

Novus Ordo Seclorum: Republicanism and the Republican Party in US Politics

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Introduction

THE MOST difficult task to undertake when it comes to examining an ideology is to establish, as accurately as possible, its definition, characteristics, historical evolution and main arguments which have both shaped and delineated it from other ideological orientations in relation with which the ideology as such could have interfered. If this is the case, then what is necessary are solid arguments for considering republicanism in an ideological sense, in order to avoid ambiguity, errors and even overlaps in terminology. The modern republic was the predominant political reality and the ideological substance of a republican government, more often than not, needs a complement so that one could precisely characterise it (e.g., liberal republic, democratic republic, popular republic, conservative republic, etc.). However, this does not mean that one cannot define republicanism as an ideology on its own: moreover, its tradition is significant, if one takes into consideration the classical approaches of Aristotle, Polybius or Cicero, the modern perspectives in the works of Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Harrington, Sidney, Trenchard, or Bolingbroke (Castiglione 2005: 453–65), and the complex syntheses of contemporary times, e.g., the complex formulas of “neo-republicanism” (Philip Pettit) or “republican synthesis” (J. G. A. Pocock). What is of particular interest to me in the present study is whether and how one can define and characterise republicanism in the American tradition; in order to do that, beginning with the 1960s and 1970s, a very influential school of “republican revisionism” in America (Pocock, Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, Joyce Appleby and others) has tried the rehabilitation of the republican idea to the detriment of the dominant Lockean liberal model, with the certain aim of defining republican ideology as normative political discourse. The tradition of ideological reflection and historical writing applied to republicanism is synthetically summarised in an article published at the beginning of the 1980s (Pocock 1981: 49–72). I am not interested at this point to determine how “republican revisionism” criticised, amended and completed the fundamental republican principle (i.e., promoting civic virtues) which formed the basis of an entire tradition of civic humanism with its specific connotations; I will make these observations within the body of

my article in order to distinguish among various republican options in America throughout the decades. The thesis I subscribe to in the present study is that a more rigorous, more specific and more pragmatic definition of republican ideology is easier to formulate if one analyses and interprets the instantiations of this ideology in the political programs of the American Republican party between 1789 and 2008. However, this does not mean that I equate republican ideology with the political agendas of the Republican party: if I were to do so, I would be mistaken; moreover, the very historical evolution of the Republican party would disprove such equivalence; for, especially in the period 1789–1820s, one cannot speak about a republican direction in the United States in terms of an opposition to the democrat direction: until the Jacksonian period, all the main political actors of the time justified their political options as republican, although—as I will show later on—the nuances are particularly interesting. If it is true that the republican tradition was revived by Machiavelli’s writings in the period of modernity, then one should subscribe to one of the most profound intuitions of the Florentine political thinker: like all Renaissance thinkers, Machiavelli generally pleaded for the understanding of a thing at the intersection between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*; I believe this is an additional argument for the inseparability between political and ideological republicanism; briefly, to understand republican ideology is tantamount to examining the republican experience in the period between 1789–2008. Thus, the understanding of republicanism as ideology becomes dependant on the understanding of republicanism as process in the substance of the Republican party’s political agendas; my interpretation constructs republican ideology dialectically, in six stages, each representing a negation of the previous ones, according to the following periodisation: i) Federalist republicanism, 1789–1829; ii) Nationalist republicanism, 1833–1860; iii) Abolitionist republicanism, 1861–1877; iv) Corporate republicanism, 1880–1920; v) Conservative republicanism, 1921–1933, 1981–1989; vi) Militarist republicanism, 1952–1977, 2000–2008.

Federalist republicanism, 1789–1829

PROBABLY THE most complicated and controversial aspect of the debate regarding the origins and meanings of republican ideology in the founding period is that of the conjunction between the federalist project and the new republican order envisaged by the Founding Fathers as a radical political amendment to the monarchic order. Before laying down a few general coordinates of federalist republicanism in the first three American decades, I would like to note that the new political order was long prepared and anticipated through colonial constitutions and the liberal secessionist spirit that culminated in replacing the Articles of Confederation with the Federal Constitution, which marked the transition from British colonial dominance, through *Staatenbund* (federation of states), towards *Bundenstaat* (federal state) (Adams 2004: 127). The difficulty of establishing the meanings of republicanism in a federal context is highlighted yet again by the uncertainty regarding the origins of the American republican conception: i) on the one hand, an American school dedicated to the rehabilitation of republicanism, also called neo-whig or idealist (Bailyn, Wood, Pocock), has given an interpreta-

