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From Torbay to Cambridge: William III, George Washington, and the use of Propaganda in Revolution

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From Torbay to Cambridge: William III, George Washington, and the Use of Propaganda in Revolution

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This thesis is concerned with the “Glorious” English Revolution (1688-89) and the American Revolution (1776-83) and the propaganda of each movement. It discusses the early portions of each revolution and the initial propagandistic strategies employed by its revolutionaries and applies a comparative approach. In particular, it focuses upon the leaders and figureheads of each revolution and their role in the propaganda campaigns that sought to legitimize their revolts. One prominent individual from each movement and one important event which the individuals participated in form the crux of the study. These individuals and events were chosen for the rough correlation they share to one another in placement and importance in their revolutions. For the Glorious Revolution, I have considered William III and his landing at Torbay in November 1688, while for the American Revolution I have considered George Washington and his entrance into Cambridge, Massachusetts in July 1775.

The goal of this essay is to explore how both William and Washington, and those who supported them, attempted to legitimize themselves in the periods immediately preceding and following these events. It thoroughly examines various forms of revolutionary propaganda including declarations, pamphlets, sermons, petitions, letters, and public speeches. In so doing it exposes many intriguing similarities and differences between William, Washington, and their use of propaganda which I believe speak to the larger similarities and differences in general between these two revolutions. Ultimately, my thesis argues that both Washington and William not only supported the propaganda campaigns of their revolutions but in some cases personally crafted persuasive documents for public consumption. It concludes that these actions greatly helped the revolutionaries legitimize themselves and contributed to the somewhat inaccurate understandings of these men and their revolutions which have persisted throughout history and continue to influence us today.
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For My Grandparents,
Peter and Marie Scholar
I. Introduction

Traditionally, *revolution* has been used to attempt to bring about fundamental changes in political structures, usually in response to some form of social or political breakdown. These attempts at change have been met with both positive and negative, violent and relatively peaceful, results. Often the success or failure of a revolutionary movement is dependent upon winning the support of the populace. If a considerable number of "the people" do not support the revolutionaries and their arguments for the necessity of change, it will be very difficult for any new government to legitimize itself and gain long term stability, and the revolutionaries will most likely fail. In order to influence the beliefs of the populace, the ideas of the revolutionaries must be clearly and effectively stated in some form and then presented to the people so that the message of the revolution can be properly disseminated. Without the successful spread of a revolutionary ideology the people will most likely be distrustful of change and will oppose or remain ambivalent to it. Thus, the key to the successful transformation of the organizational or power structures of a government in a revolution is the achievement of legitimization through the effective use of persuasion or, as it is more often called, *propaganda*.

*Propaganda* has recently been defined as "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."\(^1\) It has been used by legitimate governments and revolutionary powers alike as a way to influence public opinion, often

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through the "reinforcement of cultural myths and stereotypes."² Often these myths are so deeply engrained within a society and their effectiveness so widespread that the identification of a message as a propagandistic one can be difficult.

With these points in mind, there are many questions about the nature of propaganda and legitimization in revolution. Why exactly do some revolutions, even those armed with the most persuasive arguments for change, fail while others succeed? What particular forms of argumentation have proven to be the most effective in revolutions? Are all forms of political persuasion in revolution to be considered *propaganda*? Do different types of revolutionaries, fighting for very different things, attempt to legitimize themselves with the same kind of propaganda? In what way does the propaganda of legitimization change as the circumstances of the revolution itself change?

It is with these questions in mind that this essay will attempt to further understand the issues of propaganda and legitimization in revolution by examining and comparing a pair of specific historical moments from two revolutionary movements. The two revolutions I will examine are the "Glorious" English Revolution (1688-89) and the American Revolution (1776-83). The two moments from these revolutions that I will study are, respectively, the periods immediately preceding and following the landing of William of Orange at Torbay in November 1688 and the arrival of General George Washington in Cambridge, Massachusetts in July 1775.

I have chosen these two particular revolutions because of the unique similarities and differences that they exhibit. Both the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution are popularly remembered today with a certain rosy-minded admiration. An extraordinary sense of national pride seems to be connected to these movements, lending

² Ibid.
them an almost mythical status. This allows many people to look beyond the complicated and sometimes chaotic elements of the events in order to see only clear-cut and reaffirming examples of the ostensible “greatness” of the American and British political experiments.

Additionally, both movements stand apart as somewhat unusual examples of revolution. Following the original early modern understanding of the term, these “revolutions” were labeled as such because they represented a “return” to older principles rather than a radical “rebirth” featuring new ideas. As a result, in comparison to the far more radical and explosive sociopolitical experiments of the Russian (1917) or Chinese (1946-49) Revolutions, these movements appear far more conservative. In many ways, the Glorious Revolution was not very “revolutionary,” in so far as those with power and influence in English society (the elite landowners and the ruling dynasty itself) remained in power. While there may have been a new person (or in this case new persons) on the throne there were no fundamental economic or social changes that accompanied the movement. And while the American Revolution certainly had its share of “radical” moments, it was also nevertheless largely devoid of the kinds of chaos exhibited by other revolutionary movements. No kings were publicly executed, the governmental structure of the colonies did not break down into disorder or anarchy, and the economic conditions, while hardly prosperous, remained relatively stable. I believe these distinctive features encourage further comparison between the revolutions.

To be fair, however, there are many differences between these two revolutions. They are separated by more than a hundred years and took place in very different

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political climates, for strikingly different reasons and with very different results. These differences may complicate a comparison of these movements, especially if one were to consider both revolutions in their entirety. As a result, for the purposes of this essay, I have made the decision to limit my study to two particular portions of the revolutions, or more precisely, to the actions of two influential individuals during two periods of great risk and uncertainty. I believe these figures and events that I have chosen roughly correlate to one another in terms of their relative importance and their general placement in the revolutions and are thus worthy of comparison.

Both William’s landing at Torbay and Washington’s entrance into Cambridge stand apart as crucial turning points that occurred fairly early on in the movements. Both William and Washington had been placed in precarious situations from which they no longer had the power to extricate themselves. Both had now committed themselves to their revolutions and were indelibly linked with them so much so that the failure of the revolution would have resulted in the destruction of the leaders. It is also important to note that at the time of these events, both Washington and William lacked any formal, legal justification for their actions. While William was formally “invited” by a group of English nobles to invade and did have an outside claim to the throne, his actions were effectively a coup d’etat: a forceful seizure of power from a legitimate monarch. The Prince of Orange still needed to convince a large segment of the English population, common and noble alike, of the purity and justification of his actions both before and after Torbay. Washington, while formally appointed Commander-in-chief by the Continental Congress and held in very high esteem by many patriots, was technically a rebellious commander of a rogue army. By July of 1775, the colonies were effectively in
rebellion, with blood having already been spilt at the Battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, while the Continental Congress (the only source of Washington’s legal legitimacy) was not yet recognized as a genuine governmental body by anyone outside the colonies. The Americans had not even declared their independence and were quite far from obtaining any kind of real unity.

Additionally, I believe Washington and William themselves are worthy of comparison. Both were strong military and political leaders, the heroes and figureheads of their movements, responsible for leading their forces to victory against great odds and under intense pressure. Both were first and foremost soldiers. William had been fighting in Europe against the forces of Louis XIV for all of his adult life and considered his actions in England to be another part of his great war against the spread of Catholic absolutism. Washington, a veteran of the Seven Years War, had been professionally trained by the British army and was able to secure his commission as commander-in-chief in large part because of his extensive military background.

Furthermore, both men actively generated propaganda in order to support their actions. William pursued a series of aggressive propaganda campaigns in order not only to make the case to his own people of the immediate need for an invasion of England but also to the English people before and after his landing. This campaign included the extensive use of declarations and pamphlets as well as politically charged sermons delivered by those loyal to his efforts such as Gilbert Burnet. Washington played a similar game, participating in a well-crafted propaganda campaign with the Continental Congress in order to gain support for their young cause. This included the creation of several declarations and other mass produced and direct appeals to the populace.
Additionally, Washington's personal letters, his general use of language, and the nature
of his arguments for American Independence suggest that he was at least somewhat
complicit in the great war of words which ensued among Patriots and Loyalists in the
colonies.

A discussion of these matters, however, also invites a discussion of the role
played by the larger bodies of government which were irrevocably tied to these two
revolutionaries throughout their struggles. After all, no one person can legitimize a
revolution single-handedly. A propaganda campaign, especially during a revolution, is a
concerted effort on the part of many individuals and while the great leaders or hero
figures may assume the spotlight in such a campaign, they are not the only ones
responsible for the dissemination of a revolutionary ideology. William of Orange and
George Washington would have been powerless to enact real change in their revolutions
were it not for the support of the British parliament and the American Continental
Congress. Thus these bodies of government must also be considered part of our
discussion.

In summary, the goal of this essay will be to compare these revolutions and the
revolutionaries who were able to legitimize themselves during them. Specifically, it will
explore how the propagandistic tactics used by both William and Washington, and the
larger bodies of government supporting them, attempted to legitimize themselves in the
periods immediately preceding and following two important sets of events. My focus will
be upon the various forms of propaganda employed by American and English
revolutionaries, including official declarations, pamphlets, and sermons as well as
personal letters and other correspondence. With an eye for the explicit language using by
the propagandists, I will compare the arguments William, Washington, and those around them used to support themselves. Thematically, I will look for similar concepts which run through the propaganda of each revolution including religion, natural rights and the rejection of absolutism, appealing to the masses (through both the spoken and the printed word), the use of military force, and the use of direct, personal attacks. In the end, I believe the similarities and differences between the two events will speak to the larger, general similarities and differences between the two revolutions.
II. The Build-up to Revolution

The events leading up to the Glorious and American Revolutions, and the role played by George Washington and William of Orange in them, are complicated and require a brief but thorough introduction in order to be properly understood. This section will provide that introduction before a more detailed discussion of the propaganda surrounding Washington, William, Cambridge, and Torbay follows.

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The causes and effects of the Glorious Revolution and William III’s place in it must be understood within their proper European context. The events of 1688 and 1689 were as much a Dutch as an English affair and the influence of other forces from the continent cannot be ignored.  

