WORLD ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT THINKERS

THE PROTO-DEMOCRATIC LIBERATION

The Recovery of Sovereignty, Conscience and Constitutional Authority

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A Constitutional Declaration
and Introduction to the Proto-Democratic Trilogy

I. The Proto-Democratici

There is something profoundly wrong with a political order in which the citizen must continually justify his freedom while the institutions restricting it increasingly presume their own legitimacy.

We have become accustomed to governments explaining what citizens must do, what they must accept, which risks they must tolerate and which political alternatives are considered responsible. Far less frequently are those exercising authority required to confront the more fundamental question: by what right do they presume to stand above the judgement of the people whose authority they have borrowed?

The constitutional relationship has been inverted.

The State was never intended to be the moral superior of the human being. It was instituted to protect a political order in which human beings could exercise their freedom, fulfil their responsibilities and govern themselves through legitimate institutions.

Yet the modern citizen increasingly encounters an executive and administrative class that behaves as though institutional office confers superior judgement, moral authority and an entitlement to obedience.

The problem is not simply that such people may be wrong.

It is that they may be wrong without paying a meaningful price for their errors, while those subjected to their decisions bear the consequences.

A governing class insulated from the consequences of its own failures has every incentive to mistake institutional survival for public service.

And a constitutional order that cannot correct this imbalance has ceased to provide one of the essential protections for which it was created.

This is the conflict from which the Proto-Democrats emerge.

In academic terms, *Proto-Democratici* refers to actors who ground democratic legitimacy in antecedent constitutional principles (*principia antecedentia*), rather than in positive law, institutional continuity or technocratic necessity.

The prefix *proto* does not denote an embryonic form of democracy, but its normative precedence: **democracy is the condition of the State, not its derivative.**

The choice of the name is deliberate.

In contemporary European political discourse, those who resist centralised or supranational power are frequently described, or describe themselves, as *patriots*. The term carries a legitimate historical meaning, but it has also acquired ideological associations that can obscure the constitutional questions at stake.

Patriotism expresses attachment to a nation, its people, culture or historical inheritance.

Proto-Democracy begins somewhere more fundamental.

It begins with the sovereign human person, whose moral standing precedes the nation-state and whose legitimate claim to liberty cannot depend upon nationality, cultural identity or membership of a political movement.

A Proto-Democrat may be a patriot. But patriotism is neither a prerequisite nor a sufficient constitutional philosophy.

The Proto-Democrat does not stand for the nation against the world. He stands for the sovereign person against every form of unchecked power.

National power included.

The term *Proto-Democratici* may therefore acquire a second meaning: a name of conscious identification, a *geuzennaam*, adopted by those who refuse to confuse obedience with consent, institutional continuity with legitimacy, or political authority with moral superiority.

Not a party. Not a tribe. Not another ideological collective demanding loyalty.

A name for individuals united by a constitutional conviction while retaining their independence of judgement.

They need not agree on every political question. They may disagree profoundly about economics, culture, religion, national identity or the proper policies of government.

Their common ground is more fundamental.

They recognise that political authority is borrowed.

That conscience cannot be delegated.

That no institution may become the final judge of the limits of its own power.

And that the people must retain a lawful means of recovering authority when those entrusted with it exceed their mandate.

The Proto-Democratici do not seek the privilege of replacing one unaccountable governing class with another.

They demand an end to the constitutional conditions that permit any governing class to become unaccountable.

That is their distinguishing proposition.

And it is why the name matters.

II. The Great Political Divide

The political language of the twentieth century is becoming increasingly inadequate to describe the conflicts of the twenty-first.

Left and right remain familiar labels. Parties continue to organise themselves around them. Elections are still presented as contests between competing ideological programmes.

Yet beneath these divisions another conflict has become increasingly visible.

On one side stands a political orientation that places growing confidence in supranational governance, international coordination, expert administration and the progressive harmonisation of political, economic and social policy.

On the other stands an orientation that insists upon the recovery of national democratic authority, the preservation of constitutional liberties and the right of political communities to determine their own future.

The first is frequently described as globalist.

The second is commonly associated with patriotism, sovereignty movements or the political right.

Neither description adequately captures the constitutional question.

The governing orientation crosses traditional ideological boundaries. Social democrats, progressive liberals, centrists and economically liberal conservatives may disagree on substantial questions while accepting many of the same institutional arrangements for the exercise of power.