tion of American revolutionary ideals in terms of a republican vocabulary, which resulted from a series of conceptual pairs such as “virtue/corruption, liberty/tyranny, past/progress, and authenticity/deception” (Michaud 2009: 36); ii) on the other hand, a new interpretation places the genesis of the new American republican order on the republican tradition of Ancient Greece, according to which the primary role of the centralized republican government would be the “egalitarian distribution of property” (Nelson 2004: 199). Thus, this topic is exceedingly complicated: the question remains, whether the core of the new republican ideology is represented by the concept of civic virtues borrowed from Roman republican thought, or by the liberal idea of unlimited political participation descending from the Greek tradition. A research on this question would undoubtedly form the subject of a book; at any rate, the founding dispute regarding the meanings of republican constitutional federalism opposed the federalists to the anti-federalists: as the political history of the USA has revealed almost every time, the American genius yet again led to a moderate solution, a compromise, and in the present circumstances, this was formulated by James Madison, who understood that the most thorny issue in the debates was finding the best solution to fight public corruption (Hart 2002: 66). Among the fundamental characteristics of moderate federal republicanism according to Madison (expansionism, representation, separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism (Sheehan 2009: 169)), two of them are, in my view, exemplary for defining the moderate view: if, in my opinion, the principle of separation of powers means simply limiting the exercise of powers in a state, the principle of checks and balances is the direct expression of the need for responsibility and accountability. In the circumstances in which the historical conditions forced the Founding Fathers, often against their will, to conceive many prerogatives for the executive, this fact was in evident contradiction with the request of federalist republicans constantly expressed in the *Federalist Papers*; the American solution was, once again, a compromise, “by republicanizing the executive, through regular elections and a written constitution... The Americans mixed the strength of monarchical government with the requirements of republicanism.” (Spalding 2006: 184). Following ample controversy that lasted more than a decade after the foundation of the new republic, the federalist project for the new republic coagulated Hamiltonian political economism and Madisonian republican views on politics: the mainstream federal republicanism was based on a “national capital, national bank, national taxing power, and a standing army.” (Hart 2002: 64). The above enumeration of the guiding principles for the new federalist government could point to the fact that this orientation was mainly nationalist, although—in my view—the conception of federalist republicans was rather hegemonic, being attached to the idea of Western expansionism and wide international recognition. The premises of republican nationalism can be discerned in Jefferson’s thought, who emphasized the idea of democratic participation and guaranteeing individual liberties. However, Jefferson’s case is particularly difficult to clarify, as Jefferson himself, who had initially pleaded in favor of the anti-federalist project, substantially revised his stance after he retired from political life, especially during the 1820s: the theoretical study of classic works on republicanism, the translation of Antoine Destutt de Tracy’s commentary on Montesquieu, the rising nationalist rhetoric that changed the republicans’ original positions after the War of 1812 and especially the vast corres-

pondence with his former political rival, John Adams, all make Jefferson the most complex figure around whom all the uncertainties of the federalist republican project gathered (Hart 2002: 128–131). The fact that the Republican Party split several times, especially during Jefferson’s administration, is the proof of some political realities resulting from ideological controversies (see, for instance, the Quids minority of Southern Republicans, formed in 1805 by John Randolph) (Shankman 1999: 43–72).