In the years before the invasion, the Prince of Orange pursued an aggressive foreign policy of opposition to and containment of the great menace of late seventeenth-century Europe: Louis XIV of France. As a stadholder and an influential member of one of the most powerful families in the Seven Provinces, William engaged in a series of conflicts (namely the Franco-Dutch War) with the French king and his allies throughout the 1670’s and 1680’s. The purpose of these wars was to stem the territorial and thereby the religious expansion of Catholic France into the Protestant Netherlands. While William was largely successful in these respects, forcing the French to withdraw from most of Dutch territory, Louis nevertheless made other considerable gains in the region while forcing the Dutch to exhaust a great deal of their money and resources in the

\footnote{Ibid.}
process. Despite various periods of peace and attempts at reconciliation between the warring powers, such as the Treaty of Nijmegen of 1678, William remained firmly convinced of Louis’ desire to conquer the whole of Europe and rule it as an absolute Catholic monarch. In an ever precarious diplomatic position, the prince thus engaged in a series of political maneuvers, in anticipation of further conflict, in order to strengthen his ability to defy the French. The most important of these maneuvers involved England which William, contrary to the opinions of many in the Dutch political community, would come to believe possessed a vital and, as of yet, unexploited military potential.

By marrying into the English royal family and increasing his visibility among the English people, the Prince of Orange began to become more familiar with the country’s internal politics. This familiarity, in time, enabled William to assert himself as a popular, potential successor to the embattled Charles II and later James II. Despite this, however, the prince’s life goal was never to become the king of England. Desiring “a change in policy, not a change in monarch,” the prince saw the throne as a means to an end more than it was anything else; a tool with which he planned to bring England, with its powerful army and navy, into an anti-French alliance. It was only later, after James’ attempted flight and the outbreak of near chaotic mob violence in London and other cities, that William would decide that a deliberate seizure of the throne was the best way to ensure that his objectives were met. While the subsequent Whig historiography paints William as the consummate “Protestant deliverer” and praises his efforts to save England

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6 Hoak, 23.
7 Ibid., 21.
9 Ibid., 14.
from "popery and arbitrary power" the prince was primarily motivated to invade and indeed conquer James’ throne by strategic considerations.\textsuperscript{10} While religion was indeed a vital issue, William’s dynastic interests in England, advanced by his marriage and political maneuvering, must be understood as part of his so-called “grand strategy” to contain Louis XIV.

As William maneuvered, the political situation in England grew increasingly tumultuous. Rising to the throne in February 1685, King James II, almost immediately began alienating a great number of his people. Criticized by Whig and Tory alike for its absolutism and “popery” James’ regime was widely unpopular but remained very far from collapse.\textsuperscript{11} It was clear to many that without outside assistance there would be little chance of removing the king from power. Despite these developments William still lacked both the appropriate opportunity as well as the support to effectively implement his ambitious plans for England. This began to change, however, beginning in the early 1680’s as a result of a number of complicated and intertwined events.

In 1682, Louis once again renewed his hostilities by attacking the Spanish Netherlands, placing the neighboring Dutch province of Holland in jeopardy. Three years later, as part of his larger crusade against Protestants in his own country, the French king revoked the Edict of Nantes, which for nearly a hundred years had guaranteed religious toleration to all Huguenots. This bold move, which sent shockwaves throughout all the courts of Europe, also resulted in an unprecedented flight of wealthy French protestants, leaving France robbed of a great deal of potential capital and economic expertise.\textsuperscript{12} To offset these losses, beginning in August of 1687, Louis reimposed the tariffs and duties

\textsuperscript{10} Hoak, 23.
\textsuperscript{11} Miller, 10.
\textsuperscript{12} Hoak, 25.
which he had earlier placed upon imports from the Dutch Republic up until the Treaty of Nijmegen. This action in turn set off a Franco-Dutch commercial war, once again arousing fears within the Seven Provinces of further French military action in the Netherlands. On the heels of these developments, word arrived in December of that year that Mary of Modena, James II’s queen, was pregnant with their first child. Many at James’ court optimistically announced that Mary would soon give birth to a son who would be raised a Catholic and come to surpass William in the line of succession.

This series of chance events, arriving in relatively quick succession, convinced William and his fellow Burgomasters that swift and direct action was needed. Successfully playing upon the increased fears of his countrymen William secured unprecedented support for his bold “grand strategy.” Armed with this new mandate, the prince engaged in a bold propaganda campaign with the goal of legitimizing his plans to invade England and gain control of its government.

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While the Glorious Revolution must be seen as a distinctly European conflict, the American Revolution must be appreciated as a transatlantic event, fought principally between two increasingly different parts of a large and unwieldy colonial empire. The revolution undoubtedly had its European elements. Continental powers, especially the French, had a vested interest in the revolution and ultimately gave their support to the colonial cause in order to subvert the imperial efforts of their rivals. In addition, the British, because of concerns of a Bourbon Alliance invasion of their homeland and the defense of their interests in the West Indies, were never able to concentrate all of their resources on the conflict. Nevertheless, at its core, the revolution was an internal struggle
between two groups of English subjects with differing opinions as to the nature of sovereignty with regards to a particular portion of British territory. Thus, despite its European aspects, the American Revolution must be understood as more of an internal British-colonial or “American” event than anything else.

Following its victory in the Seven Years War (1754-1763), Great Britain chose to drastically redefine its relationship with its American colonies. Motivated in part by the massive debt incurred from the war and the daunting cost of maintaining permanent garrisons in North America in order to combat French, Spanish, or Native American incursions, government ministers adopted a decidedly more “imperial” posture. As a result, the mother country began exercising a more centralized form of administrative control over its dependencies than ever before.13

With a series of new tax initiatives, beginning with the Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765), the British government sought to increase both its direct revenue from and its influence in the colonies. These taxes were met with a great deal of resistance by many colonials. Before these acts there had been no direct interference by the British Parliament in colonial affairs with the exception of a modest, and largely evaded, collection of Navigation Acts.14 This detachment had bred a spirit of autonomy and self-government in the colonies resulting in the development of a series of “mature, stable, social, and political institutions controlled by indigenous local elites.”15 With the self-sufficiency of these institutions seemingly now endangered and without elected representation in the British Parliament, many colonials began to feel that their individual

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15 Cogliano, 25.
rights and liberties, as British citizens, were being threatened. These concerns only intensified following the passage of other, similar taxes including The Quartering Act (1765), The Townshend Revenue Act (1767) and later the Tea Act (1773) and the Coercive Acts (1774). In response, the colonials embarked upon a kind of ideological journey which, beginning as a defense of their traditional autonomy, would later culminate in a full declaration of American sovereignty and independence from Great Britain.16

Among the more initially obscure figures in this tumult was a Colonel in the Virginia colonial militia named George Washington. A wealthy planter and British trained veteran of the Seven Years War, Washington had remained politically aloof in the early years of the struggle. However, following Parliament's increasingly obtrusive actions, the Colonel soon came to prominence as an active and powerful member of a rising group of outspoken elite patriots. In time, Washington would earn the respect of many within the Virginia political community and beyond, building an impressive reputation and eventually becoming, arguably, the most powerful individual in colonial America.

Eventually the sentiments of patriots like Washington began to take hold in many Americans resulting in a widespread popular call for colonial unification. Ultimately these developments would culminate in the development of an intercolonial, representative convention which would serve as a new forum for collective colonial self-expression and protest. Beginning with the First Continental Congress of 1774 and continuing with the Second Continental Congress a year later, these conventions began growing in power and prominence, increasingly taking on the roles normally reserved for

16 Cogliano, 23.
a legal administrative body. As the direct control of the king and his parliament over the colonies began to disintegrate, the Congress continued to evolve, ultimately growing "into the institution that served as the central government for a new American state through eight years of war and five years of uneasy peace."\(^{17}\)

Despite the rapid growth of the Congress’ authority, its delegates often quarreled among themselves. The divisions among the representatives reflected those of a diverse populace, threatening the concept of colonial unity. From an early period, however, one basic idea united the leaders of the colonies: the wisdom of their commander-in-chief. From the moment of his election as the supreme leader of the united colonial army, Washington, being perceived as a leader of credibility and skill, remained consistently supported by the majority of the Congress. This support allowed the General’s preferences to be translated into action, giving him a profound amount of political influence.\(^{18}\) In time, this allowed the General and the Congress, working together, to influence colonial public opinion through a series of propagandistic acts, leading many Americans to support the legitimacy of the new colonial government and its independence movement.


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 133.
III. Propaganda and Revolution

Propaganda figured heavily in both the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution. Through a series of both direct and indirect means, English, Dutch and American revolutionaries were able to successfully present their ideologies among the general populations, resulting in the broad dissemination of their message and the eventual legitimization of their revolutionary governments. Many elements of these revolutions and their propaganda campaigns are dissimilar. The nature of the goals of the revolutionaries, their relationship vis-à-vis their opponents and the authority structures of their governments and propaganda campaigns are all strikingly different. Despite these distinctions, however, there are a number of important correlations between the symbolic, propagandistic figureheads of the movements, the types of propaganda used by the revolutionaries, and the specific tactics and language used in the propaganda. This section will detail these differences and similarities and discuss what they suggest about the larger movements and the individuals involved in them.

Fundamental Differences

Any comparison of the propaganda of the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution must acknowledge several fundamental differences between the revolutions and their propaganda campaigns. The Glorious revolutionaries were chiefly motivated by political and especially religious concerns. Displeased by the policies enacted by James II (policies that were often influenced by the sovereign’s faith) a group of foreigners, aided
by Englishmen loyal to their cause, decided to forcibly change England’s political and religious situation for their own benefit. Their movement was justified by a lawful claim to the English throne which William of Orange possessed as well as a mandate, granted to the prince by a group of high ranking English politicians (speaking ostensibly on behalf of the English people), which he believed entitled him to invade and later to usurp the kingship. As a result, William and his supporters must primarily be seen more as invaders or perhaps more kindly as foreign deliverers. While they were more or less welcomed by the English the fact remains that they chose consciously to involve themselves in an external political and religious situation that did not directly concern them. They generally should not be considered internal rebels or insurgents.

The American revolutionaries were motivated by political and in particular ideological concerns. Their quarrel with King George, their self-acknowledged sovereign, was not a religious one and instead principally involved the concept of representation in government according to a radical Whig understanding of the English Constitution. Offended by the political policies enacted by Parliament and the king and desirous to have a more prominent voice in the development of the laws which governed them, the delegates of the Continental Congress used a variety of different methods to attempt to convince the British government to redress their grievances. Ultimately, the revolutionaries felt they had little choice but to use armed force to rebel against British control and form their own independent government so that they could defend their rights and liberties themselves. There was little legal precedent for this and colonists justified their actions philosophically. Consequently, the Congress and its leaders such as George
Washington, must be classified as *rebels, insurgents or insurrectionists*; leaders of a revolt that began from inside rather than outside the British Empire.