Their convergence does not erase those differences. But it can make the institutional direction of government less dependent upon which of them holds office.

The opposing orientation is equally diverse.

It includes national conservatives, classical liberals, religious traditionalists, advocates of decentralisation and citizens whose political concerns do not fit comfortably within any established ideological category.

They may agree that consequential authority has travelled too far from the electorate while disagreeing profoundly about what should happen once that authority is recovered.

This is why the conflict cannot be adequately understood as a contest between enlightened internationalists and backward nationalists, or between respectable centrists and dangerous extremists.

Such descriptions substitute political classification for constitutional argument.

And classification becomes particularly consequential when it begins to determine which political opinions are admitted into legitimate public debate.

Political exclusion has become an increasingly normalised instrument of institutional power.

Parties may be legally constituted, democratically elected and supported by substantial sections of the electorate, yet find themselves systematically excluded from political dialogue, institutional participation or the boundaries of respectable public debate.

The constitutional danger begins when political opposition is no longer confronted through argument but disqualified through classification.

Labels become substitutes for evidence. Moral condemnation replaces political contestation. Institutional exclusion becomes a means of preserving the prevailing political order.

When those entrusted with protecting democracy acquire the power to determine which lawful democratic opposition deserves to be heard, the constitutional relationship has been inverted.

The electorate is no longer treated as the source of political authority, but as a population whose choices must remain within boundaries established by those already exercising power.

This is the predicament from which Proto-Democracy emerges.

A political order that permits its governing institutions to determine the legitimacy of their own opposition has ceased to trust the sovereign people from whom its authority derives.

III. The Power That No Longer Answers

There is a peculiar privilege available to those exercising institutional power.

They may make decisions whose consequences are devastating to others without necessarily experiencing comparable consequences themselves.

An entrepreneur may lose his business. A family may lose its livelihood. A citizen may endure restrictions, administrative sanctions, reputational damage or years of uncertainty.

The consequences are immediate, material and personal.

The decisions that produced them may have passed through ministries, expert committees, regulatory bodies, international institutions and private organisations performing functions essential to public policy.

When the citizen seeks accountability, he encounters a different reality.

The decision was lawful.

The procedure was followed.

The recommendation came from an expert body.

The measure implemented an international obligation.

The official acted within his mandate.

An inquiry may subsequently identify errors. A report may acknowledge shortcomings. Procedures may be revised and recommendations adopted.

The institution survives.

The people who directed the failure may survive professionally as well.

The consequences are personal. The responsibility becomes institutional.

This is the asymmetry that constitutional government must confront.

The citizen cannot escape the consequences of power by invoking the complexity of the system.

The official may be able to disappear within that complexity.

And where institutional arrangements repeatedly fail to connect identifiable wrongdoing with proportionate consequences, they create incentives for the accumulation of authority without corresponding responsibility.

This is not simply a matter of incompetence.

It concerns the moral posture of government.

A political class that has become accustomed to determining what citizens should think, accept and do may gradually lose the habit of considering whether its own authority remains justified.

The executive begins to mistake the urgency of its objectives for the certainty of its knowledge.

The administrator begins to mistake compliance with procedure for the discharge of moral responsibility.

The expert begins to mistake specialised knowledge for a superior entitlement to political judgement.

And the institution begins to mistake criticism of its conduct for hostility towards the public interest it claims to represent.

The disagreement is no longer answered.

The dissenter is classified.

This becomes particularly dangerous when institutions possess the means to enforce the classifications they create.

Political language then acquires administrative consequences.

A citizen's opinion may become a matter of institutional scrutiny. A political movement may find its access restricted. A controversial argument may be treated not as a proposition to be examined, but as evidence of a person or organisation requiring intervention.

Such powers demand exacting constitutional scrutiny because their misuse can distort the very political contestation through which government remains legitimate.

The deeper failure is human.

Institutions do not possess consciences.

Human beings do.

A ministry cannot experience remorse. A committee cannot carry the personal burden of having harmed another person. A regulator cannot substitute its institutional procedures for the moral judgement of those exercising its authority.

Yet the modern administrative order makes it possible for the individual to disappear behind the institution while the institution continues to exercise power in his name.

Speaking truth to power is futile when the person exercising that power has surrendered conscience and moral judgement to it.