Nationalist republicanism, 1833–1860

As I have mentioned in the previous section, a possible interpretation on the origins of American republicanism emphasized the idea of democratic political participation to *res publica*; this orientation, with evident pragmatic and procedural connotation, was not an issue of the original debate on the republican project. As far as I am concerned, even this idea of political participation could be equivocally placed in the Greek tradition. I argue this point by putting forward the following alternative interpretation: as it is well known, political ideologies have been subtly nourished and legitimized by the ecclesiological vocabulary. This interpretation model on the origins of the secular state and public institutions has entered the space of secularized political language; thus, the civic ideal of *pax Romana* was the lay expression of *fraterna Christianitas* (Alzati 2007: 3–25). Similarly, in the American context, the original republican ideal, expression of the primacy of civic virtues in public affairs, retains the ethical dimension, but alters the Christian universalist ideology in the sense that—at least in America—this type of legitimation could no longer be invoked in the context of proliferating Protestant sects. Consequently, the new way had to be found in the sense of amending the centralized federal republican idealism with a markedly democratic and populist rhetoric. In more simple terms, one could discover the genesis of democratic republicanism within the limits of such an interpretation. Democratic republicanism in America became the “official” orientation of the American government starting with Andrew Jackson’s administration, when the Republican Party decisively split into the wing of radical/old Republicans and moderate/democratic Republicans—better known as the Whig Party. In the context in which the Democratic Party was born in 1829, with the help of the first Democrat president (in the current understanding of the American political party system), Andrew Jackson, one could argue that the Whig Party is the expression of republicanism’s dominant orientation in the period 1833–1860, as middle party between radical republicans and nationalist democrats. Although democratic nationalism falls outside the scope of the present study, it is important to mention that nationalist ideology had an important contribution to the dissolution of the original republican project and one of its cornerstones was the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. Returning to the ideology of nationalist republicanism, its meanings can be more aptly understood from the analysis of three major nationalist doctrines formulated by Whig republicans John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams. Calhoun’s nationalist republicanism is known as “war department nationalism”, due to the ideological emphasis on security defense; the elements of his political program were: a bet-

ter system of defense, national prosperity and the consolidation of the state's connections. Later on, in a speech given in the House of Representatives, Calhoun added a fourth component to his nationalist program: the building of a system of roads and canals. However, Calhoun's insistence reiterated one of the fundamental orientations of federalist republicans, that of consolidating and reforming the standing army (Calhoun 1969). The second important political program of nationalist republicans belongs to Henry Clay and is better known as "the American system." The elements of his program are: nationalist legislation, cementation of the Union, improvement of the internal trade, augmentation of wealth and population (Remini 1991). Finally, one last view, and probably the most idealistic one, in agreement with the republicans' progressive industrialist view, was formulated by John Quincy Adams and could be characterized as "the enlightened nationalism." Adams's ideological program is a revolutionary one by comparison with the entire republican orientation that preceded him, because the sixth American president insisted upon the importance of international recognition for the young American republic and the role of education and religion in public life (in this latter aspect he emphasized the need for establishing a national university) (Lipsky 1950). These three programs tried to adapt traditional republican ideology to the progressive nationalization of public businesses in America; on the other hand, radical republicans attempted to denounce the high level of corruption posing as national interest. The old republicans saw the tyranny of the majority as a serious threat to republican order (Monroe 2003: 50–54). Because of these repeated criticisms, Jacksonian nationalist democracy soon fell into decline, partly because of the competition with the exceptionalist ideology which, in the 1840s, criticized the isolationism of the US under the Monroe doctrine.

Abolitionist republicanism, 1861–1877

THE SERIOUS economic stakes and the intensification of expansionist rhetoric of exceptionalism meant that—as early as the mid-1940s—the ideology of nationalism entered a steep decline and to turbulences in American political life. It is well known that, ever since the foundation of the republic, two distinctive views on America's economic development led to antagonistic ideological commitments. Those who adhered to the wing of old republicans did not stray from the original Hamiltonian view regarding the need for rapid American industrialization; they were in conflict with the supporters of Jeffersonian agrarianism, who would form the basis of the Democratic Party in the third and fourth decades of the 19th century. The preference for industrialization imposed a certain political behavior and economic view, so that, beginning with 1840, abolitionism became the cornerstone of republican political discourse, be it moderate or radical. The level of discontent increased and political life became divided in an unprecedented fashion. Two other republican-oriented factions were added to the old republicans and the whig moderates: in 1839, the Liberty Party was founded and its markedly abolitionist ideology was continued by the Free-Soil Party in the period 1848–1854. On the other hand, in the 1850s, the nativist-xenophobe party known as the Know-

