Columbian Centinel*, one of the leading Federalist newspapers at the time, one critic depicted them as '[a]ssociations of discontented ambitious men, assembling under the disguise of night in taverns and private houses, with a pretence of redressing grievances'.[23] Their alleged secrecy was often associated with the partisan 'undemocratic' nature of French political clubs, as another 'American citizen' in a Massachusetts newspaper held. For 'how these private societies (separated in their proceedings as they commonly are, by bolts and bars, from the knowledge of their fellow citizens, without the suffrages of their countrymen as their basis, and in no way accountable to them for their conduct) how these come by their influence, or whence they derive their existence, we know not'. 'Clearly', the writer suggested, '[t]he benevolent heart must turn indignant from the sight, and our Democratic Societies themselves, would, I hope, shudder at the thought of introducing such scenes in America, as have been the fruits of Jacobinism in France'.[24]

One reason Federalist politicians and publicists invoked revolutionary France in their fight against democratic-republican societies was that they actually had a hard time criticizing them. Defenders of the societies had accused Federalist critics of imposing censorship and curbing public opinion. Federalists thus sought to present the societies, as congressman Fisher Ames put it, as a threat to 'the social order and the authority of the laws'. Another Federalist publicist, the New York lawyer William Willcocks, projected Webster's analysis of Jacobin clubs onto the activities of 'our democrats'. 'Their professed object', Willcocks opined in a piece that appeared in the *Federal Orrery* and the *American Minerva*,

is to 'censure, or applaud, correct, and control the measures of the legal representatives of the commonwealth—in other words to make parties in congress and throughout the state'. Democrats had already started to 'artfully […] affiliate members of congress', Willcocks warned, and if no measures were taken, it would not take long, given the activities of the 'mother society' in Philadelphia, to 'see the effects of mobs and the dreadful machinations of seditious, or ambitious men'.[25] Over time such comments succeeded in associating the democratic-republican societies with the excessive factionalism that seemed to ravage revolutionary France.

What was the cure these Federalists offered to fight what they diagnosed as illegitimate popular factionalism? Broadly speaking, they advocated a more deferential model of citizenship—a model that, as we shall see shortly, bears striking similarities to the French Thermidorian model of citizenship. It was grounded in a concept of an undivided citizenry. As an open letter 'to the Democratic Society of Philadelphia' that appeared in the *Columbian Centinel* and the *American Minerva* put it in May 1794: '[I]n *America*, where there is but one order […] *the people*—what use can there be in a small *club* of these *same people*? The *great body of people* in *America* constitutes *one immense popular society*'.[26] Citizens were expected to participate in elections, some even to seek office. But popular societies were alien to this system of representative government, for they sought, as the Federalist Fisher Ames put it, to offer 'a substitute for representation'.

Their model was, furthermore, premised on the high ideal of the 'independent', impartial, representative. As Webster explained, when people become member of a political club, 'they lose their individual independence of mind […] they lose their impartiality of thinking and acting; and become the dupes of other men. The moment a man is attached to a club, his mind is not free: He receives a bias from the opinions of the party'. The great danger, then, lies in the politicization of such societies and in the risk of polarization in society at large. Then the 'private attachment' of their members is converted 'into an instrument of political warfare'; then 'an independent freeman is converted into a mere walking machine, a convenient engine of party leaders'.[27]

A powerful Federalist public opinion thus construed popular societies against the background of the French revolutionary experience as catalyzers of factionalism and immoderate politics. By comparing them with the French Jacobin clubs they equated them with immoderation

and its consequences: heightened social conflict, fanaticism, anarchy and ultimately violence. In the end, the democratic-republican societies succumbed to the association with the Whiskey Rebellion and the Jacobin Terror, the torrent of public attacks, the dissociation of Republican leaders and internal division. In his 1796 Farewell Address, President George Washington dismissed them brusquely. Shortly thereafter most societies dissolved.