The goals at the outset of each movement, and the ways in which the revolutionaries were prepared to attain them, were also very different. William of Orange invaded England to take over its government and reduce its king to a pawn and he had no compunction about using military force to do this. After restoring the Protestant faith to the English people he then planned to compel their government to join an alliance against Louis XIV and go to war against him. In contrast, the Continental Congress, at first, hoped to settle its dispute with King George using peaceful measures. Most colonists very much desired to remain a part of the British Empire and as a result were initially unwilling to renounce their allegiance to it. Thus, the Continental Congress can be seen as a group of somewhat reluctant revolutionaries. Furthermore, many congressmen questioned their legal ability to raise an army, appoint generals and wage war.

Finally, the leadership structure of these revolutions and their propaganda campaigns were also strikingly dissimilar. For all intents and purposes, the Glorious Revolution was the revolution of William of Orange. While other leaders such as William’s wife, Mary had a vested interest in the movement and ancillary figures such as Gilbert Burnet and Gaspel Fagel were instrumental in the crafting of the movement’s propagandistic messages and helping the prince implement his ambitious plans, William, more so than any other individual, was the architect and the director of the uprising. He alone was able to navigate the bureaucratic minefields that complicated the politics of the Seven Provinces and England and he alone was able to act as an influential symbol for the movement.
In comparison, the American Revolution was a far more decentralized and democratic event. No single individual was able to dictate the actions of the revolution at a national level and control the content of the movement’s propaganda. Instead, the Continental Congress was largely responsible for organizing the colonial response in as unified a way as it could. While many influential pieces of propaganda such as Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* were released independent of the Congress, the body brought together “many of the more able propagandists in the colonies” and accordingly became the source of “the most important political agency for the spreading of ideas.” 19 While individuals such as General Washington exercised a certain amount of powerful, semi-centralized control over the movement, no one colonist was ever able to act in the same capacity as a European prince.

These distinctions are important and complicate a comparison of the events to a certain extent. Nevertheless, despite the fundamental differences between them, the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution and the propaganda of each movement share some surprising similarities.

**William and Washington**

Both revolutions boast prominent figureheads, who despite exercising differing degrees of power in their movements, acted as remarkably effective propaganda symbols that embodied the core principles of their revolutions.

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William of Orange was seen to exemplify the values of the Glorious Revolution in many ways. Recognized throughout Europe as a consummate protestant man of war, William had spent the better part of his adult life using military force to defend his country in a series of religious wars. Having stemmed the tide of Louis XIV’s incursions into the Protestant Netherlands, William’s expertise as a commander was held in high regard. Additionally, throughout his career, and especially during his invasion of England, the prince displayed a bold, risk-taking resolve which made the prospect of facing him in battle a daunting one. Finally, William’s well documented hatred for “popery” made his status as a faithful and fervent Protestant beyond reproach. These factors made William the perfect individual to rescue the English people from the damaging policies of an absolutist Catholic king who despite his unpopularity remained very powerful and, to all outward appearances, very capable of defending his crown and unwilling to give up his faith. The British Parliament admitted this much in their declaration of December 11, 1688, by referring to the Prince of Orange as a man who “with so great kindness to these nations, so vast experience, and so much hazard to his own person, hath undertaken...to rescue us...from the imminent dangers of popery and slavery.”

In a similar way, George Washington appeared to constantly epitomize the principles of the America Revolution. In a movement which ideologically dedicated itself to virtuousness and the defense of the principles of English republicanism, no man was

20 Hoak, 6.
21 Ibid., 20.
22 Ibid., 19.
held in higher esteem or more celebrated as the model of the virtuous republican
gentleman than the commander-in-chief.\textsuperscript{24} The General's ostensible dedication to "the
greater good," is well documented as he refused to receive a salary for his work as the
commander of the Continental Army and later chose to resign his powerful command to
retire to his estate. Additionally, his skill as a veteran of the Seven Years War was well
established. Arguably the most experienced officer in the colonies at the time of his
nomination, Washington was praised by John Adams during the Second Continental
Congress as a "gentlemen" whose "skill and experience as an officer...is very well
known to all of us."\textsuperscript{25} Thus, no one was better suited to defend the territory of the
colonies on the battlefield while also defending its principles against reproach through the
quality of his character.

The fact that these two men so perfectly embodied their revolutions is no
accident. It is a testament to the power of the propaganda machines that supported them
and their own willingness to personally use and otherwise support their movement's
propaganda in order to appear as committed to the principles of their movements as they
could.

William of Orange, the main director of the Glorious Revolution's propaganda
campaign, understandably used indoctrination extensively throughout the movement to
craft the way that he would be perceived by those around him. His attention to his
reputation as well as the way that his invasion and his subsequent seizure of the throne
would be received by the English people is evident throughout the propaganda created

\textsuperscript{25} Edward G. Lengel, \textit{This Glorious Struggle: George Washington's Revolutionary War Letters} (New
not only by William himself but also by his supporters which he often directly supervised. William constantly choreographed his appearance in order to not only appear virtuous in English eyes but also, when possible, to evoke appropriate religious or historical imagery. One such example of this involves William’s decision to time his landing at Torbay in such a way that landfall was made on November 5th, the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, a date which carried incredible significance to English protestants. In addition, William, a man “capable of the greatest dissimulation” often had no problem deceitfully using propaganda to cloak his actions. For example, following the birth of the Prince of Wales, only months before his invasion, William sent a congratulatory letter to his father-in-law praising the miraculous nature of the birth. Considering the fact that many within England and the Seven Provinces (including William’s wife) strongly doubted the legitimacy of the birth and that it would based upon this suspicion that the prince would later launch his invasion, the nature of his letter is immediately suspicious. Whatever the intention of the letter, William’s actions angered many of his supporters. The Invitation to William from the “Immortal Seven” which would follow shortly thereafter in fact directly chastised the prince for his correspondence. Stating that the document “hath done you some injury” the invitation warned that the topic was a delicate one which the prince should handle with more care because “the false imposing of [the birth] upon the princess and the nation” was “not only an infinite exasperation of people's minds here” but was also “certainly one of the chief causes upon which the declaration of your entering the kingdom in a hostile manner must

27 Hoak, 22.
be founded on your part."\textsuperscript{28} In the end, I believe few if any historians question William’s deeply rooted role in the propaganda of the Glorious Revolution and the more unscrupulous character traits which his involvement in that campaign reveal.

For George Washington, however, the situation is more complicated. To the best of our understanding, Washington does not appear to have acted as a stereotypical revolutionary propagandist. While some of his actions and their purposes may be challenged and a hidden set of his guarded true intentions may be surmised, the fact remains that George Washington does not appear to have carried on his role as a figurehead of the American Revolution in the same kind of duplicitous fashion as a figure like William of Orange. This may in part be due to the fact that the more decentralized authority structure of the American Revolution made it far more difficult for a figure such as the commander-in-chief to control the presentation of his public image using propaganda. Thus, to a certain extent, Washington did not have the same opportunity to engage in deception that a figure such as William of Orange did. Despite this, however, Washington’s character still in many ways appears to be above serious reproach.

If one desires proof of this fact, they need only look at the scene surrounding his initial assumption of command as the leader of the Continental Army. Using evidence collected from several sources it is the almost unanimous opinion of today’s scholars that Washington did not actively seek the commission of Command-in-Chief. His assumption of power was apparently entirely unexpected and undesired.

When he was first nominated for the position by John Adams in a session of the Continental Congress on June 14, 1775, Washington reportedly fled the chamber

\textsuperscript{28} The Invitation to William (June 30, 1688), ed. Andrew Browning, in English Historical Documents, 1660-1714 (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 120-122.
immediately.\(^{29}\) His subsequent speech of acceptance two days later was remarkably gracious. The Virginian repeatedly stated his thanks to the Congress and noted the great honor which had been done to him. The new general also stated repeatedly and "with the utmost sincerity" that he did not believe he was worthy of the command he was being offered.\(^{30}\) His acceptance of it he declared was due only to the importance and greatness of the cause which the revolutionaries were struggling for. Finally, he stated that in order to assure the Congress that no "pecuniary consideration" influenced him to accept his new position, he would not accept a salary.

Washington's personal letters to his wife also appear to suggest that his new position was one that he not only did not desire but also sought to evade. Assuring Martha "in the most solemn manner" the General writes that "so far from seeking this appointment I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness...but from a consciousness of its being too great for my capacity."\(^{31}\) Additionally, Washington relates that despite reluctance "it was utterly out of my power to refuse this appointment without exposing my character to such censures as would have reflected dishonor upon myself, and given pain to my friends." Making his uneasiness and unhappiness clear, it appears that the new commander-in-chief is as unassuming as he possibly could be under the circumstances.

Further support is provided by Washington's friends and colleagues such as Patrick Henry who relates to us the General's behavior on the day of his acceptance of


the position of commander-in-chief. According to Henry, Washington was highly
distressed and overcome with tears and reportedly told his friend and fellow Virginian
that “From the day I enter upon the command of the American armies, I date my fall, and
the ruin of my reputation.”

Despite this evidence, however, a number of facts appear to belie some of these
statements made by Washington. Examining the evidence, I believe it is possible, at the
very least, to suggest that a more complicated and calculated individual may lie behind
the public image of the General that continues to flourish even today. For the fact remains
that despite all his modesty and selflessness, Washington was still able to become an
influential propaganda symbol and a powerful symbolic figurehead of the American
revolutionary movement. How is this possible? It is possible because Washington
personally, actively, and successfully cultivated his public image and remained willing to
participate in and provide support for the tenuous American propaganda campaign which
the revolutionaries attempted to conduct. The extensive reputation that the General built
for himself enabled him to effectively act “as a propaganda and political asset” that “from
the very beginning greatly enhanced the American cause.”

