Rewriting the Revolution: Propaganda, Diplomacy, and the French-language Press during the American Revolutionary War, 1775-1783.

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Abstract

This thesis analyses how the French government and American diplomats utilised and subsequently shaped the French-language press due to their influence and propaganda efforts during the American Revolutionary War. The role of the press in the Ancien Régime can reveal developing political, social, and diplomatic cultures. The rigid censorship policy of the French monarchy places the newspapers in a middle ground between the government and the literate portion of the population. There were competing notions amongst the most popular European publications as to what constituted news and how it should be communicated, thus the coverage of the American Revolutionary War varied across geographical and temporal boundaries. This thesis seeks to assess the social and political upheaval that was the American Revolution in 1775, and its impact on France, through the lens of governmental control of newspapers. France's role in the American Revolution has been well documented, as the monarchy utilised this opportunity to gain prestige and damage Britain's standing as a global power. France officially sent military and financial aid to the rebels from 1778, and many French soldiers such as the Marquis de Lafayette became heroes who fought alongside their American counterparts to overthrow the control of King George III in the colonies. However, getting France to agree to this was difficult. It was therefore necessary for the Americans to send diplomats to Versailles to vouch for their cause and elicit support. Thus ensued a major propaganda campaign which would entangle both state and non-state actors, and would have significant implications for the development of press culture in France.

France heavily censored newspapers and imposed strict regulations on the influx of foreign information from countries with a freer press environment, such as the Netherlands. In Britain, the licensing act lapsed in 1695, and provincial and national newspapers consequently multiplied in number and prospered. After the British government allowed the

publication of parliamentary reports in 1772, French-language newspapers were able to reprint them, leading to increased scrutiny on their response to events in the colonies. This meant that readers of foreign French-language newspapers illegally circulating in France at the time were being exposed to alternative sources of news. The national newspapers largely reflected and upheld elite values that were ingrained into French society at the time, and left little room for debate or opposition. However, this was radically altered by the presence of the American diplomats in Paris. Leading figures, such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, were greatly admired by the French public, and they utilised this wave of popularity to bolster their political agenda. This agenda had undoubtedly been influenced by French Enlightenment thought - particularly regarding the individual rights of man, political representation, and freedom of speech and the press. This thesis explores how this philosophical and political transfer influenced the French government's approach to the medium of the press. It identifies four main newspapers as indicators of how the war was impacting the way in which the government wanted to portray itself on the diplomatic stage.

The American Revolution showed the world how it was possible to uproot a system of political injustice and to justify it using fundamental ideas of democracy. The use of the French-language press by the Americans and the French government to further their interests, therefore, exposed a reading audience to political ideas that might have otherwise been suppressed. It is in this context that the newspapers take on significance. The attempted control of the content of these papers through the manipulation of texts, propaganda and the production of war narrative that favoured French and American interests shaped how French readers came to view the conduct of their government in a way not previously seen. Furthermore, the personal relationships formed between government figures, American political leaders and philosophers, and the editors of highly influential and widely-read

papers sheds light on the deep entanglement of the press with politics. While the limitations of readership in Ancien Régime France are taken into account, this thesis argues that the French involvement in the American Revolutionary War shaped French government relations with the press, and contributed to a shaping of its diplomatic engagements with America both during and after the war.

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Introduction

At the onset of the American Revolutionary War in the early 1770s, France was experiencing significant political change as the regime of King Louis XV gave way to that of King Louis XVI. The war across the Atlantic represented an opportunity for the new king to avenge for losses at the hands of Britain in the Seven Years' War, and to take advantage of the economic prosperity of the colonies. France's entry into the war in 1778 on the side of the American rebels transformed the military and diplomatic relations of all three actors. Against this backdrop existed the evolving French-language press in Europe. Press and politics had become increasingly intersected during the eighteenth century as print technology advanced and media communication expanded. However, the royal licensing policies imposed by the French government greatly hindered the development of the country's press culture. While the growth of the political press in France was relatively stunted compared to the freer environments of other European countries, the impact of new political ideas was felt at the crossroads between the political press and the people. Catherine Behrens aptly presents the Enlightenment as a potent solvent of the old order, one which 'provided all the discontented with principles by which to justify their discontents'.[1]