Nothing Party led to increasing political tensions. Briefly, the political disturbances in the mid 19th century America reflected the growing liberalization of the economy and the ever more diverse economic interests of the Northeastern industrialists towards the agrarian economy of the South. Thus, ideological liberalism mixed with egalitarian abolitionism, foreshadowing major conflicts in the American political life. If one adds to this the professionalization of political parties' actions, the increasing privatization of small rural manufacturing and the consolidation of urban bourgeoisie, the Civil War emerged as the resulting complex picture of the above-mentioned causes (Henretta 2004: 165). Some scholars consider that Lincoln's substantial merit is that of having been able to gradually eliminate the factions inside the Republican Party and to reunite it around a common ideology focused on the abolition of the old slavery-type economic system (Wagner 2007: 19–28). However, this does not mean that it was only inside the old Republican Party that such divisive tensions were evident; the populist-democratic orientation of the Democratic Party gradually lost its supporters, to the point where the whig republicans decisively repudiated it and the Republican party was rebuilt around the presidential campaign of 1860, which brought Abraham Lincoln into the White House on the Republican ticket. After the end of the Civil War, the Republicans sought to maintain their dominance on the American political scene by putting into practice both the equalitarian and liberal principles. The political finality of egalitarian abolitionism would be completed by granting citizenship to freedmen, while the enforcement of liberal economic interests would be achieved by the right to franchise. But the events of American public life in the Reconstruction period revealed the utopianism of the political egalitarian ideology, reinforcing at the same time the dimension of economic liberalism, so that the liberalization of the American economy would become the cornerstone of corporate republicans' options. As far as the idealist consequences of abolitionism were concerned, these were soon countered by the Jim Crow segregation laws or by the "separate but equal" doctrine. This is precisely why, especially in the 20th century, the ideology of liberal pluralism abandoned the unrealistic vocabulary of egalitarian doctrines (still endorsed by feminist and new left orientations): notions such as "recognition" and "inclusion" are relevant examples for such a substitution (Honohan 2002: 250–289). Briefly, abolitionist republicanism could not have endured beyond the adoption of the legislation eliminating slavery, because the egalitarian spirit didn't survive. However, this does not mean that, because of the defunct principles that initiated it, the historical and political consequences of abolitionist republicanism were not important: one of them could be the possibility of the fusion between the democratic and republican principles. The current understanding of democratic republicanism imposes the requirement of moving beyond any limitations as far as the concept of political participation of the citizens to *res publica* is concerned and it represents the prerequisite for one's full citizenship rights (Sandel 1996; Taylor 1979).

Corporate Republicanism, 1880–1920

“ONE CONVICTION that troubled Weber was that politics could no longer regenerate republican government and restore the classical ideas of the past. For Weber perceived, as did Karl Marx and Alexis de Tocqueville a half century earlier, that the modern political state would not be able to withstand the economic and social forces that would absorb it.” (Diggins 1985: 572) This reference tells the *in nuce* story of republicanism in the gilded age of industrial corporatism: both fierce economic competition among the major economic interest groups and the progressive populist reaction against the domination of the whole economic life by big businesses are illustrating the economic and, respectively, social forces that dominated the period between 1880 and 1920, an age I have termed “corporate republicanism.” The presidential administration of Ulysses S. Grant meant, for the first time, at the end of Reconstruction, the association between the Republican Party and big businesses, with political and economic consequences of great magnitude (Wagner 2007: 32). Also, the traditional republican ideology crumbled for the first time in the century-long history of the United States: industrial plutocracy and massive financial interests put a great deal of pressure on politics to the point of taking complete control over it. Evidently, big bosses and plutocrats needed an original ideological legitimacy to replace the old republican ideology, a legitimacy found in the social Darwinist philosophy of Herbert Spencer and his American followers. The survival of the fittest doctrine in the circumstances of extreme economic competition became the new ideological justification, at the same time representing the radicalisation of *laissez-faire* classic liberal principles. Thus, the political actors could no longer avoid the involvement of big businesses at governmental level; the immediate consequence of this fact was the comprehensive political corruption and the large-scale institutionalisation of the spoils system principle (Green 2009: 57–61). This control was so profound that not even growing public discontent could successfully oppose it, a fact illustrated by the almost complete domination of the Republican Party in American politics between 1880 and 1913, with the notable exception of Grover Cleveland’s two non-consecutive terms at the end of the 19th century. Also, between the last years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, an aggressive political interventionism was added to corporate economic domination, forming the picture of a nation that was aware of its global force for the first time in its history. The economic impetus of large corporations gave a similar impulse to politics, in the sense that two Republican presidents, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, abandoned the nationalist principles and Monroe’s isolationist doctrine for good, in order to adopt an internationalist hegemonic position (Green 2009: 67–73). Under these circumstances, some moderate critics of corporate republicanism denounced the association of big corporations, economic and financial interests, and the political-ideological lobby as a permanent characteristic of the macro-political Republican strategies to this day. The ramifications of corporate republicanism spread to present-day America and can be identified—to give but one example—in the “New Power Brokers” ideological organization of right-wing militants (DeLay, Norquist, Rove) (Hacker and Pierson 2005: 135–36). There

