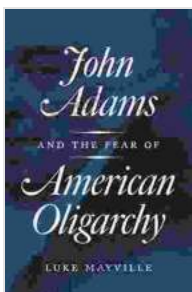


# John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy: A Timely Warning for Our Own Time

John Adams, the second president of the United States, was a brilliant political philosopher whose writings on government and society continue to resonate with us today. In his seminal work "Thoughts on Government," Adams argued that the greatest threat to American democracy was the rise of an oligarchy, a small group of wealthy and powerful individuals who would use their influence to subvert the will of the people.

Adams's fear of oligarchy was based on his observations of the Roman Republic, which he believed had collapsed due to the rise of a wealthy elite that had used its power to corrupt the government and oppress the people. Adams believed that the same thing could happen in America, if the people were not vigilant in defending their liberties.



## John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy

by Luke Mayville

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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## **Adams's Definition of Oligarchy**

Adams defined oligarchy as "a government in which the supreme power is vested in the hands of a few." He distinguished between two types of oligarchies: natural aristocracies and artificial aristocracies. Natural aristocracies are those that arise naturally, due to the superior abilities or talents of a few individuals. Artificial aristocracies are those that are created by law or custom, and which give a small group of people a privileged position in society.

Adams believed that both natural and artificial aristocracies were dangerous to democracy. Natural aristocracies, he argued, could easily become self-serving and oppressive, while artificial aristocracies could be used to create a permanent ruling class.

## **Adams's Proposals to Prevent Oligarchy**

Adams believed that there were a number of things that could be done to prevent the rise of oligarchy in America. These included:

- \* Limiting the power of government
- \* Ensuring that all citizens had access to education
- \* Promoting a virtuous and public-spirited citizenry
- \* Encouraging the formation of a strong middle class

Adams believed that a strong middle class was particularly important for preventing oligarchy, as it would be less likely to be swayed by the promises of demagogues or the threats of the wealthy.

## Adams's Legacy

Adams's fear of oligarchy has been largely vindicated by history. In the centuries since he wrote "Thoughts on Government," the United States has seen a number of attempts by wealthy and powerful individuals to subvert the will of the people. These attempts have been largely unsuccessful, thanks in part to the safeguards that Adams helped to put in place.

However, the threat of oligarchy is never far away. In recent years, we have seen a number of developments that could potentially lead to the rise of an oligarchy in America. These include:

- \* The increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals
- \* The decline of the middle class
- \* The rise of political polarization
- \* The erosion of trust in government

These developments are a cause for concern, as they could make it easier for a small group of wealthy and powerful individuals to manipulate the political system to their own advantage.

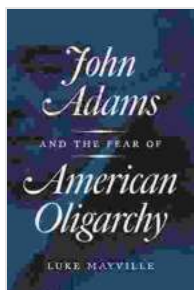
John Adams's fear of American oligarchy is a timely warning for our own time. The threats to democracy that he identified are still present today, and they are even more dangerous in the current climate of political polarization and distrust.

We must heed Adams's warning and take steps to prevent the rise of oligarchy in America. We must limit the power of government, ensure that all citizens have access to education, promote a virtuous and public-spirited citizenry, and encourage the formation of a strong middle class.

If we fail to do these things, we risk losing the democracy that Adams and his fellow revolutionaries fought so hard to create.

## Alt Attributes

\* John Adams, second president of the United States \* John Adams's book "Thoughts on Government" \* The threat of oligarchy in America \* The importance of a strong middle class \* The dangers of wealth and power \* The need for vigilance in defending democracy



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