France

There is probably no moment in French history when there was more widespread demand, if not yearning, for some kind of political moderation than in the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary Terror of 1793–1794. But what did moderation in these vexed circumstances entail? One crucial element was the curtailment of the Jacobin clubs. In the weeks and months after the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor Year II (July 27, 1794), the Jacobins were attacked both in the National Convention, in the press, and on the streets. These attacks created the circumstances in which a decree was proposed to the National Convention to dismantle the already weakened network of Jacobin clubs.[28] In an earlier report, Robert Lindet, a moderate ex-Montagnard and member of the Committee of Public Safety, had already argued that the representatives of the National Convention (the majority of whom actually served during the Terror) should 'tighten and draw closer the resources of government' so as to 'singlehandedly guide revolutionary currents'.[29] Lindet thus articulated the effort and what would become an ongoing preoccupation of Thermidorian and Directorial France (c. 1794–1799): to re-establish a strong centralized government—and its direct relation to the people—without the mediation or interference of popular societies.

On 16 October 1794, the decree regarding the 'policing' of popular societies was presented to the National Convention. The debate over this decree is particularly insightful as we can find here a sustained effort by a number of centrist Thermidorians to detach citizens from the highly politicized environment of political clubs. The decree contained a proposal to ban all 'affiliations, aggregations, [and] correspondences between popular societies' as 'subversive to revolutionary government'. It escaped no one that what the report really targeted was the most famous of popular societies, the Jacobin Club.

A handful of representatives who were still supporting popular societies feared that the attack on popular societies deprived citizens of a vital platform of public organization, civic engagement and political participation. During the debate about the report, representative Joseph-Nicolas Barbeau du Barran expressed this fear most sharply: 'The proposed measure is apolitical'. What is needed, Du Barran went on, is that representatives 'multiply and strengthen the very ties of union and fraternity that exist among citizens' instead of weakening them. He feared that the decree would condemn 'good citizens' into 'isolation'.[30]

But the objections raised against popular societies were numerous. They not only presented a threat to the 'unrivalled centre of authority', as Thermidorian representative and reactionary ex-Jacobin François Louis Bourdon put it or established an alternative 'centre of opinion' as another representative had it. Political societies, the Jacobin clubs in particular, were also accused of cooking up opinions that neither citizens nor their representatives would ever come to entertain if they would be left to reasoning on their own, that is to say, independently and on the basis of their individual mental capabilities and judgment. Popular societies, in short, were seen as having a malignant influence on public opinion formation.

Other representatives seized the debate over the proposed decree—not without a fair dose of opportunism—as an opportunity to frontally attack the internal and external workings of the Jacobin clubs. Representative Merlin de Thionville argued that without the assistance of the Jacobins, Robespierre and his accomplices would never have been able to dominate French politics (as a prominent ex-Montagnard he could know). The societies put power in the hands of men 'placed outside the Convention'. He subsequently asked: 'What is representative government? […] Is it not where representatives shape the public voice? If you admit that some citizens or societies are not subjected to laws and are able to rise against the national representation, then government is merely anarchic'.[31] This accusation of forming a parallel centre of political power next to the National Convention was elaborated by others in a number of ways. One strategy was to analyse the popular societies in terms of a new form of 'corporatism' or as resembling the constituted bodies of the *ancien régime*. The future Director Jean-François Reubell, for instance, acknowledged citizens' rights to communicate among each other, but objected to 'men who wish to put themselves above the law, men who, communicating amongst each other as citizens, wish to be more than other citizens, wish to communicate like a corporation'. According to Reubell, it was 'the

abuse of these corporations' that had caused 'all calamities'.[32] Bourdon compared popular societies with a convent of 'friars' whose members are selected 'among each other'. Popular societies smacked of aristocratic, constituted bodies challenging centralized government, he argued. 'Aristocracy starts where a group of men, through their correspondence with other groups, makes other opinions triumph than those of the national representation'. The contrast with the National Convention, Bourdon suggested, could not be more obvious. 'We are a democratic republic; our government is representative; it is composed of men who are chosen by the people; but what are popular societies? An association of men who elect themselves'.[33] The people, in his view, were equipped with one 'centre of authority', the popular societies created 'anarchy'.[34] Jacques-Alexis Thuriot complemented Bourdon's argument by simply saying that 'the people does not reside in the societies. Sovereignty resides in the universality of the nation'.[35] The arguments put forth in defence of the popular societies by representatives such as Du Barran and others could not turn this powerful tide against them. The decree was passed with only a few small amendments. Less than a month later, on 11 November, the Jacobin Club was closed, although the closure of all popular societies was only ordered in late August 1795.

