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As against the machinations required to justify sovereignty beginning from the liberal premise of individual freedom, I suggest a fundamental reexamining of liberal freedom. In its place, I will argue for a return to a classic conception of Athenian or Aristotelian republicanism as the basis of political obligation. Reigning for perhaps millennia, yet strangely absent from contemporary theory, the ancient view argues that political obligation is based on our natural and unavoidable interconnectedness. Aristotle's persuasive arguments that human beings need political communities to survive and flourish, now fortified by modern social science, illustrates why sovereignty is not a puzzle but rather a natural extension of our civic interconnectedness and gives rise to political obligation.

Once republican obligation is firmly fixed as our new primary value, we can see how many current political mysteries fall into place. Though answers are only broached, republican obligation, for example, clarifies under what conditions a sovereign may claim extraordinary authority against terrorist attacks. Focusing on the reciprocal nature of civic duties also sheds light on the distinction between restrictions on legal treatment of crime and executive power aimed at American citizens engaged in terrorist activities. This piece hints at the answers that may follow once we understand that political obligation, sovereignty and civic virtues are interwoven.