Ever since the 17th century, the goal of domestically produced, government-monitored newspapers was to project and protect the image of the absolutist regime, to quell any overtly seditious material, and disseminate the cultural values of the elite. This was aided by the royal censors under the Ancien Régime, who were responsible for judging, legitimising and approving works in the pre-publication phase. While the surface agenda of the monarchy was to impose strict regulations on the literary and press markets, political reality created

[1] C.B.A. Behrens, *The Ancien Régime* (London, 1967), p. 124.

ambiguities in the production and communication of news. The contribution of American diplomats - inspired by French Enlightenment ideals - such as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, to French-language publications in Europe invites further examination of the extent to which the French government could control their influence. Their popularity, as well as the attention paid to their work by French ministers and *philosophes*, reflects the developing entanglement of French and American political thought and its effect on international relations.

This thesis argues that key figures in the French government became increasingly aware of the power of the press and simultaneously joined American propaganda efforts of the Americans in order to further French interests and garner support for French involvement in the war by justifying it. The government realised the importance of controlling its image in both the domestic and the foreign French-language press in order to prevent backlash against its sending of financial aid to the rebels. This was achieved in a number of ways, including through the subtle manipulation of influential political texts, the shaping of the war narrative to evoke anti-British sentiment, the highlighting of key victories by the rebels, and by generally supporting the American cause. Certain ministers, including Jacques Necker, Jacques Turgot, the Comte de Vergennes, and Chrétien Guillaume de Malesherbes were highly influential in steering the French internal and foreign policy through the war. These individuals were reform-oriented, and their actions and attitudes towards the Revolution reveal how this period of the regime was distinctive in its progressive approach to informing the reading public of government affairs.

The core part of the research will be based primarily on newspapers circulating in France from the onset of the American Revolutionary War in 1775: the *Gazette de France,* the

Courrier d'Avignon, Les Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique, and the *Gazette de Leyde*. These newspapers have been selected due to their geographical context, their readership, the extent of French government interference in their production, and how they framed the American war. These publications fall across a spectrum that reflects the extent to which they were controlled or influenced by the French government. While estimates for readership of the papers vary and the reception of news is beyond the scope of this thesis, mapping the differences in their coverage of the war sheds light on what the French government intended to achieve through their influence on the press.

The history of news publications in France can be traced back to Théophraste Renaudot's establishment of the *Gazette de France* in 1631, which gained exclusive royal privilege to publish.[2] Initially, the *Gazette* consisted of short, comprehensive news accounts. Renaudot obtained the information from a correspondent, Louis Epstin, who had contacts in German and Dutch cities.[3] Cardinal Richelieu, who oversaw the development of the paper, had a direct input into what was covered and contributed information that was often unconfirmed. Renaudot defended this approach by claiming that a more immediate delivery of information was more important than ensuring its accuracy, 'I would rather give her to you less beautiful, but younger, than more accomplished, but too old'.[4] Renaudot's *Gazette* eventually gained a national monopoly of political news in France through the strategic efforts of Richelieu, who utilised the paper for government propaganda.[5] This set a precedent for how the government

[2] H.M. Solomon, *Public Welfare, Science and Propaganda in 17th-Century France : The Innovations of Theophraste Renaudot* (Princeton, 1972), p. 114.
[3] Solomon, *Public Welfare,* p. 113.
[4] G. Feyel, 'Renaudot et sa pratique du journalisme: La Gazette en 1640' in: Imbert, J. (ed.) *Theophraste Renaudot: l'homme, le médecin, le journaliste, 1586-1986,* Institut Français de Presse et des sciences d'information (Paris, 1986), p. 69. '[...] j'ay mieux aimé vous la donner moins belle, mais plus jeune, que plus accomplies, mais trop vieilles'. Renaudot refers to the news as 'her'.
[5] P. Georgakakis, 'Delivering the News from Abroad: French-Language Gazettes Published in the Dutch Republic During the Second Half of the 17th Century', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 89. No. 4 (2020), p. 659. See also J.D. Popkin, 'The Provincial Newspaper Press and Revolutionary Politics', *French Historical Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1993), p. 437.

viewed the position of the press in French society: a controllable mechanism with which to funnel its agenda.