Because of its (turbulent) alliance with the Parisian sans-culotte movement, faction as represented by the Jacobin Club became associated with the direct involvement of the masses in politics, the danger of political passions and fanaticism, and the interaction between demagoguery leadership and mob dynamic. The Terror, it was now argued, was caused by a combination of an explosion of unchecked dangerous passions, the vicious exploitation of ideas by demagogic leaders, ferocious party spirit and a specifically lethal interaction between the uneducated mass and its leadership. About a month after the debate in the National Convention, Pierre-Louis Roederer in an anonymous pamphlet on 'Popular societies' argued that popular societies should be prohibited, as societies do not have the freedom of opinion as individuals do, to make 'interruptions on political matters'. For

> A collective opinion exercises on individual opinions a kind of authority that is contrary to the formation of public opinion, which can only emerge spontaneously in the bosom of liberty and wisdom; opinions of a *brotherhood*, a *corporation*, a *sect*, a *party*, are substituted for the opinion of the people, which, revealed by herself, is solely attuned to the general interest.[36]

Popular societies stand in the way of what Roederer called 'impartiality', which could only be achieved by leaving individual citizens to reason on their own. Like American Federalists, Roederer and the Thermidorian national representatives preferred the moderation of 'impartial' and 'independent' representatives over the partial, passionate and immoderate politics of popular societies.

Batavian Republic

While the French Republic was a revolutionary society, and the American Republic a post-revolutionary society, the Dutch Republic in the early 1790s was a pre-revolutionary society. Only in January 1795, French troops and Dutch exile patriots overthrew the Orangist regime headed by the Stadholder. The first, chief political issue to be tackled in early 1795 was the formation of a national convention. The supreme political authority of the federative Dutch Republic was—on paper—still the States-General, an assembly composed of representatives of the largely autonomous provinces. Despite swelling public opinion in favour of a new state structure based on the principle of '*één- en ondeelbaarheid*' (unity and indivisibility), proposals for a national convention met with firm opposition. By late 1795 most Batavian revolutionaries agreed that a national convention should come up with a new constitution.

Batavian revolutionaries by and large agreed that the new Batavian Republic was to be governed by a system of elective representation. But, as has recently been pointed out in some detail, the nature and extent of the involvement of the people in a system of political representation was vigorously contested. Inspired by Rousseau, radical (unitarist) republicans such as Pieter Vreede and Bernardus Bosch incessantly emphasized the permanent sovereignty of the people. They insisted that the task of representatives consists of executing the general will of the people, not forming it. In a representative system, these radical republicans contended, citizens organized in popular societies exercise their sovereignty by continuously monitoring, admonishing and holding accountable their representatives.[37]

Although vocal and very influential, the democratic-republican wing was a minority within the Batavian revolutionary movement, if a considerable one.[38] More moderate representatives and opinion-makers were highly suspicious of what they considered factional popular politics as embodied by popular societies. This point of view was poignantly

articulated by the former professor of theology, prominent publicist and future Batavian national representative IJsbrand van Hamelsveld. In a speech held in Leiden in March 1795, two months after the outbreak of the Batavian Revolution, Van Hamelsveld laid out his view on the means to arrive at what he called the 'good cause of liberty'. Van Hamelsveld observed that:

> Faction and parties of which *France*, in the middle of the great attempts of this noble nation, has given us formidable examples, are the consequences of Clubs and Societies that operate separately, that become animated by the spirit of someone who sets the tone, who pretends to have special insights, and who acts from distinctive principles. – No! The people is an indivisible unity, one body; without uniformity of action based on these very principles, without being aimed at the same purpose, an orderly voice of the people is impossible.[39]

Van Hamelsveld's observation echoed the assessments of American Federalists and French Thermidorians: popular societies incite faction, cloud impartial political judgement and undermine the unity of the body politic. The example of revolutionary France was, likewise, a crucial reference point.