A constitutional order cannot depend upon the personal virtue of those exercising authority.

It must remain capable of correcting them when conscience fails.

And the danger extends beyond any single government.

Modern political power increasingly operates through overlapping networks of public institutions, corporations, international organisations, foundations, expert bodies and digital infrastructure.

The World Economic Forum's Great Reset initiative, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and earlier traditions of gradual institutional transformation have all contributed, in different ways, to public debate about the direction and organisation of modern governance.

Their purposes, legal status and institutional mechanisms differ. Their existence does not establish a single command structure.

But the constitutional question does not depend upon discovering one.

Consequential direction may emerge across institutions that share assumptions, incentives, expertise and objectives while responsibility remains dispersed among them.

A policy may originate in one setting, acquire legitimacy in another, be translated into standards elsewhere and finally be enforced through national law or private infrastructure.

Each participant may deny control over the whole.

The citizen nevertheless encounters the combined result.

Power has acquired a network. Democracy still looks for an officeholder.

That is why the constitutional question must follow power wherever it travels.

Not merely to the institution that signs the final decision, but to the people and arrangements through which consequential direction was established.

Where authority becomes difficult to locate, responsibility becomes difficult to enforce.

And where responsibility cannot be enforced, power becomes increasingly difficult to correct.

IV. The Inheritance We Are Losing

The Western constitutional tradition did not emerge from confidence in the moral perfection of rulers.

It emerged, in substantial part, from the recognition that human beings are fallible and that political authority must therefore be limited.

Its intellectual inheritance is extensive: classical philosophy, Roman law, Christian theology, medieval constitutional restraints, the common-law tradition, the Enlightenment and the struggles through which representative government acquired its modern form.

These traditions did not always agree.

Nor did the societies that inherited them consistently live according to their professed principles.

But one proposition became increasingly central to the development of constitutional liberty:

The human person possesses a moral standing that government cannot legitimately create or extinguish at will.

For my own understanding of Proto-Democracy, the Christian foundation of that proposition is indispensable.

The human being is not merely an administrative subject, an economic unit or a member of a political collective.

He is a moral person whose dignity precedes the institutions of government.

That dignity carries responsibility.

It requires recognition of the equal standing of others and places moral limits upon the exercise of power.

The constitutional consequence is profound.

Government does not stand above the moral order.

It is subject to it.

The American Declaration of Independence expressed this relationship with exceptional clarity when it affirmed that human beings are created equal, endowed with unalienable rights and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

The Declaration did not create those rights.

It asserted their antecedent existence.

The constitutional order that followed sought to establish institutions capable of exercising political authority while remaining restrained by law, representation and divided powers.

This was an extraordinary political achievement, however imperfectly its principles were initially applied.

But its importance lies not in the proposition that the American constitutional settlement was complete or infallible.

It lies in the distinction between the source of legitimate authority and the institutions authorised to exercise it.

The person precedes the institution.

Consent legitimises delegation.

The institution exercises borrowed authority.

And the authority remains subject to constitutional limits.

This inheritance has not disappeared from Western political language.

Governments continue to invoke liberty, democracy, human dignity and the rule of law.

The danger is that these words can remain in circulation after the constitutional relationships they describe have been weakened.

Freedom becomes a category of permitted conduct.

Democracy becomes the continuation of recognised procedures.

Rights become claims whose practical protection depends upon institutions increasingly insulated from democratic correction.

And sovereignty becomes a word used by governments while the people from whom legitimate authority derives struggle to recover its exercise.

A civilisation does not necessarily lose its constitutional inheritance by openly renouncing it.

It may lose that inheritance by continuing to repeat its language while forgetting its meaning.

The most dangerous abandonment of constitutional principle is the one that still speaks in the name of constitutional principle.

The purpose of Proto-Democracy is not to recreate an idealised past.

It is to recover the moral and constitutional distinctions without which legitimate self-government cannot endure.

V. Before the Point of No Return

There comes a point in the life of a political civilisation when its greatest danger is no longer the abuse of power itself, but the disappearance of the means by which that abuse can be peacefully corrected.

That is the point I fear we are approaching.

I do not claim to know when a society reaches such a threshold.

Nor do I believe political collapse, civil conflict or revolutionary upheaval is inevitable.

But history gives us sufficient reason to take seriously the consequences of political orders that lose the confidence of those they govern.