is also a widespread radical criticism in contemporary America that associates the old republican ideology of natural aristocracy and the Republican Party no more no less than with a fascist corporate orientation, which warns against the prevalence of American political and economic organisation in the form of monopolistic institutions and industries (Burrell 3008: 6–14). At any rate, the common assumption of all these critics is that the aim of corporate republicanism ideology was “the conquest of the state” (Hodges 2003: 38) by means of the complete monopoly of great economic interests. Hodges associates this republican ideological orientation with what he calls “deep republicanism”: “Unlike the Anglo-American stream of shallow republicanism, the French revolutionary tradition leading to Jacobinism became the main pipeline of deep republicanism. By deep republicanism I mean the post-Polybian development of Machiavelli’s political thought...we go beyond the Anglo-American model of mixed government to a republic without gentlemen in which the state is rich and the citizens are poor with the prospect of becoming virtuous as well.” (Hodges 2003: 63). In light of this observation, the populist progressive reaction came as an attempt to temperate the corporate monopolies; the reaction of the masses and the public discontent against the domination of economic life by monopolies led to the split of the Republican Party, Theodore Roosevelt being nominated in the 1912 presidential campaign on the Progressive Party ticket.

Conservative Republicanism, 1921–1933, 1981–1989

AS EARLY as the end of the 19th century, several Republican administrations tried to oppose corporatism and big businesses; these attempts were unsuccessful and led to the erosion of the Republican Party’s credibility. President William Howard Taft’s election to office in 1909 was a timid endeavor to return to moderation, anticipating the first period of conservative republicanism at the end of World War I. For, the period between 1921 and 1933 coincided with a conservative traditional orientation of the Republican Party, which means an attempt to rehabilitate the old republican principles; it wasn’t probably accidental that Woodrow Wilson’s internationalist liberal program was rejected by Congress in 1921. To simplify, I will therefore operate with a distinction between a traditional conservative orientation of the Republican Party between 1921 and 1933 and the contemporary one, descending from William F. Buckley’s establishment of the *National Review* in 1955. Undoubtedly, the ideology of contemporary conservatism was a more or less discreet presence in the republican political agendas after 1955; at any rate, the contemporary version incorporated, in very general terms, two major directions: the libertarian stance of minimal government, influenced by Milton Friedmann’s economic writings and the libertarian philosophical theories of Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, and the neo-conservative one that reinterpreted Burke’s classic conservatism in a work published by Russell Kirk in 1953 (Tanner 2007: 19–60). Apart from the 1921–1933 period, the conservative ideology was consistently assumed by republicans, especially after 1955, regardless of whether one speaks of realist conservatives (Nixon) or idealist ones (Reagan) (Dueck 2010: 142–88;