For evidence of this it is best to further examine the circumstances surrounding
Washington’s assumption of command and his arrival in Cambridge. Throughout the
spring and summer of 1775, as the prospect of a larger war with Britain grew more and
more likely, many patriots began to search for a capable commander, loyal to the
American cause, who would be willing to offer his services. Washington, having fought
for the British with distinction in the Seven Years War, was seen by many as the ideal

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32 Lengel, *This Glorious Struggle*, 4.
man to lead a united army of colonists. In addition to his military credentials, the commander's role as a wealthy planter and delegate to the Continental Congress (a delegate with the power to act as a unifying factor between North and South) made him all the more enticing.

Washington was undoubtedly well aware of all this and despite the modesty apparent in his later acceptance of the position, he very much desired to be the Commander-in-Chief. Many of the General's correspondences from nearly a decade of military service as well as seventeen years as a planter and politician expose key elements of his personality, such as his "long standing ambition" for a successful military career. Some historians have noted this "ardent" personal hunger for fame which "can be demonstrated over and over by his own words." The command of the American armies afforded Washington the career and the fame which he so deeply desired while also offering him the ability to embarrass the very same British army which had previously refused him promotion. Thus, while he may not have overtly desired to command the colonial army, he must have, at the very least, understood the enormous opportunity that lay before him if he were successful.

Despite this Washington chose not to actively pursue the command of a colonial army, a move which may suggest a certain degree of personal machination on his part. Instead of directly campaigning, he took the appropriate steps to avoid any outward sign

36 Ibid.
38 Rasmussen, 111.
of interest or impropriety. In so doing, Washington was working to build his closely guarded, virtuous reputation; an attribute that he felt was the single most important key to his attainment of any personal goal. Over and over in fact, Washington’s actions reveal that he possessed an “uncommon awareness of self,” a sense that “what he decided and what he did, and how others perceived his decisions and deeds, always mattered.” This explains why, whenever possible, the General appears as if he not only did not desire the position of Commander-in-Chief but was actually unfit for it because of a lack of military experience.

Thus, it was personal virtue and in particular modesty that formed the centerpiece of Washington’s carefully crafted public persona. As a result, by doing his best to appear as much like a virtuous republican gentleman as he could, Washington earned great praise and would be elevated to an extremely distinguished status in the eyes of many patriots. The commander’s “personal standards became a model” for others to follow, allowing him to sustain his army through years of bitter conflict. As time went on in fact the General would be continually celebrated as the true embodiment of republicanism in action and key individual who could transform the new American nation into a “republican utopia.” Indeed as Thomas Jefferson would write to the commander-in-chief after the Treaty of Paris, it was the “moderation and virtue of a single character” that had “prevented this revolution from being closed as most others have been by a

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42 Rasmussen, 112.
subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish." This character to whom Jefferson referred was undoubtedly none other than Washington. Thus, more so than any other individual Washington was seen as an exemplary gentleman patriot who should be emulated; and he was very aware of this fact.  

This evidence is instructive, since in many ways Washington was not a gentleman. He had never attended college, spoke no foreign languages, and was not an exceptionally gifted man of letters. His family, while definitely part of the landed planter gentry, was neither overly successful nor influential in government. Yet to the best of his ability, Washington strove to look and act the part. His strict adherence to the text Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation, which he had studied from an early age, was quite helpful. Additionally his quiet, courteous demeanor was seen to command respect and exude strength.

Simply put, despite certain shortcomings, Washington successfully used written correspondence and public action to appear virtuous among those whom he wished to influence. This fact is made clear many times throughout the General’s life, including during his appearance at the Second Continental Congress. Attending every session of the Congress dressed in his blue and red British military uniform Washington, without saying a word, demonstrated his willingness to take up arms. The uniform not only expressed a willingness to fight but also reminded those present of the formidable tasks undertaken and completed in that uniform. At the same time, however, the Virginian appeared to

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46 Ibid.
47 Freeman, 426.
hold out hope for reconciliation by voting in favor of all measures that attempted it. Thus, while firmly committed to the patriot cause, Washington was very careful to keep his personal beliefs in check and therefore did not fill the statehouse with lengthy speeches.49 Instead, he silently embodied the belief that formally taking up arms with Britain should be avoided at all costs but if one day it became unavoidable, he was ready and willing to offer his services.

The opportunity came in the opening days of June 1775. With news of Lexington and Concord already spreading throughout the colonies and groups of Massachusetts militiamen gathering to combat the British in Boston, Congress at last believed that they had no choice but to commit to an armed conflict. Upon the formal creation of an American army, the delegates immediately looked to Washington to be its commander and the ambitious Virginian did not fail to take advantage of the situation.

Accepting the command, Washington wrote a group of letters to his wife explaining his situation, met briefly with friends and supporters in the Congress and then embarked for Cambridge with crowds of well wishers greeting him along the way. When he arrived outside Boston and took formal command of the army his actions were widely reported in colonial newspapers. Additionally, Washington took it upon himself to ensure that the propaganda released by the Congress was properly distributed among his troops. Upon the issuance of the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, the General had the document read aloud in assembly. This tactic would be repeated throughout the war as Washington did his part to make sure that the propagandistic messages of the Congress were circulated properly.

49 Ibid., 85.
Taking all this into account, I believe it is clear that Washington, ever the skillful tactician of politics and war, must be seen as a willing participant in the American revolutionary propaganda war. Through his actions and his words, the General not only supported the propaganda of the war but also consciously misled those around him in order to personally indoctrinate them. The fact remains, however, that the General tempered his skill at playing the propaganda game with a desire to remain detached from the unscrupulous nature of the conflict. Understanding "the necessity for encouraging the people," Washington knew what needed to be done in order to capture the support of the American population for the revolutionary struggle, and "constantly recommended pertinent opportunities to [his] literary friends." Thus, he was always very careful to control his placement and purpose in the campaign. Rather than take a role as a principal creator of the nation's propaganda, the General instead chose to act as a facilitator of various revolutionary messages. This is why, while some of Washington's widely distributed addresses, declarations, and petitions carry a propagandistic quality, in most cases, he had nothing to do with the formal creation of the rhetoric of America's war of words. Nevertheless, the commander-in-chief "on several occasions gave the propagandists their cue and was always conscious of the need for their activity." In addition, we cannot overlook the fact that the declarations and addresses of the Continental Congress would not have been able to have an effective impact on the American people if it were not for George Washington. As the revolution's key "propaganda symbol" Washington lent credence to many of the pronouncements

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50 Davidson, 351.
51 Ibid.
Congress would make allowing their declarations and resolves to carry a greater influence.

From all this information I believe it is clear that both William of Orange and George Washington embodied their revolutions by conveying a dedication to the core principles of the movements which others could see and potentially emulate. This enabled both men to act as powerful symbolic figureheads of their revolutions. It was made possible by the use of propaganda which allowed both men to support their revolutions and themselves so that both the movement and its leader appeared in as positive a way as possible.

Types and Tactics of Propaganda

In addition to the roles played by Washington and William, elements of the larger propaganda campaigns of these two revolutions also have important similarities. With the help of the larger bodies of government which not only supported these leaders but also helped craft and release a great deal of propaganda, these campaigns often used not only the same types of propaganda (both broad, public displays of persuasion as well as more direct, private forms) but also, in certain cases, the same tactics and the same language to effectively disseminate their revolutionary messages to their extremely diverse audiences.

For both sets of revolutionaries the most popular form of propaganda was undoubtedly the formal declaration. Whether issued by legislatures, prominent political figures, private individuals, or other informally organized political groups, these documents, often highly visible through their publication in newspapers, pamphlets and
broadsides, or their recitation in city streets or other public places, were created specifically for the purpose of carrying the message to as many people as possible. With regards to this essay, the declarations directly issued or otherwise orchestrated by legal governmental authorities, or those desiring to be considered as such, carry a special significance.

William of Orange used declarations extensively before, after and even during his landing at Torbay in order to announce his supposed intentions to the English people as well as the rest of Europe. The Declaration of the Hague (also known as the Declaration of Reasons) perhaps the first mass statement of William’s revolutionary message, provides an excellent example of this. While it was originally intended to be released in unison with the invasion, the declaration was inadvertently leaked beforehand and almost immediately became readily available to commoners throughout England. In pamphlet form it became “highly visible” and quite literally “everywhere” in the final month leading up to the landing. Thanks to William’s agents, it was translated into four languages and was read aloud among the prince’s partisans in the streets of many major English cities including the capital. In addition, the document was also carried with William on his voyage, designed to be printed off ad infinitum through the use of a mobile printing press and a group of printers and copywriters, brought along expressly for the purpose.

The prince would continue to use similar, highly visible documents to spread his revolutionary messages as he approached London and later completed a military conquest

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54 Hoak, 17.
of the capital. During this time, as James attempted to flee for France and mob violence began to break out in London and other cities, William began using his pronouncements to return order to the country. Later with the capital and a provisional government under his control, the prince would continue to use propaganda in order to gain the favor of the Convention Parliament and ensure that a favorable settlement of the crisis was obtained. In addition to William’s pronouncements, the Parliament itself also used declarations as part of its efforts to settle the dispute between William and James during this period.

In a similar way, the Continental Congress issued a number of influential declarations such as the *Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress*, the *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity* and the *Declaration of Independence* in order to attempt to influence large populations. While these pronouncements were principally part of a larger political dialogue between the Congress and the English Parliament and King George, the popular power of these documents must not be underestimated. Additionally, but to a lesser extent, General George Washington, used his prominent position as commander-in-chief to issue influential declarations such as his *Address to the Inhabitants of Canada* which often espoused the same kinds of sentiments as the Congress.

In addition to these formal declarations, other documents were released by both sets of revolutionaries; documents which despite their indirect nature were still very important for their ability to spread propagandistic information to large audiences. These documents included various speeches, letters and petitions made by William, Washington, the Parliament and Congress which were initially, in one form or another,
directed toward one particular audience, but were then widely distributed, using a
different medium, to a larger one.

It is important to note here that as we discuss the similarities among these
revolutions and their more indirect forms of propaganda, there are also further differences
which appear. While both the American and Glorious Revolutions made use of indirect
propaganda, they did not always use exactly the same kinds. The propaganda of the
Glorious Revolution, for instance, was often transmitted through sermons, especially
those delivered by Gilbert Burnet, one of William of Orange’s greatest propaganda
agents. While sermons were undoubtedly a very big part of the American Revolution as
well, the Continental Congress and other patriot leaders did not have the power to direct
the American churches to say anything. Thus, when considering the propaganda
campaigns of these revolutions from a national level, we cannot directly compare their
sermons. Nevertheless, if we examine the content of all these various direct and indirect
forms (declarations, pamphlets, sermons, letters, speeches and petitions) together, despite
differences in their frequency, we immediately begin to see several important similarities.