By looking at other French-language newspapers circulating at the time, a more informed conclusion can be drawn in regard to the diverging content that French readers were being exposed to. Contrasting with the highly controlled *La Gazette,* the *Courrier historique, politique, litteraire, galant et moral,* or more commonly known as the *Courrier d'Avignon* (henceforth *Courrier*) was a curiously positioned news publication in the papal enclave of Avignon, in southeastern France. It began publication in 1733 and ceased in 1793.[6] The journal was beyond the jurisdiction of France's strict censorship laws, but continued to be under the control of the pontificate authorities. This thesis will explore how diverging coverage of the war in the *Courrier* represented the limitations of French government control on the circulation of national policy interests in French-language publications in demand by French readers.

The *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique* was a publication solely devoted to coverage of the American Revolutionary War and the British political response. It ran for three years from 1776 to 1779, under the editorial control of Edmé-Jacques Genêt and supported by the French government through Vergennes himself. The *Affaires* was the most radical of all the publications that are discussed in this thesis, as it published all of the fundamental documents that marked the beginning of American democracy, such as the Declaration of Independence, and multiple state constitutions including those of Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and Philadelphia. Not only were the actions and the battles between Britain and the colonists conveyed, but the ideological material that underpinned the cause were also translated to

[6] E. Hatin, *Bibliographie historique et critique de la presse périodique française* (Paris, 1866), p. 306.

readers captivated by the rebellion. The *Affaires* allowed key political material emanating from the revolution to have preeminence in the European press environment. However, texts were altered to further France's interests, in order to show its support of the colonists, but to also keep checks on unrestrained discourse. Thus, the inclusion, omission, and framing of events in the war that reflected the abilities of the French monarchy in the press form the basis for understanding the government's awareness of the power of the press.

Perhaps the most influential of the foreign French-language publications was the *Gazette de Leyde.* Founded in 1677, it published bi-weekly on predominantly military news.[7] It eventually came under the control of Jean Luzac in 1772, a prominent figure in the European press scene who oversaw the coverage of French and American news during the war. The Netherlands, then the United Provinces, enjoyed a relatively free press environment in the eighteenth century. A range of successful French language newspapers emerged here, including the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* and the *Gazette de Rotterdam.* Many of the editors were Huguenots, who had fled France to seek refuge in Holland following Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.[8] Thus, their knowledge of the language allowed for the gazettes to flourish, and copies sent to subscribers have been traced far beyond Dutch borders; across the Atlantic to America and eastwards towards Asia and the Middle East.[9] Luzac initially framed the war in a primarily militaristic dimension but was later influenced by its ideological nature.[10] The geographical proximity of the paper had implications for French readers accessing external streams of information, and the involvement of Dutch gazette editors with government ministers blurred the lines of a strict and uniform government policy on the press.

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[7] Georgakakis, 'Delivering the News from Abroad', p. 662.
[8] Georgakakis, 'Delivering the News from Abroad', p. 657.
[9] J.D. Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution: Jean Luzac's "Gazette de Leyde"* (New York, 2015), p. 120.
[10] Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution*, p. 151.

In addition to this, this thesis will make use of correspondence between the American diplomats and the French government, as well as selected texts from personal writings and political works of individuals directly involved in the press and the government at the time will be utilised throughout. These diverse range sources contribute to the highlighting of individual agency and perspective in this argument, as the actions of some of the central figures looked at in this thesis played a pivotal role in defining the scope of political discourse as they reacted to the war. Another aspect this thesis will survey is the influence of the royal censors in maintaining the authority of the monarchy throughout these years, and how their personal beliefs influenced the legitimacy of the office they held. The memoirs of Chrétien Guillaume-Lamoignon de Malesherbes, published posthumously in 1808, convey his personal disagreements with the office he was charged with executing. While Malesherbes, on the surface, maintained the agenda of royal censorship, he corresponded with many prominent thinkers of the time, while simultaneously engaging in an institution that altered their works. Therefore, these sources illustrate the ways in which government censorship was perceived by those directly affected by it. The personal opinions of those in control of the press, during and after the war, affected how the government determined the limits of the press.