189–231). Succinctly, republican conservatism in the period 1921–1933 was marked by a return to the idea of natural aristocracy, civic morality and free market ideology; with the support of Southern Democrats, inter-war conservative republicans maintained segregationist policies and the conservative principle of state's non-interference in the economy. Franklin D. Roosevelt called the conservative detractors of New Deal policies “economic royalists.” (Burrell 2008: 9–17) From my point of view, the conflict between liberals and conservatives was shaped more precisely during Roosevelt's three administrations; the opposition between the conservatives of the period, supporters of traditional and religious values, and liberals—considered as “secular humanists”—later led to an ample ideological debate bringing to fore, on the one hand, Leo Strauss as leader of idealist conservatives and, on the other, Sir Isaiah Berlin, the leader of liberal pluralists (Shorris 2004). In the 1950s, alongside Buckley's publication, the dispute between liberals and conservatives amplified because of the publication of two works, crucial to the subsequent evolution of ideological debates: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (1955) and Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (1953). I will not insist here on the posterity of these debates. Returning to conservative ideology, seen as a means of rehabilitate the republican ideals, one should mention that the theory of elites promoted by Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca had a decisive influence (Brock 2004: 70); the principle of natural aristocracy and the ever more conservative orientation of the Republican Party's elites have become nowadays a target for criticism because of their growing departure from the generally moderate views of the general public (Hacker and Pierson 2005: 25). The second conservatism, that culminated in the 1980s (the Reagan administration), made large-scale recourse to a propaganda sponsored by big conservative enterprises, supported by think tanks, academic milieus and well-known conservative publications (Brock 2004: 54). All these means of popularizing conservative republicanism resulted in the articulation of a series of persuading techniques by using discursive strategies, largely targeted towards the following three directions: i) fiscal responsibility and tax reduction; ii) national security; iii) moral standards and family values (Goodall and Wiener 2008: 142–43). All these discursive strategies were aimed at discrediting liberal democracy and the Democratic Party, the Reagan administration being the decisive moment of parties elites' polarization, which led to the positioning of the liberals within the Democratic Party and of the conservatives within the Republican Party: “...in the 1950s and 1960s, Democratic and Republican elites were relatively heterogeneous, with a liberal Rockefeller Republican wing and a cadre of conservative Southern Democrats. But by the 1990s and 2000s, elites were more sharply polarized, with most Democrats on the left and most Republicans on the right.” (Levendusky 2009: 2) The division between welfare state democrats and, respectively, libertarian-conservative republicans corresponds to this distinction.

Militarist Republicanism, 1952–1977, 2000–2008

THROUGHOUT TIME, one could argue that the ideological options of the republicans gradually became more radical, up to the extremely problematic association between republicanism and militarist ideology. The dialectic of republicanism as radicalization of ideological options can be constructed on several levels, in the sense that negation, specific to the dialectic method, acquires here an eliminativist connotation, rather than an assimilationist one. Here are two examples: i) just like the nationalist-populist rhetoric called for exterminating native Americans, as they were considered obstacles to American progress, contemporary militarist orientations call upon the belligerence principle as strong ideological justification; however, the lesson of contemporary militarism does not assimilate the rhetoric of expansionist nationalism for reasons of historical inadequacy; ii) during the Eisenhower administration, marking the proper debut of republican militarism, militarist ideology was directed either against internal isolationist conservatism or against external socialism (Burrell 2008: 19). Another possibility for dialectically construing American militarism throughout history could be illustrated as follows: the exceptionalist imperialist moment at the end of the 19th century aimed at consolidating the US geostrategic position through annexing or controlling vast regions all over the American continent; the second moment was the illustration of the bipolar division of the world during the Cold War, when American militarism was the justification for the struggle against communism and totalitarianism; finally, the synthesis of these two moments and, at the same time, the peak of American militarism, was reached in what I would term the absolute holistic militarism of George W. Bush as a way of responding aggressively to international terrorism (Dueck 2010: 39–84). The common denominator of all militarist ideological approaches associated to the Republican Party is the predilection of organizing the security system on the basis of consolidating and expanding the standing army to the detriment of local militias that were preferred during the defensive system of classical republicanism (Hart 2002: 204–05). Therefore, throughout time, one has witnessed the gradual rise of American interventionism and aggressiveness which, further fueled by Christian fundamentalism and by the obsession regarding America's role as world policeman, has led to a certain militarist fanaticism during George W. Bush's two terms in office. In light of such an interpretation, the perversion of the original American republican orientation takes the postmodern form of what one could call "political pathology" (Dragodan 2012: 165–74). The justification for militarism take, more often than not, perverted forms: for instance, under the respectable mask of the cosmopolitan citizenship ideal, recent American militarism involves all global communities in a fierce struggle for reaching a so-called common purpose (i.e., elimination of terrorism), but this issue of militarized global justice, above all considerations regarding the content of international law norms, raises serious ethical dilemmas (Chung 2004: 117). In one of the latest attempts to legitimize the propaganda of American militarism, one finds out that the "missile gap" is used as ideological justification for the military interventions against Iran and North Korea, and this reason is a recurrent one, if one thinks about the fact that it was invoked by radical republican militarists during the Cold War (Burrell 2008: 21).

Conclusions: is republicanism an ideology proper?