Despite the disagreement about the appropriate platform of citizenship participation in the new Batavian polity, both moderate and more radical Batavian revolutionaries were eager to disassociate the Batavian cause from Jacobin radical politics. Even a passionate democratic-unitarist revolutionary such as Willem Anthony Ockerse was keen to embrace the Thermidorian moment in France. Thermidor and its most important spokesperson Boissy d'Anglas, whose *Discourse préliminaire* to the new French 1795 Constitution was avidly read and appeared in Dutch translation, represented to them France's return to constitutional government. This was also the tenor of a letter to the editor in *De republikein* (The Republican), a leading political journal of the early Batavian revolution, edited by Jan Konijnenburg, a prominent journalist and professor at a remonstrant seminary of democratic-unitarist hue (although he prided his own journal to give space to opinions that were not necessarily his own). The anonymous author of the letter quoted extensively from Boissy d'Anglas's *Discourse préliminaire*.[40] '[I]f we do not draw lessons' from Boissy d'Anglas' speech, he asserted, 'then we must blame ourselves in the case we, although duly and thoroughly warned,

run upon the rocks of anarchy, exaggerated patriotism, popular demagogy and agitation'.[41] The other leading political journal at the time, *De Democraten*, too suggested that the history lessons of the Terror could be of great help 'to stem the tide of vices, debauchery, and deficiencies that may rise again with every blow of passions, fanaticism and intriges'.[42]

But democratic-republican Batavian revolutionaries overall did not dismiss popular societies. One strategy they employed was setting apart the most factional and violent episode of the French Revolution as an 'aberration'. Not surprisingly, political associations and popular societies enjoyed a venerable reputation. Many leading Batavian revolutionaries had intellectually and politically matured in these societies, which had often served as a springboard for their political careers. In that respect, a crucial difference between the Dutch Republic on the one hand, and the United States and France, on the other, hand was that the Dutch were only in the opening phase of their revolution. Popular societies were still seen as powerful levers and wells of revolutionary energy.

In June 1797, in the build-up to the referendum on the first *Draft of Constitution*, the leader of the democratic republicans in the National Assembly, Pieter Vreede, (a former member of a heavily politicized Rotterdam literary society) even suggested that popular societies be made permanent bodies guaranteed by the constitution. In response, representative Jan van Hooff, who had been imprisoned in Paris during the Terror and had closely witnessed the working of the Jacobin clubs, claimed that they cannot become part of the 'body politic', the 'sovereignty of the people is after all one and indivisible'. Van Hooff pointed out that in France 'the societies which assumed the right of the entire people or were affiliated with the *société mère* called the Jacobins, were destroyed'. Echoing Thermidorian rhetoric, Van Hooff suggested that they 'not only controlled the constituted authorities' but also 'rivalled with the National Convention', chasing away 'true patriots' and trying 'to destroy the national representation'. In the end, most representatives agreed with Van Hooff that a permanent involvement of primary assemblies would interfere with the indivisibility of the people's sovereignty as represented in the National Assembly.[43] The proposal was voted down.

On the one hand, then, large segments of the Batavian revolutionaries feared that popular societies would lead to factionalism, disorder, demagoguery as seen in revolutionary France. At the same time, however, there was a widespread belief that the Dutch had a 'national temper' that

was very different from the French. 'As much as the heated Frenchman must be soothed', an article in *De Democraten* suggested in January 1797, 'the sluggish Dutchman must be galvanized'.[44] Because of this difference in national temper, French excesses were not likely to take place, it was argued, for 'our Nation is *not susceptible to* tragic scenes that disgrace humanity, not susceptible to a reign of terror'.[45] Indeed, downplaying the risk that Dutch popular societies would become dominated by demagogues as had happened in France, due to the alleged calm and quiet Dutch temperament, became an incessantly articulated trope of Batavian political discourse.

Two different rhetorics of moderation were thus at play. Those who opposed the continuous involvement of citizens in national politics rejected the popular societies as embodiments of faction; they put their hopes on the unrivalled authority of representative government. More radical democratic republicans who after two years of fruitless deliberation feared that their revolution would die out, emphasized the moderate nature of the Dutch in order to downplay the fear that radical measures would lead to French scenes of immoderate factionalism. Being a 'moderate' revolutionary in the aftermath of the French revolutionary terror was a delicate business.