First, despite the fact that the two revolutions were fought for very different
reasons, both sets of revolutionaries used propaganda to frame their conflict in religious
terms. In so doing both the English and the American revolutionaries used strikingly
similar language to reinforce their arguments.

Examining William’s Declaration of the Hague, we can see that from the very
beginning the concept of religion was prominent in the prince’s rhetoric. In the
declaration William states that “religion, laws, and liberties” of the realm have been
“overturned,” by the “arbitrary” actions of England’s current government. He elaborates by explaining several ways that the king and in particular his counselors have broken their promise to “maintain the Church of England as it was established by law.” Each of these examples highlights the current government’s lack of support for the Protestant faith and attempts to conflate that lack of support with illegality. William closes by stating that one of the main reasons for his invasion is the “preservation of the Protestant religion” and that he plans to “chiefly rely on the blessing of God for the success of this our undertaking, in which we place our whole and only confidence.”

Following this work, various declarations released by William make some reference to religion in one form or another. The prince’s Third Declaration reiterates many of the same religious points of his first as it reaffirms William’s “fervent zeal for the Protestant religion” and refers to his invasion (which at this point was in its more advanced stages) as “the Blessed and Glorious Design which by the Favor of Heaven we have so successfully begun.” However, one document in particular, a letter originally written by William to the sailors of the English fleet on the eve of his invasion carried an especially strong religious tone. The correspondence states the prince’s “hope that almighty God will inspire you [the English sailors] with such thoughts as may facilitate your deliverance and preserve you, your country, and your religion in all these impending miseries.” It then cautions the seamen that they are being “made use of only as

56 By His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, A Third Declaration (November 23, 1688), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
57 Prince of Orange’s Letter to the English Fleet and the Form of Prayer Used in the Dutch Fleet Translated From the Dutch (1688), The British Library.
instruments to bring this nation under popery and slavery.” The letter then concludes by listing, in its entirety, a prayer used by the Dutch fleet, translated from the Dutch into English specifically for the document, which William’s invading force was undoubtedly planning to use during its expedition.

As William advanced on London and Parliament began to throw their full support behind him, so too did the Lords Spiritual and Temporal take up this religious language. Stating that it could no longer “be silent under those calamities, wherein the popish counsels which so long prevailed, have miserably involved these realms,” the body affirmed its faith in the Protestant religion and promised that it would ensure that the religion was “supported and encouraged to the Glory of God and the happiness of the established government in these kingdoms.”

Later in an effort to secure these goals and to promote peace and tranquility throughout the capital and the city of Westminster, Parliament and later the Prince of Orange both released declarations ordering all Catholics in those two cities to leave. Claiming that their actions were “for the better preservation of the peace and common safety” the documents both threaten punishment for those who do not cooperate and enlist local law enforcement in order to ensure that the new statutes are upheld.

In fact, even the more mundane declarations issued by William and the Parliament during this period reference religion, albeit in an indirect manner. When dealing with the proper collection of taxes the prince makes reference to “collectors,

58 A Declaration of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, In and About the Cities of London and Westminster, Assembled at Guildhall (December 11, 1688)
receivers and officers (not being papists). Likewise, when reestablishing order in the capital William calls on “every person (not being a papist) that upon the first day of December last was in any office or employment…” to return to work.

However, William and his partisans most effectively used religion by taking control of the English church and using the pulpit to broadcast a concerted religious message. Leading this effort was Gilbert Burnet, an Anglican cleric who had served William and his wife since 1686 as a close personal friend and spiritual counselor. One of Burnet’s most important sermons was delivered on December 23, 1688, at St. James’ palace with a large audience of notable partisans in attendance including the Prince of Orange himself. By this time, William’s successful landing at Torbay and occupation of London had placed him in de-facto control of England and its government. Despite this William faced several challenges. Desperate to grow beyond the rhetoric of the Declaration of the Hague which by this time had been largely abandoned by the revolutionaries, William had turned to Burnet in the hope that he could help emphasize the religious implications of William’s appearance in England and his potential assumption of the throne. Accordingly, the sermon is full of religious imagery and makes many bold claims about William, his invasion and God’s role in it.

Beginning with a psalm and alluding to various pieces of scripture throughout, Burnet is careful to call attention to the “amazing concurrence of providences” that have

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60 A Declaration of His Highness the Prince of Orange, for the Better Collecting the Public Revenue (January 2, 1689), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
61 A Declaration of His Highness the Prince of Orange, for the Authorizing of Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and Other Officers and Ministers, to Act in Their Respective Places (December 13, 1688), The British Library.
62 Claydon, 29.
occurred surrounding William and his appearance in England. Stating over and over again that the circumstances are “the Lord’s doing” Burnet points to a series of examples of how God has intervened on England’s behalf and how these instances are very clear, and begs the audience to see them and understand them properly as the work of God. Among the seemingly miraculous events mentioned by Burnet are the “Protestant Wind” which accompanied William’s landing and the “sudden and unbloody issue to which it was so unexpectedly brought.” Referring to William as “Our Great Deliverer” and “the instrument whom God has highly exalted in bringing about so great a work by his means” the cleric makes it clear that William and his actions should be appreciated. His words also subtly hint that God will continue to do wondrous things through William as time goes on. Burnet also takes the opportunity to attack the Catholic religion and ostensibly James II and his regime by referring to it as “a religion that dissolves faith and good reason and gives authority both to perfidy and cruelty.” The sermon concludes by stating that while many wondrous things have happened in the revolution, it is not yet complete and thus, because it is God’s work, “we ought not to stop the course of it till it had had its full effect” and let it “attain its full perfection.” In this way Burnet and William are almost certainly alluding to William and his interest in claiming the throne, an action which the pair hopes the people will also interpret as being part of God’s plan.

Similarly, the American revolutionaries often used religion to support their cause, frequently stating that it had been blessed with “divine favor.” Documents such as the

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63 Gilbert Burnet, *Sermon Delivered at St. James’s Before His Highness the Prince of Orange* (December 23, 1688), Harvard University Library.
Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, for instance, are full of references to “the divine Author of our existence.” Asserting the colonists’ intent to go to battle by “exerting the utmost energy of those powers which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us,” the document also includes a direct invocation to the almighty, stating that “with a humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the Universe” the colonists “most devoutly implore His divine goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict.” The Declaration of Independence contains comparable language as it refers to “The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” and inalienable rights endowed by a “Creator.” It states that the colonies are “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions” and concludes by stating that the revolutionaries have resolved themselves to independence “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.” Several other documents from the Congress contain subtle religious overtones. The Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress states that, in order to protect their “religion, laws and liberties” from being “subverted” by the actions of the English government, the representatives have met in convention and issued a definitive statement of their rights. Additionally, texts such as George Washington’s Address to the Inhabitants of Canada declare that the Americans are aided in the struggle by their belief that God has thus far “smiled upon our virtuous efforts.”65

Despite its lack of centralized control and the absence of a national church, the Continental Congress, while never able to make a concerted effort to indoctrinate the

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colonies through American churches, did attempt to use religion in other ways. For instance, Congress and its leaders attempted to take control of the observance of certain religious ceremonies. This included appointing “annually a day in the spring for fasting, humiliation, and prayer, and a day in the autumn for thanks giving.” Additionally, General Washington often attempted to manage and in some cases restrain the religious activities of his troops. For example on November 5, 1775, members of the Continental Army outside Boston engaged in a decades old tradition reserved for public expressions of anti-Catholicism: Guy Fawkes Day. This holiday involved, among other things, a public celebration where crowds would often burn an effigy of the pope. In his General Order for that day, General Washington ridiculed the holiday and its practice of burning the effigy as a “ridiculous and childish custom.” Reminding his troops of the need to obtain “the friendship and alliance of the people of Canada” the General stated that “at such a juncture, and in such circumstances, to be insulting their religion, is so monstrous, as not to be suffered or excused.”

However, most attempts to use American churches to spread revolutionary messages were done by independent parties who remained unaffiliated with the Congress or its leaders. One prominent example involves the so-called “Black Regiment” of Massachusetts. This “regiment” was in fact a group of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist preachers who were accused of espousing the principles of the revolution from their pulpits. This group was first identified by Peter Oliver, a loyalist

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66 Davidson, 355.
who chastised the clerics for taking “so active a part in the rebellion.” Oliver states that
the group would “preach up manufactures instead of the gospel” to the point where “the
people would have rather suffered their brains to be beat out of their heads, than to have
their faith in this absurdity beat out of their brains.”

Nevertheless, we must remember that whether orchestrated by Congress, its
supporters, or other unaffiliated groups, none of these efforts were as widespread or as
generally effective as the efforts of William of Orange and Gilbert Burnet.

In addition to their use of religion, both the Glorious and the American
revolutionaries frame their disputes using similar secular, political language as well. In
particular both propaganda campaigns often attack the improper legislative actions of
their opponents and call for the installation of more representative government policies
and the limitation of the excesses of monarchy.

On the eve of his invasion, William promised to ensure the assembly of “a free
and lawful Parliament...as soon as possible” and declared that he wished to impress “no
other design” upon the English people. Ostensibly shunning any interest in the crown
itself, the prince’s propaganda declares his desire to “concur in everything that may
procure the peace and happiness of the nation, which a free and lawful Parliament shall
determine.” After his landing William often reiterated these points by stating that he
hoped to “establish the religion, laws and liberties of those kingdoms upon such a sure
and lasting foundation, that it shall not be in the power of any prince for the future to

68 Adair, Douglass & John A. Schutz, eds., Peter Oliver’s Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion
(Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967), 41.
69 Ibid., 63, 106.
70 Declaration of His Highness William Henry... (October 10, 1688)
introduce popery and tyranny." Later, having pledged their support to William, the British Parliament weighed in on the issue, going so far as to restate many of the prince’s earlier statements verbatim. Praising William for his desire to “.procure a free parliament” the representatives stated their desire to obtain “such a parliament with all speed, wherein our laws, our liberties and properties may be secured.”