A constitutional system is not sustained by coercive capacity alone.

It depends upon the continuing belief that disagreements can be resolved, abuses challenged and authority corrected through lawful institutions.

When citizens lose confidence in those possibilities, political conflict changes character.

The question ceases to be merely which government should exercise authority.

It becomes whether the existing constitutional order can still provide a legitimate means of changing its exercise.

That is a far more dangerous question.

A society in which citizens believe that political participation has become futile invites withdrawal, resentment and eventually the temptation to seek remedies outside ordinary constitutional processes.

The responsibility for preventing that deterioration does not belong to citizens alone.

It belongs particularly to those exercising the greatest capacity to compel, restrict, classify and impose irreversible consequences.

The more consequential the power, the greater the burden of justification.

And the more difficult it becomes to reverse an exercise of authority, the stronger the constitutional protections required before that authority is exercised.

The American Declaration of Independence recognised that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and that the people retain the right to alter or abolish government when it becomes destructive of its legitimate purposes.

That principle remains among the most consequential statements in constitutional history.

But it exposes a question that has received insufficient attention.

What happens before the moment of constitutional rupture?

What happens when government has exceeded its legitimate authority, but the institutions responsible for correction cannot compel it to return?

What happens when elections replace officeholders without recovering consequential power?

What happens when citizens possess rights that cannot be effectively enforced against the institutions violating them?

And what happens when the constitutional system becomes so invested in preserving its own authority that its correction appears possible only through its disruption?

Why should a people have to approach revolution to recover authority that was never the government's to own?

This is the question from which Proto-Democracy's central constitutional proposition emerges.

A legitimate constitutional order must contain the means of recovering delegated authority before its failure makes rupture necessary.

The return path must exist within government itself.

Not as a theoretical right whose practical meaning emerges only after the system has failed.

Not as a distant promise that another election will eventually correct what existing institutions have placed beyond electoral reach.

But as a genuine constitutional capacity to challenge, correct and recover authority when those entrusted with it exceed their mandate.

Authority outward. Correction back. Sovereignty retained.

This is the missing relationship.

The State may exercise authority.

It may not acquire ownership of the sovereignty that legitimises that authority.

And when institutions begin to behave as though their mandates are permanent, self-justifying or beyond effective correction, the constitutional order must possess the means to restore the relationship.

The purpose is not to render government powerless.

It is to prevent government from becoming unanswerable.

That is the constitutional liberation Proto-Democracy proposes.

VI. The Proto-Democratic Liberation

I did not begin this work because I intended to establish another political movement.

I began because something fundamental no longer made sense.

During the political and institutional upheavals that followed 2020, I watched governments exercise extraordinary powers over the lives of ordinary people.

I watched public disagreement become increasingly difficult to distinguish, in official discourse, from irresponsibility.

I watched expertise acquire political authority that extended beyond the limits of scientific knowledge.

And I watched citizens who questioned consequential decisions encounter institutions that appeared more concerned with defending their authority than confronting the substance of those questions.

The experience brought me back to the individual.

To the sovereign human being whose moral agency precedes the institutions established to govern political life.

I regard myself first as such a human being.

Not sovereign because I answer to no one.

Not because my judgement stands above that of others.

But because my moral agency does not originate in the State, and because the responsibility to exercise that agency cannot be surrendered merely because another human being has acquired political office.

I understand that sovereignty to be grounded ultimately in the Creator.

It is therefore inseparable from responsibility.

The recognition of my own moral standing obliges me to recognise the equal standing of others, including those whose convictions differ profoundly from mine.

I do not ask government to be infallible.

I ask that it remain corrigible.

I do not demand that every political decision reflect my preferences.

I demand that the institutions exercising authority remain answerable when those decisions are challenged.

I do not reject the State.

I reject the inversion through which the State comes to regard itself as morally superior to the people it exists to serve.

And I reject the proposition that government may retain the legitimacy of delegated authority after it has destroyed the practical means through which that authority can be recovered.

The problem cannot be solved merely by finding better rulers.

Nor can it be solved by replacing one governing class with another whose political convictions happen to resemble our own.

The problem is solved only when the constitutional conditions that permit unaccountable power have been removed.

That is why the Proto-Democratici must remain more than another political identity.

The name must carry a constitutional obligation.