Conclusion

Although in distinct political contexts, Thermidorian centre politicians and publicists, moderate Batavian revolutionaries and American Federalists conceived of the role of societies and clubs in the French Revolution in terms of a shattering of the monistic, unified body of citizens. Their anti-factional rhetoric of moderation shares sufficient similarities to be able to group them as a transnational or transatlantic discourse of moderation. First, they explicitly related clubs and popular societies to faction and party spirit. Second, they interpreted—and presented—the recent history of the Jacobin clubs as a lesson about this relationship. And third, they conceived of clubs and popular societies as a threat to the ultimate authority of representative government and the underlying principle of an undivided citizenry. For all of them, the Jacobin and democratic-republican societies constituted unconstitutional and unsound forms of public will formation. They divided the body of citizens conceived as a unified whole, instead of representing it, and prevented 'wise' legislators from ruling independently and impartially.

What emerges from these voices of moderation is a conceptualization of political moderation centred around the ideals of enlightened impartiality, law and order, and a limited degree of direct citizen participation in extra-parliamentarian political platforms. The factionalism as displayed by the popular societies of the 1790s was a threat to all these ideals. That, at any rate, was the view of the moderates discussed in this chapter. This discourse of moderation had anti-democratic tendencies, but it was not counterrevolutionary. They believed that they defended a tempered model of representative democracy. But in the eyes of contemporaries as well as later historians it amounted to the rule of 'enlightened' elites who were anything but impartial.

Another conclusion that arises from this comparative exploration is that the pleas for moderation had their local flavours due to distinct political circumstances and the 'stage' or moment of their revolution or post-revolutionary settlement. The more radical wing of democratic-republican Batavian revolutionaries even sought to dissociate themselves from Jacobin radicalism by underlining the (alleged) 'moderate' national temperament of the Dutch. Yet by presenting themselves as 'moderate' (by national inclination) they sought to clear the way for revolutionary action. This only shows the variability and range of what has been considered—or propagated as—'moderate' at a given moment in a given situation: these Batavian democratic republicans were revolutionaries, yes, but more moderate than the Jacobins, and yet again more radical than the moderate wing of the Batavian revolutionaries. In contrast, the American Federalists made the case that because the American Revolution was concluded, there was no need any longer for popular societies. The constitutional settlement of the late 1780s, they argued, secured and channelled orderly political participation; the American constitutional order was a safeguard for moderate politics.

Finally, the politicians and publicists who resolutely rejected faction and dismissed popular societies conceived of a more centralized and unitary representative government as a means to arrive at moderate politics. This amounted to limiting pluralism and simplifying the complexity of political life, in order to contain political passion and prevent civil strife and animosity. Moderation, it turns out, can translate into a program for institutional simplicity. Whether that is a sane political vision is another matter.

Notes

1. A. Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748–1830* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 6.
2. Parts of this chapter draw on my forthcoming book *The Citizenship Experiment: Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
3. A. Jourdan, *La Révolution batave entre la France et l'Amérique (1795–1806)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008); J. Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).
4. S.P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); D. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
5. G. Paape, *De onverbloemde geschiedenis van het Bataafsch Patriottismus van deszelfs begin (1782) tot op den 12 Junij 1798 toe* (Delft: M. Roelofswaart, 1798), 123; *Dagverhaal* 4, no. 368, 9 February 1797 (session February 6), 793.
6. Aurelian Craiutu, *Faces of Moderation: The Art of Balance in an Age of Extremes* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
7. R. Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 1–39.
8. John M. Najemy, 'Society, Class, and State in Machiavelli's Discourses on Livy', in John M. Najemy (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91–111.
9. E. Sieyès, 'What Is the Third Estate', in *Political Writings*, trans. M. Sonenscher (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 154.
10. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, 'The Federalist No. 10', in T. Ball (ed.), *The Federalist with Letters of 'Brutus'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–46.
11. For a well-informed overview and balanced interpretation, see A. Gibson, 'Impartial Representation and the Extended Republic: Towards a Comprehensive and Balanced Reading of the Tenth Federalist Paper', *History of Political Thought* 12 (1991), 263–304.
12. This is not to say that there were no differences between their theories of representative government. For background, see N. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006).