The Continental Congress, labeling itself a “full and free representation” of the united colonies continually stated that it had been forced to act because the rights of the colonists as English citizens were being disrespected. In a statement of those rights, the Congress often took it upon themselves to list those rights and expand on their nature. The Declaration and Resolves in particular relates “that the respective colonies are entitled to the common law of England, and more especially to the great and inestimable privilege of being tried by their peers of the vicinage, according to the course of that law.”

In addition, these statements about the nature of government and the desire for representation often included anti-monarchical language and many direct and fervent attacks on monarchs themselves. Burnet’s sermons directly attacked James II, labeling his actions as “abominations” which had burdened the English people. The Parliament likewise discredited James and his actions, in particular in their declaration issued on February 13, 1689, a document which was released under William’s supervision. The document listed over twenty grievances against the king and his advisors and stated that

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71 By His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, A Third Declaration (November 23, 1688)
72 A Declaration of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, In and About the Cities of London and Westminster, Assembled at Guildhall (December 11, 1688)
73 Gilbert Burnet, Sermon Delivered at St. James’s before His Highness the Prince of Orange (December 23, 1688).
these acts were undertaken “to subvert and extirpate the Protestant religion, and the laws
and liberties of this Kingdom.”

Similarly, Congress chose to directly attack King George and his supposed abuses
of power, labeling his recent actions “a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all
having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states.” Detailing this “long train of abuses and usurpations” and the “absolute despotism”
displayed by the king through them, the Congress listed over twenty detailed grievances
against their monarch. Based upon these abuses the Congress concluded that “a prince,
whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the
ruler of a free people.”

Despite these attacks and their indictment of the abuses of monarchy, each set of
revolutionaries initially displayed an unwillingness to directly attack the characters of the
monarchs they opposed. William at first refused to directly attack King James, a family
member and a sitting monarch (who was also the commander of a formidable army and
navy) and instead constantly laid the blame upon James’s “evil councilors” and their “ill
designs.” Parliament continued this trend, blaming not James but instead the influence
put upon him by “the pernicious counsels of persons ill affected to our nation and
religion.”

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74 The Declaration of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons Assembled at Westminster
(February 13, 1689), Harvard University Library.
75 The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), ed. Charles C. Tansill, in Documents Illustrative of the
76 A Declaration of His Highness William Henry... (October 10, 1688)
77 A Declaration of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, In and About the Cities of London and Westminster,
Assembled at Guildhall (December 11, 1688)
Congress similarly initially avoided attacking King George and instead chose to hold Parliament and “his Majesty’s ministers of state,”78 responsible. Much of the early propaganda of the American Revolution in fact went out of its way to avoid direct criticism of the sovereign. In one case, the Congress stated that “several threatening expressions against the colonies were inserted in his majesty's speech” but refused to openly blame the king for those comments.79 In fact, Congress actually went so far as to directly petition George III on two occasions, lauding him as “The King’s Most Excellent Majesty” and the “Most Gracious Sovereign,” while wishing him a “long and prosperous reign” and kindly “beseeching” him to listen to their concerns.80 These similarities, I believe, highlight the interesting parallels in the ways both groups of revolutionaries chose to shift their propaganda strategies as the circumstances of the revolutions began to change.

Both the Glorious and American revolutionaries also took great care with military matters. Directly addressing the reasons impelling them to use military force and repeatedly stating that the choice to do so was a necessary and otherwise reluctant one, both groups were anxious to appear as passive as possible in their decision to use arms to decide their conflicts.

While William’s appearance in England was made in an overtly military way, he initially stated that his invasion was being implemented on behalf of the English people and that his show of force was not meant to be used to claim the throne. Denying that his

79 The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms (July 6, 1775)
invasion intended “to conquer and enslave the nation,” William stated that “the forces we have brought along with us are utterly disproportioned to that wicked design.”81 He continued by relating that he was “confident that no person can have so hard thoughts of us”82 and that “no true Englishman and good Protestant can entertain the least suspicion of our firm resolution.”83 Later the prince attempted to make the depth of his commitment to his cause plain stating that he and his army were prepared to “spend our dearest blood and perish in an attempt than not carry on this Blessed and Glorious design.”84 He also continually attempted to announce the strength of his military position by explaining how many soldiers in James’ army had “deserted the illegal service they were engaged in and...come over to us.” Throughout all this, however, the prince was careful to espouse his hope of avoiding battle and bloodshed stating that “if it be possible [to claim victory] without the effusion of blood...we do think fit to declare...we will offer no violence to any but in our own necessary defense.”

In a similar way, the Continental Congress stated that its decision to raise an army and appoint a commander-in-chief was influenced by offense actions of the British government and its army which the Congress claimed had “butchered” innocent Americans.85 Throughout the war the delegates would maintain that they did not create the Continental Army out of an overt desire to make war and conquer territory. Instead, when faced with the option of “an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or resistance by force,” the colonists stated that they were only making the

82 Ibid.
83 By His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, A Third Declaration (November 23, 1688)
84 Ibid.
85 The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms (July 6, 1775)
most practical choice that they felt was being offered to them.\textsuperscript{86} In addition, the Congress, using strikingly similar language to that of William of Orange, stated that the colonists stood "with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves." George Washington echoed these sentiments by stating that the crisis between king and colonies had "risen to such a height that arm alone must decide it."\textsuperscript{87} However, Washington was also quick to reiterate his belief that the colonists were fighting not for glory and wealth but instead "in defense of our liberty, our property, our wives, and our children." The commander-in-chief also reiterated the Congress’ commitment to the principles of the revolution, stating, with an eerie similarity, that his troops were "prepared to preserve them or die."

Both sets of revolutionaries were also very quick to begin exercising direct authority over large groups of people despite their lack of legitimacy. For the Glorious revolutionaries, this behavior included the tactic of aiming their declarations toward the common man and looking out for the security and safety of civilians by organizing law enforcement and delegating authority in much the same way a centralized government would. While the American Revolutionaries did this to a certain extent, the lack of centralized control over the American citizens made it far more difficult for the Congress to suppress mob violence and general disorder. Nevertheless, in the end the increased authority given to the convention by its constituents lead the Congress to continue to adopt many of the functions of a national government. These included maintaining an army, appointing generals, raising money for the war effort, reserving the right to make treaties and alliances and in general ensuring that the lives and liberties of the citizens

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} George Washington, \textit{Address to the Inhabitants of Canada} (June 16, 1775)
were being upheld. Ultimately, these strategies would earn both sets of revolutionaries the support of a majority of the common population and help to solidify their revolutionary claims.

Following his invasion, and James’ exodus, William made a concerted effort to reach out to the English people in the hope of restoring order to the now chaotic cities of London and Westminster. At first William did this without any direct authority in the interest of filling the power vacuum created by James’ departure. His Third Declaration provides a good example of this as it outlines his hope that “all Lord-Lieutenants, Deputy-Lieutenants, and Justices of the Peace, Lord-Mayors, Mayors, Sheriffs, and all other magistrates and officers civil and military of all counties, cities and towns of England” would continue to do their duties and help restore order.

However, later that month Parliament chose to intervene with its own declaration. It stated that because James had “withdrawn himself” it was now up to parliament and William to restore order. To this end, the body pledged to “endeavor to preserve the peace and security of these great and populous cities of London and Westminster and parts adjacent,” and to “assist his Highness” by promoting “His Highnesses intentions for the public good.”

Armed with this new mandate William went to work releasing a slew of declarations aimed at earning the support of and ostensibly protecting the masses. These documents often directly referenced Parliament’s earlier decree by stating that representatives had “by their respective applications, desired us to take the administration of public affairs, both civil and military and the disposal of public revenue, for the preservation of the peace…and to exercise the same till the meeting of the intended
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convention." Thus with the purpose of ensuring “the happy state and peace of the kingdom” William went to work “suppressing all riots, routs, and tumultuous assemblies,” ensuring that the public revenues would once again “run in their proper channel” and no longer be “intermeddled with,” and making certain that all Catholics and repudiated Catholics were being removed from London and Westminster.

In a similar vein William also took care to ensure that his army was behaving properly and that he was doing everything in his power as a military commander to keep the peace. This included guaranteeing that no troops were “quartering in private houses” unless they had the “free and voluntary consent of the owner” and that any troops that had been incorrectly ordered to disperse were being recalled by “Colonels and Commanders in Chief of such regiments, troops and companies” and then kept “in good order and discipline.” Since these earlier disturbances were causing “the public peace [to be] very much disturbed,” the prince’s actions were met very positively by the common people who began to throw their support behind their future king.

Following suit was Burnet whose sermon on December 23, 1688 called on ordinary Englishmen to “see the folly of trusting to that religion and of imagining that any weight was to be laid on all the promises that could be made us by them.” In this way

88 A Declaration of His Highness the Prince of Orange, for the Authorizing of Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, and Other Officers and Ministers, to Act in Their Respective Places (December 13, 1688)
89 Ibid.
90 A Declaration of His Highness the Prince of Orange, for the Better Collecting the Public Revenue (January 2, 1689)
91 The Declaration of His Highness the Prince of Orange Concerning Papists Not Departing From the Cities of London and Westminster and Ten Miles Adjacent (January 14, 1689), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
92 By the Prince of Orange, a Declaration for the Better Quartering of Troops (January 8, 1689), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
93 Declaration, Whereas We Are Informed That Diverse Regiments, Troops and Companies Have Been Encouraged to Disperse Themselves (December 13, 1688), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
94 Ibid.
95 Beddard, 17-18.
the sermon not only attacked James and Catholicism together but also cautioned the English people about harboring Catholic tendencies or entertaining the thought of opposing William and his protestant faith.

However it would not be until after the meeting of the convention and its decision to appoint William and Mary as the joint sovereigns in March 1689 that the Prince of Orange would gain legal legitimacy in the minds of the English people and be able to govern beyond his original capacity as a temporary, provisional authority.

In a similar way, throughout late 1774 and into 1775 and beyond, the Continental Congress had increasingly begun exercising a form of centralized governmental control. Through documents such as *Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress* and later the *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*, both widely distributed and well received domestic propaganda, the convention began releasing formal, unified, and intercolonial statements of their rights and grievances.