Those who adopt it must accept that the principles they demand from government also apply to themselves.

A movement that claims to defend sovereign individuals cannot demand unquestioning obedience from them.

A movement that criticises institutional self-protection cannot exempt its own leadership from scrutiny.

A movement that insists upon recoverable authority cannot construct an organisation whose authority is beyond correction.

The means must remain consistent with the end.

The Proto-Democratic Covenant is therefore not a demand for ideological uniformity.

It is a voluntary commitment to the constitutional precedence of the sovereign person, the continuing accountability of delegated authority and the preservation of lawful mechanisms through which power can be corrected and recovered.

Its principles must remain applicable regardless of which political party governs, which ideology commands a majority or which institutions exercise authority.

That is the distinction between constitutional renewal and the pursuit of political supremacy.

The purpose is not to ensure that our preferred rulers possess power.

It is to ensure that no rulers can make power their permanent possession.

The three papers that follow develop the constitutional architecture necessary to pursue that objective.

The first examines the source of political authority and the necessity of its recoverability.

The second examines the human responsibility of power and the conscience that cannot be delegated to an institution.

The third examines the location of authority and the limits imposed by human knowledge, proximity and the capacity for correction.

Source. Actor. Location.

Three investigations into one constitutional problem.

How can a society entrust human beings with political authority without allowing that authority to become alienated from the people whose sovereignty legitimises it?

I do not know whether the constitutional recovery I propose will succeed.

I do know that a civilisation which loses confidence in peaceful correction places its future in danger.

And I know that the answer cannot be another promise that the next government will exercise unaccountable power more wisely.

The answer must be to restore constitutional limits that no government may legitimately escape.

That is the liberation.

Not liberation from law.

Not liberation from legitimate political obligation.

But liberation from the presumption that institutional authority stands above the sovereign human person.

From the confusion of legality with legitimacy.

From the disappearance of personal responsibility behind administrative procedure.

And from the progressive alienation of delegated authority from those whose sovereignty remains its rightful source.

Freedom is not granted by governments; it is the condition under which governments may legitimately exist.

Yet freedom cannot endure through declaration alone.

It requires institutions capable of remembering their own limitations.

It requires human beings who refuse to surrender conscience to the offices they occupy.

It requires citizens willing to exercise the responsibilities of sovereignty.

And it requires a constitutional order in which authority can travel outward to accomplish legitimate public purposes without losing its route home.

The purpose of Proto-Democracy is not to overthrow government.

It is to ensure that the people never have to overthrow government merely to recover the authority that was theirs to begin with.

I offer this declaration as both an invitation and a warning.

An invitation to reconsider the constitutional foundations of our freedom, to recover the responsibilities of the sovereign person, and to recognise that legitimate government must remain answerable to those from whom its authority derives.

And a warning that the continued erosion of those foundations may bring us to a point where the peaceful recovery of democratic authority is no longer possible.

We should not presume that the democratic ideal, once established, is ours to keep indefinitely. A civilisation can lose the very principles upon which its freedom was built, even while the institutions bearing their names remain standing.

If we fail to recover the constitutional means of correcting power, we may one day discover that we have lost the means of recovering democracy itself.

The three Proto-Democratic Papers are my attempt to prevent that from happening.

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THE PROTO-DEMOCRATIC TRILOGY

BOOK I — SOURCE

The Proto-Democrats

Restoring Europe's Constitutional Idea

The legitimacy and recoverability of political authority.

BOOK II — ACTOR

The State Without Conscience

The human moral responsibility behind institutional power.

BOOK III — LOCATION

The Politics of Proper Scale

Subsidiarity, Human Limitation and the Limits of Distant Power

The constitutional limits of distant authority and the necessity of properly scaled government.

Authority must remain recoverable.

Responsibility must remain traceable.

Power must remain properly scaled.

Authority outward. Correction back. Sovereignty retained.

PUBLICATION NOTE

The Proto-Democratic Liberation reconstructs the original position paper, *The Proto-Democrats: Restoring Europe's Constitutional Idea*, in light of the subsequent development of the three Proto-Democratic Papers. It serves as an independent constitutional declaration and the intellectual entrance to the trilogy.

Developed through intensive human–AI collaboration with ChatGPT (OpenAI). The author retains responsibility for the philosophical premises, factual claims, judgements and conclusions.