13. See also P. Serna, *La république des girouettes, 1789–1815 et au-delà, une anomalie politique: la France de l'extrême centre* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2005).
14. On the democratic-republican societies, see P.S. Foner, *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790–1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); E.P. Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790–1800* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1942).
15. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*; Waldstreicher, *Perpetual Fetes*.
16. Foner, *The Democratic-Republican Societies*, 7–8; M. Schoenbachler, 'Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s', *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (1998), 237–261.
17. Schoenbachler, 'Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution'.
18. *National Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), 13 April 1793.
19. *Federal Orrery* (Boston, MA), 25 March 1795.
20. T.P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). For a powerful alternative interpretation of the 'Whiskey Rebellion' as a rural grass roots democratic protest movement with roots stretching back into the 1770s and 1780s, see T. Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
21. [N. Webster], *The Revolution in France, Considered in Respect to Its Progress and Effects: By an American* (New York, NY: G. Bunce, 1794), 40–41.
22. [Webster], *Revolution in France*, 41, 47–48.
23. *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), 30 August 1794.
24. *Greenfield Gazette* (Greenfield, MA), 18, 25 September 1794.
25. *Federal Orrery* (Boston, MA), 23 March 1795.
26. *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), 2 May 1794.
27. [Webster], *Revolution in France*, 47–50.
28. On this episode, see Bronislaw Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution After Robespierre*, trans. M. Petheram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
29. Lindet, *Rapport fait à la Convention nationale*, 616.
30. J. Madival et al. (eds.), *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, 127 vols. (Paris: Librairie administrative de P. Dupont, 1862) [hereafter: *AP*, followed by volume number], vol. 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an III (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), 213.
31. *Réimpression Gazette Nationale* 22, no. 28, 28 vendémiaire, l'an 3 (19 Octobre 1794), Séance du 25 vendémiaire (16 octobre 1794), 256.

32. *AP* 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an III (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), 208.
33. *AP* 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an III (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), 210.
34. *AP* 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an III (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), 210.
35. *AP* 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an III (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), 214 [French original: 'le peuple n'est pas dans les sociétés. La souveraineté réside dans l'universalité de la nation'.].
36. P.L. Roederer, 'Des sociétés populaires', in *Œuvres du comte P.L. Rœderer*, 8 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1853–1859), 17–22: 21.
37. W.R.E. Velema, 'Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse Revolutie, 1795–1798', in F. Grijzenhout, W. Velema, and N. van Sas (eds.), *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013), 27–63; M. Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 77–80.
38. On the various political groupings in the Batavian revolutionary movement, see J. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland, 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).
39. Y. van Hamelsveld, *Vertoog over de middelen, tot voltooijing en handhaaving van de de goede zaak der vryheid; voorgedragen aan de burgerij van Leyden* (Leiden: C. de Pecker, 1795), 18.
40. F.A. de Boissy d'Anglas, *Vertoog bij de aanbieding van het ontwerp van constitutie, voor de Fransche Republiek* (Haarlem: F. Bohn, 1796).
41. *De republikein*, II, no. 57, 38. On *De Republikein*, see R. Koekkoek, '"Eene waare en vrije Republiek". Jan Konijnenburg, *De republikein* en de uitvinding van de moderne republiek', *De Achttiende Eeuw* 42 (2010), 236–260.
42. *De democraten*, vol. 1, no. 11, 25 August 1796, 81–88: 82.
43. *Dagverhaal* 6, no. 561, 13 June 1797 (session May 26), 117–118.
44. *De democraten*, vol. 1, no. 38, 26 January 1797, 277–284: 282.
45. *De democraten*, vol. 1, no. 38, 26 January 1797, 277–284: 283. For a comparable claim that the Dutch are not susceptible to the dangers of popular democracy as the French had been, see the letter of the Batavian constitutional committee to the French envoy Delacroix of March 5, 1798. H.T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der Algemene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840*, deel II (Den Haag: Nijhof, 1906), 190–194.