The key to effectiveness of these propagandistic documents was the First Congress’ willingness to govern moderately and to attempt to take into account the interests of all of their representatives and thereby all of their constituents. This was done with respect to not only civil but also military matters. For instance, while Congress repudiated the authority of the British Parliament and stated their intention to levy their own taxes and represent themselves through their colonial assemblies and the national convention, they continued to hold out hope for reconciliation and in so doing refused to give into the demands of the more radical patriots. Thus through the use of relatively moderate and often conciliatory actions, Congress was able to increase its legitimacy in

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96 Bonwick, 91.
the minds of moderate and conservative Americans in every colony.\textsuperscript{97} One of the key
decisions in this phase of the conflict was the creation of the Continental Association, a
“non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement” among concerned
citizens, which proved Congress’ willingness to not only regulate the colonial economy
but to consider energetic yet nonviolent efforts to redress its grievances.\textsuperscript{98} Additionally,
in the interest of ensuring that the problems faced by the colonies could be adequately
dealt with beyond the end of the convention, the representatives were careful to ensure
that a second Congress would convene, picking up where the first left off. The eventual
return of all but six of the original delegates for the second session suggested an
important continuity between the two conventions which further legitimized the actions
of the representatives.\textsuperscript{99}

Yet, when that Second Congress came together to continue their work seven
months later they learned that many of their conciliatory measures had been met with
scorn by the British Government which now considered the colonies to be in a de-facto
state of rebellion. Faced with new and more serious challenges the Congress did not
reverse any of its earlier decisions or give up its authority but instead chose to adopt a
firmer stance with its opposition to the crown. This fact is evident in the increased
emphasis that the continental delegates began to place on military matters early in the
second convention; an emphasis which once again highlights the evolving nature of
Congress’ central governmental authority.

In May, the Congress directed the Provincial Congress of New York to begin the
process of defending Manhattan through the raising of a militia and the collection of

\textsuperscript{97} Marston, \textit{King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774-1776}, 99.
\textsuperscript{98} Bonwick, 91.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 96.
military supplies. The following month they agreed to assume command of the Massachusetts Army defending Boston, immediately and ostentatiously renaming it the Continental Army. To bolster this new national force, the delegates voted to raise more troops from Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia for use in the defense of New England. Additionally, the Congress authorized the use of military force to attempt to bring Canada into an alliance against Britain. And finally as the cost of these endeavors began to mount, the Congress authorized the printing of $2 million in paper money. All of these actions were announced via public declarations which reached a large percentage of the colonial population; a process which continued to cement Congress’ growing sense of authority.

Despite these changes, however, many elements of Congress’ strategy remained the same. Responding to the will of the colonial assemblies from each colony and their various constituents, the delegates still remained unwilling to give up on the chance of reconciliation and accept secession, stating that “we mean not to dissolve that union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us.” In fact the Congress insisted upon directly petitioning King George with the so-called “Olive Branch Petition,” in hope for a resolution and reunion of British and American interests. While the document may have angered many liberal members of Congress such as John Adams who believed it severely compromised the colonies’ political position, the petition once again signaled the fact that despite all of its grievances and the outbreak of open warfare in the colonies, the Congress was not prepared to act precipitously and would therefore only explore the concept of independence if the American people were supportive.

100 Ibid., 97.
101 The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms (July 6, 1775)
However, by September, George had personally dismissed the reasoning of the Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, rejected the “Olive Branch Petition,” and on August 23, had formally declared the colonies to be in a state of rebellion. Indeed, a series of royal proclamations and military actions would follow over the next six months, which would influence a majority of the colonists and their congressional representatives that independence was the only reasonable action left available for the colonies.

Public support for independence, while initially mixed continued to grow throughout late 1775 and early 1776, especially after the publishing of Thomas Paine’s monumental pamphlet Common Sense in January. Advocating independence and the ideals of English republicanism, the pamphlet is memorable for its inflammatory antimonarchical tone and the breadth of its effectiveness. Noted historian Gordon Wood has even gone so far as to label Paine’s work as “the most incendiary and popular pamphlet of the entire revolutionary era.”

Driven by the sentiments expressed by Paine and other revolutionaries, constituents “at the local level” began instructing their congressional representatives to push for a formal declaration of separation from Great Britain. The effects of this movement were first felt at the state level as various colonies began to oust their loyally appointed governors and other officials, replacing all signs of formalized British control. At the national level the issue came to a head in June in the Congress as Richard Henry Lee, following the instructions of the Virginia Convention, introduced a resolution for the

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102 Cogliano, 61.
103 Ibid.
105 Cogliano, 65-66.
united colonies to declare their separation from Britain. As Lee’s proposal was being debated by the delegates, a special committee was created with the task of creating a document that would formally proclaim the independence and explain the reasons behind it, should the resolution be adopted.

This document, the American *Declaration of Independence* written principally by Thomas Jefferson in June 1776 and adopted and issued the following month, is in many ways the culmination of the rhetoric of the initial phase of the American Revolution’s propaganda campaign. In principle it represents not only the will of the American people to obtain independence from the mother country but also their willingness to create a new government and place the Continental Congress in control of it, at least for the time being. One particular section of the declaration reinforces this fact. Having announced the reasons impelling it to separate from Great Britain and stating the basic rights and liberties of the American people, the document then states that “these United Colonies and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States...and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do.” 106 This section in effect formally states that the Continental Congress has the right to behave as a national government and in principle justifies all of its previous governmental actions.

However, despite the success of documents such as *Declaration of Independence* and Congress’ theoretical attainment of sovereignty and legitimacy, it would take the American revolutionaries many years before they would fully achieve all of their goals. The sweeping claims of the declaration could not change the fact that the Continental

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106 *The Declaration of Independence* (July 4, 1776)
Congress still did not represent a fully united country. Many loyalists refused to accept the legitimacy of the body well into the 1780's choosing to view the entire American revolutionary movement as an unjust rebellion against King George and a deliberate seizure of power. Still others remained undecided or ambivalent towards the issues. Even those patriots who strongly supported the revolutionary cause would see their faith severely tested during the next decade. Nevertheless, the monumental steps taken by the congressmen to craft an effective propaganda campaign and use it to slowly adopt the powers of a centralized government that was accepted by many throughout the colonies and beyond is extremely instructive and provides us with a great deal of valuable information with which to compare this fascinating revolution to other similar movements.

Conclusion

Before concluding I am compelled to note an important limitation of this study. This section has focused on how propaganda was used during two specific periods during these revolutions. With regard to the propaganda of the Glorious Revolution and the role played by William III and his supporters, it has roughly considered all of the propagandistic actions employed by the revolutionaries from autumn 1687 to spring 1689. For the American Revolution, the chapter has focused on all the propaganda created and distributed by George Washington and the Continental Congress from the summer of 1774 to the summer of 1776. While the discussion of these events has provided a great deal of information about the initial steps taken by revolutionaries to
attempt to legitimize themselves, it does not fully explain how the American or English revolutionaries fully attained legitimacy. The reason for this omission is twofold.

First, it is often difficult to determine when a revolution is complete and when "legitimacy" has been achieved. Though revolutionaries may declare their movements to be a success and may physically control the territory which they wish to govern, they may still face great resistance from inside and outside their borders. While William III may have been crowned king in April 1689, he still faced opposition from the inhabitants of Scotland and Ireland, many of whom considered the deposed James to be their rightful sovereign. Similarly, while the Continental Congress may have declared its independence from Great Britain in the summer of 1776, the English government would not recognize this independence until the Treaty of Paris in September 1783. Thus, at the very best, the coronation of King William III and Queen Mary II and the Declaration of American Independence represent only the theoretical attainment of actual political legitimacy. And while this legitimacy is indeed important when considered as part of the larger histories of both countries, its nature is limited and open to dispute.

Second, as I have stated before, because of the narrow scope of this modest essay it is far too ambitious and indeed unnecessary to attempt a complete discussion of the propaganda of both the Glorious and American Revolutions. Instead, for the purposes of my focused topic, I believe a discussion of the initial phases of each revolution's propaganda war is far more practical and indeed quite instructive. For while both sets of revolutionaries did employ various intricate and constantly shifting propagandistic strategies over the course of their struggle, many of their fundamental early methods would continue throughout the conflict and would also greatly influence their later
efforts. Thus, I believe this study of the key figures of the early moments of each revolution and their basic propagandistic strategies has revealed a great deal about the general nature of their larger propaganda campaigns.

As this section has shown, propaganda did indeed figure heavily in both the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution as both of our groups of revolutionaries, despite various innate differences, used an assortment of sometimes strikingly similar means to successfully disseminate their revolutionary messages, resulting in the eventual legitimization of their revolutionary governments.

Perhaps the biggest differences between these revolutions are exposed when one attempts to compare the initial goals of the revolutionaries and their initial reasons for undertaking their revolts. The Glorious Revolution, from its inception, was always designed to be secured through military force. Its goal was to capture control of England, its territory and its government. The American Revolution, on the other hand, was undertaken with a certain degree of reluctance as a result of several failed attempts at reconciliation between the English government and its colonies. Military conflict was for a long period of time explicitly avoided while peaceful measures were employed to attempt to end the dispute.

Other disparities can be found when one examines the authority structures of the revolutions and their propaganda campaigns. The Glorious Revolution was William of Orange’s revolution and it is a movement for which he undoubtedly, willingly, and candidly used propaganda. The American Revolution, conversely, was a far more decentralized affair and as a result General George Washington’s role in its propaganda was far different. Washington, unlike William, did not openly seek advancement as a
leader of his revolution and was comparatively less involved in the development and the spread of its propaganda.

Yet, despite these contrasts, both leaders did at the very least attempt to deceive those around them and knowingly supported their movements’ propaganda campaigns. In so doing both served important and strikingly similar roles as propaganda symbols and symbolic figureheads of their revolts. In addition, to these similarities the larger bodies of government, which not only supported each leader but also crafted and distributed a great deal of the revolutionary propaganda themselves, acted in strikingly similar ways. Both the British Parliament and the American Continental Congress, in conjunction with Washington and William, had a huge hand in the spread of revolutionary propaganda through official declarations (many of which were printed as newspaper articles), pamphlets, letters, speeches and petitions.

Eventually this propaganda enabled Washington, William, the Congress and the Parliament to take on the roles normally reserved for a legal government, despite the fact that these revolutionaries in many ways lacked full legal legitimacy. This process increased their ability to validate themselves in the eyes of their people and ultimately enabled them to wield more authority in their revolutions.