THE PRESENT study has put forward an investigation of republicanism based on a dialectic interpretation on its gradual transformations by associating it with the political practices of the Republican Party. Such an interpretation should by no means be considered an exclusivist one: if the republic represented the form of organizing the American political system since the foundation of the union to the present day, this means that republicanism should also be assessed in relation to other parties' political agendas. As I have already mentioned in one of the previous sections, the ideological substance of republicanism is consistent with both the principles of classic Greco-Roman republicanism and modern liberalism; in the same logic, democratic republicanism can take on equally solid justifications such as federalist republicanism and the economic doctrine of the welfare state can be just as unproblematically associated with republicanism as is the economic conception of the minimalist non-interventionist state. If this is the case, one could criticize republicanism in terms of ideological relativism. One of the recent historians of republicanism, Gordon S. Wood, in his work *The Creation of the American Republic: 1776–1787*, argues that the republican ideological tradition was shaped in an uncertain way, under the influence of Enlightenment republican ideology, but gradually moved away from the original historiographic interpretation; what is nowadays called “republican synthesis” has taken the form of a comprehensive ideology within which various authors have tried to place a political order specific to modernity which conceals suspicious political interests. Consequently, it seemed to me that approaching republican ideology through a connection with the agendas of the American Republican Party would be more consistent and valuable, instead of conceiving it as a specific and individuating framework.

But, beyond these succinct methodological observations, I have announced my intention to examine republicanism in a dialectic manner, in close correlation with the historical evolution of the Republican Party. I would like to briefly reiterate the dialectic moments of the American republican tradition, as follows: the founding moment, that of federalist republicanism, represented the constitutive, markedly idealist, and entirely positive—from an institutional point of view—reaction in the service of establishing a republican order based on guaranteeing political representation, promoting civic virtues, and public duty. The nationalist-democratic moment succeeding it amended the original idealism, introducing the requirement of large civic participation of the masses to *res publica*, but hypocritically obscuring the issue of racial inequalities. The period of abolitionist republicanism unmasked the principled contradiction of the previous moment and resolved hypocrisy by promoting a political agenda inspired by egalitarian principles. The capitalist-corporatist stage denied the possibility of universalizing the principle of equality, in the context of the prevalence of economic monopolies and financial elites, based on the doctrines of national aristocracy and Social Darwinism. Finally, the last two republican ideological orientations radicalized both the original idealist option and the meliorist intermediary ones: on the one hand, conservative republicanism maximized the classic liberal principle of economism and non-regulative state; on the

other hand, militarist republicanism maximized the ideology of centralized military state, insisting upon the global dimension (i.e., transnational) of fighting against totalitarianism and terrorism.

The issue preoccupying contemporary scholars is that of placing republicanism on a solid normative basis; in my view, republican revivalism is characterized nowadays by three distinctive orientations: i) the first is normative and makes reference to the conceptual reconsideration of civic virtues, Hannah Arendt being the leader of this orientation; ii) the second is procedural and highlights the extension of the political participation principle, the leading figure being Charles Taylor; iii) finally, the third direction is instrumentalist, arguing for reconsidering republicanism not as a set of intrinsic values and virtues, but in the context of the current situation of pluralist-liberal republics; Will Kimlycka is the proponent of this view. But, all these versions of ideological neo-republicanism fall outside the scope of the present study; however, I have mentioned them in order to illustrate the fact that the debate on republicanism is far from being definitive.

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Abstract

Novus Ordo Seclorum: Republicanism and the Republican Party in US Politics

The new political order in America at the end of the 18th century was designed and projected as republican in both form and content. But the American republican partisans defined, interpreted and shaped republicanism intricately in the course of American politics and history; accordingly, I will deduce and explain the following six occurrences of the American republican tradition, as follows: 1) Federalist Republicanism, 1789–1829; 2) Nationalist Republicanism, 1833–1860; 3) Abolitionist Republicanism, 1861–1877; 4) Corporate Republicanism, 1880–1920; 5) Conservative Republicanism, 1921–1933, 1981–1989; 6) Militarist Republicanism, 1952–1977, 2000–2008. In addition to these labels and oversimplifications, I will argue that republican ideology, during certain phases of complex evolution, has been marked by some notable shifts and transformations which could be rendered by specific dominant views, sharply dependent on political contexts and historical challenges. My point is that all these dominant republican views can contribute both to the comprehensive understanding of ideological republicanism and to the republican agenda-setting in American politics.

Keywords

federalist republicanism, nationalist republicanism, abolitionist republicanism, corporate republicanism, conservative republicanism, militarist republicanism