The traditional view of the press in France in secondary literature was that before the French Revolution, censorship rendered the French press politically insignificant. Since the 1980s, historians have incorporated the socio-political force of the press as it relates to the communication of events to the reading public in the Ancien Régime. Looking at public forms of communication can elucidate the origin, continuities, and decline of key political

and social debates, which is imperative in the understanding of the ideological causes of the French Revolution.

Scholarly debates regarding the press in the later decades of the eighteenth century have provided somewhat opposing perspectives on the role of the press in accelerating the demise of the Ancien Régime. In his 1982 book *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*, Robert Darnton highlighted the importance of studying the Enlightenment and the reading public in France from below to see how new political ideas filtered through society.[11] Following this, Keith Michael Baker, in his 1990 book *Inventing the French Revolution*, argued that the press constituted the medium of the political space.[12] However, royal authorities unknowingly conspired with opposition to transfer ultimate authority from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public[13]. Then in 1996, Bob Harris maintained the view that French press culture was far less participatory than that of Britain,[14] but argued that significant changes took place in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This angle has demonstrated how the role of royal censors and their accommodations towards French Enlightenment thought, in addition to the presence of foreign gazettes within the French borders, created an ambiguous policy that undermined royal authority. This thesis shows that these variances can be more fully defined by looking at coverage of the American Revolution. Gilles Feyel in his formative work *L'Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse d'information en France sous l'ancien régime*, contended that had the French government ceded to some of the public demands for discussion of societal affairs, it may have been able to stave off the interest in foreign news information. This thesis aims to build on this angle

[11] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime,* (Harvard, Harvard University Press: 1982), p. 1.
[12] Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2012), p. 172.
[13] Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution,* p. 172.
[14] Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France 1620-1800,* (London, Routledge: 1996), p. 102.

through exploring the political potency of Enlightenment ideas, and the extent of social and political influence of the American diplomats in the French-language press environment. It addresses the agency of particular individuals during a time of crisis that changed the press environment and how this subsequently altered government-press relations. The existing scholarship focuses primarily on larger socio-economic trends that contributed to the general growth of the press and of readership during the revolutionary era. The personal attitudes, opinions and actions of government officials and publication editors of the French-language press in Europe will be incorporated into this research. It traces how these factors shaped coverage of the war and bolstered French internal and external interests. Consequently, it explores how these changes shaped Franco-American diplomatic relations in addition to the French government's altered attitude towards foreign press editors who had become perhaps too involved in producing a narrative of French internal affairs.

The three chapters in this thesis examine three stages of the American Revolutionary War, and ascertain the extent to which changes in French diplomacy and how understandings of the social order were potentially influenced through the press. This thesis takes a qualitative approach to social and political history, with supplementary quantitative analysis to support the core analysis of newspapers. The first chapter situates the press in French society in the Ancien Régime, and how the lack of accessibility to the news and the rigid press culture reflected the government's approach to transparency. It will also look at how the outbreak of war shaped early French relations with American diplomats as well as the impact on circulation and subscription trends to illustrate increased participation of French readers with both state and foreign media. The second chapter constitutes a textual analysis of the coverage of the American Revolution, and how the narrative of French involvement in the war was carefully curated to bolster both domestic and foreign interests of the government.

The final chapter concludes with an examination of key actors in both the French government and French-language press scene, and how their individual agency shaped the foundations of Franco-American relations.