Despite all these parallels, further differences can also be pulled from our study. For instance, William, with the help of dedicated allies such as Gilbert Burnet, used the pulpit of the Anglican Church to further extend his message and frame the conflict in religious terms. This explicitly religious element of the Glorious Revolution is absent from the American Revolution and while the American revolutionaries did indeed successfully use religious language as part of their propaganda and frequently espoused
the belief that God was on their side, they did not make a concerted national effort to
spread this message using American churches. While this dissimilarity may complicate a
comparison of these movements I believe in general it simply reinforces the fact that at
its core the Glorious Revolution was a far more religious conflict than the American
Revolution. Furthermore, I believe these points suggest that the American conflict was
motivated far more by political and philosophical issues rather than religious ones. In the
end, I do not believe these conclusions are surprising given the fact that if one examines
the initial goals and the rationale of these revolutionaries, William of Orange and his
supporters consistently saw their revolution as a religiously motivated one, while the
Continental Congress and George Washington always saw theirs as being far more
political and ideological.

Considering the questions posed at the very beginning of this study, I believe this
thesis has provided important information with regards to how propaganda is used in
revolution and how legitimacy is attained. In general my paper suggests that the forms of
propaganda which use religion, while also appealing to political and ideological
principles have the best chance of success. This appears to be true even in very different
types of revolutions which may be fought for religious or political reasons. While some
may have a problem labeling all of the tactics I have discussed in this essay as
“propaganda” I believe that we should adopt a more fluid understanding of the term so
that readers are not immediately overwhelmed by its use and do not immediately equate
the works of Stalin with those of someone like Washington. In the end I think we should
become more comfortable with the concept of propaganda and accept its prevalence and
its power, especially in our own time. Finally, I believe that while we may never know
why some revolutions succeed and others do not, I believe we can all agree that a carefully orchestrated, well crafted, and diverse propaganda campaign is essential for any group of revolutionaries no matter when they fight or the purpose of their movement.
IV. Epilogue: Propaganda and the Memory of Revolution

Celebrated eighteenth-century English politician and philosopher Henry St John, the 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, once said that “history is philosophy teaching by examples.” This sentiment remains important even to today’s historians who strive to have their works be instructive, inspirational, and yet free from any damaging bias or subjectivity. Even today, however, as Jack Rakove has stated, “the ideal of ‘unbiased’ history remains an elusive goal.” This problem of objectivity has long plagued even the most evenhanded of scholars. Despite the utmost attention to detail and attempts at impartiality, all historians interject their own beliefs and personal preconceptions into every project they undertake. I have always been intrigued by the nature of this problem and its connections to our accounts of various revolutions and revolutionary propaganda.

After all, the historians of Lord Bolingbroke’s era were much less concerned with objectivity. Older histories were written in order to advance beliefs which the historian, or others with influence around them, believed were most important. Bias was accepted and even encouraged, especially with regards to the history’s more significant figures. William Gordon, a noted eighteenth-century American historian, believed that it was his responsibility to “oblige all, who have performed any distinguished part on the theatre of the world, to appear before us in their proper character; and to render an account at the tribunal of posterity, as models which ought to be followed or as examples to be censured.

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107 Issac Kramnick, ed., Lord Bolingbroke: Historical Writings, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), xvi; this quotation is also attributed to Thucydides in his The History of the Peloponnesian War in various sources.
or avoided."\(^{109}\) It is no surprise therefore that the histories of the famous leaders of the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution were stunted according to the interests of the historians of their time. In fact, even one hundred or two hundred years after the events which made them famous, an objective account of King William and George Washington was still not even being attempted.

While most descriptions of the Prince of Orange’s landing at Torbay attest to the grand scale of the enterprise and the general importance of the event, perhaps no account captures the scene with as much vivid imagery, beautiful prose, and unabashed partisanship as Thomas Babington Macaulay’s massive, multi-volume *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, originally published in 1840. The author relates the story of the landing with a truly dramatic flair. After a dreary mist had initially prevented the fleet from coming ashore, Macaulay states that suddenly “a soft breeze sprang up from the south,” allowing the sun to break through and light the way for the prince’s arrival.\(^{110}\) Coming ashore uncontested William and his entourage immediately mounted their horses and began to review the countryside. Nearby, peasants were said to marvel at the sight and immediately flocked to the prince’s banner since all “held Popery in detestation.”\(^{111}\) The prince himself was said to be in high spirits and extremely hopeful for the rest of the expedition. Marching through the nearby town of Exeter four days later he was met by a huge crowd of supporters who, having never seen a sight such as this before, came “half a day’s journey to meet the champion of their religion.”\(^{112}\)


\(^{111}\) Ibid., 445.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 449.
with "delight and awe," spectators crowded into every door, window balcony and roof and "gaily decorated" their houses.\textsuperscript{113} On the prince's banners, according to Macaulay, the words "The Liberties of England and the Protestant religion I will maintain," were prominently printed.\textsuperscript{114}

Considering the good fortune with which they had proceeded on their journey many members of the expedition were thoroughly convinced that "the ordinary laws of nature" had been "suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England."\textsuperscript{115} The weather had cooperated at every turn, helping the Dutch fleet reach the shore while frustrating the pursuit of the prince's enemies. This reminded many of the men of the destruction of the Spanish Armada a hundred years before. In addition, the fact that the landing had taken place on the anniversary of the failure of "the blackest plot ever devised by papists," The Gunpowder Plot, only added to the increased feeling of confidence among the troops.\textsuperscript{116} Throughout the ranks there was an understanding that what was transpiring was a special event that would usher in a new period of greatness for the English nation.

Only a few years later a no more objective account of General George Washington's arrival in Cambridge, Massachusetts would be presented by one of America's first great authors and historians: Washington Irving. In his \textit{The Life of George Washington}, originally published in 1855, Irving paints his subject's life in vivid detail. According to the writer, the General's procession into the town was full of pomp and circumstance. "As he entered the camp," states the author "the shouts of the multitude

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 450.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.; 450-451.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 448.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
and the thundering of the artillery gave note to the enemy beleaguered in Boston of his arrival."\textsuperscript{117} The General’s appearance was “calculated to captivate the public eye,” and he was “the admiration of the soldiery and of a throng collected from the surrounding countryside.”\textsuperscript{118} In the midst of all of this revelry Washington, it is said, remained “modest at all times.”\textsuperscript{119} “The honors with which he was received, the acclamations of the public, the cheerings of the army, only told him how much was expected of him.”\textsuperscript{120}

The following morning Washington took formal command of the army and began by reviewing his troops and their lines on horseback, slowly beginning the task of turning his inexperienced yet faithful army into a capable fighting force. When faced with such a challenge the General is said to have acted with “that solemn resolution and that hopeful reliance on Supreme Goodness which belonged to his magnanimous nature.”\textsuperscript{121} Other subsequent accounts and works of art continue to embellish the scene, picturing Washington saluting his troops on horseback before taking cover under an elm tree. The tree for years afterwards would affectionately be known as the “Washington Elm” and would be marked by a plaque which can still be found there today.

The rampant inaccuracies of both accounts expose not only the bias of the histories of the past and the general challenge to the historian but also the enduring power of the propaganda of revolution. In reality, Washington’s entrance into Cambridge was anything but a glorious scene.\textsuperscript{122} The general and his entourage arrived in the town on a wet and dreary afternoon. There were no crowds of soldiers there to greet the group, no

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
shouts of joy, and no cannons firing. In fact the only individuals actually there to witness his entrance were some idlers wandering through the town, most likely from the nearby college of Harvard. While a contingent of troops had initially planned on greeting Washington, the time of his arrival was not definitively known and thus when the men assembled a day earlier and were frustrated to find that the General had not yet arrived, they did not return the next day for fear of a similar disappointment. When they did finally meet their new commander many of the troops were apparently unimpressed with him.

Similarly, William’s landing and the beginning of his march, while it must have been an impressive scene, could not have been as momentous an occasion as the description given by Macaulay would have us believe. As later historians are quick to point out, such fanciful accounts are careful to leave out “the drizzling, chilly rain, the mud, the steep hills, and the narrow, rocky roads that were little better than footpaths; or the grim undercurrent of fear that gripped a people caught between a powerful invading army and the orders of their King that any communication or commerce with it were treason or death.”

While Washington and William may very well appear before us here in their “proper” character, serving as models for countless others to emulate, as our study has shown, their true nature was far more complicated and decidedly not as “glorious” as they would have us see. Thus, I believe we must never forget that history itself has served

123 Freeman, 477.
124 Ibid.
as a form of propaganda, with historians picking up where the revolutionary propagandists left off.

If one desires further proof of this they need only consider the ideological origins of the American Revolution and its links to the popular Whig interpretation of the Glorious Revolution. Thanks to the efforts of historians such as Macaulay the Glorious Revolution, and in particular the English Bill of Rights of 1689, was viewed as “a formative stage in the development of liberal democracy.”127 By linking the revolution with the works of John Locke and in particular his *Two Treatises of Government* which was first published in the aftermath of the movement, historians credited King William III and his Parliament for having “nurtured the growth of freedom and liberty among the English people.”128 In reality, however, Locke’s work was not a product of the revolution and exerted little to no influence over it, a fact which is not too surprising when one considers the reasons for William’s invasion of England and his rationale for claiming the throne. In fact, William himself, following the issuance of the *Declaration of Rights* denied any formal connection between his acceptance of the throne and his acceptance of the terms of the bill.129

Nevertheless, despite these false links, the American revolutionary generation looked to the Bill of Rights of 1689 and indeed the Glorious Revolution itself as a formative event and adapted its language for their fight against King George. George Mason’s *Virginia Declaration of Rights* lifts entire sections out of the English Bill of Rights.

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127 Hoak, 2.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 5.
Rights while elements the American Constitution of 1789 can also be said to resemble the 1689 document.\textsuperscript{130}  

All of these facts I believe only reinforce the power of the propaganda of the Glorious Revolution and American Revolution, propaganda which this thesis has attempted to compare and discuss in detail. No matter the academic application of this modest essay I nevertheless believe the information presented in it demonstrates the power of revolutionary persuasion. These revolutionaries not only influenced their own populations and used their arguments to attain legitimacy for their governments, they influenced countless generations after them and no doubt created arguments that allowed future revolutionaries to successfully revolt. If we take one thing away from this study, it should be that the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution were successful because of their propaganda; propaganda which had a profound effect upon subsequent revolutions and continues to have an enormous effect on us even today.

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