Chapter I: The American Revolution Comes to Paris

The onset of the American Revolutionary War was a watershed in Franco-American relations, and had significant repercussions on the French press environment and the monarchy's image from the early 1770s. The war arrived during major political change in France, with Louis XVI ascending the throne in May 1774, just eleven months before the first official military battles between the Patriots and the British Army at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. France's engagement with the American rebels and the decisions that led up to its entry into the war were shrouded in secrecy, as the rebellion would implicate France in a war against its enemy, Great Britain. France's alliance with the rebels affected both its domestic affairs and foreign relations, and these changes can be viewed through the perspective of the French-language press environment. The restrictions placed on the press within France created a selective audience for domestic and global news, and therefore was an effective tool for the monarchy to protect its image. Additionally, this chapter will focus on the initial contact made between France and the American rebels, and how this began to shape a new approach to the press by the French government. It will look at the individuals involved in persuading France to join the cause, and how their popularity and scrutiny in the press reflected an increased interest of the public in foreign events. Additionally, the restrictions on the press at the onset of the war are explored to ascertain how the role of the press in society was conceptualised in the final decades of the Ancien Régime This allows for a greater contrast between how the dynamic between the government, the press, and its readers was impacted by the emergence of war. The political newspaper, the primary form of publication

that this thesis will assess, permeates through these social forces and thus acts as a window into both government attitudes and the curation of the public mind.

France at the beginning of the 1770s faced fundamental challenges to the existing social, political and military order. The aristocracy extolled virtues that had existed since the Middle Ages - a sense of devotion to the divine authority of the monarch, in addition to a deep pride in military victory that formed the basis for French prestige on the global stage.[15] In a country with a population of 26 million by the end of the eighteenth century, the management of finances and the protection of agriculture to avoid starvation became central concerns for the government. However, poor harvests in the 1770s and 1780s revealed the economic inequalities and the outdated methods of agricultural production.[16] The continued tax burden on the poor further exacerbated grievances. It was against this backdrop that the French government deemed it advantageous to involve itself in a costly war.

As the relationship between Britain and its subjects in North America began to deteriorate rapidly in the early 1770s, the colonists understood the necessity of obtaining foreign aid in order to achieve independence. The naval superiority that consolidated Britain as a major geopolitical power in the Atlantic made this however a difficult task. The Continental Congress sought French assistance in the form of supplying much needed munitions. The delivery of this aid was kept secret during the early years of the war. Obtaining foreign aid for the rebellion was widely criticised in the American colonies, and France was continuing to maintain neutrality until it became advantageous for it to justify an open war with Britain.[17] Therefore, a secret American committee for foreign affairs was assembled in 1775 with the aim of persuading France to aid the rebels through diplomatic means. The onset of the war

[15] Behrens, *The Ancien Régime,* p. 119.
[16] J.H. Shennan, *France Before the Revolution* (London, 1983), p. 15.
[17] R.H. Ferrell, *Foundations of American Diplomacy, 1775-1872* (New York, 1968), p. 21.

just one year after the king came to the throne revealed the unpreparedness of the monarchy to deal with the ideological fallout of the new relationship between the two countries.

The committee, originally made up of Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Johnson, John Dickinson, and John Jay, negotiated arms deals, distributed supplies, and coordinated transatlantic military and diplomatic intelligence. While they made efforts to elicit aid from other European powers such as Holland and the Holy Roman Empire, they knew that France's naval aid was of the utmost importance. In March 1776, the diplomat Silas Deane received a letter from the committee instructing him to travel to France and assume a false identity, 'This will give good countenance to your appearing in the character of a merchant, which we wish you continually to retain among the French in general, it being probable that the court of France may not like it should be known publicly that any agent from the Colonies is in that country'.[18] Following this, Deane set up a meeting with the minister for foreign affairs Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes. This correspondence demonstrates what the Americans sought to achieve with France in the initial stages of the war, '[...] acquainting him that you are in France upon business of the American Congress, in the character of a merchant, having something to communicate to him that may be mutually beneficial to France and the North American Colonies'.[19] Deane was therefore reminded to inform Vergennes of the financial and commercial benefits that would result from French aid, especially to the detriment of Britain: 'That it is likely great part of our commerce will naturally fall to the share of France, especially if she favors us in this application, as that will be a means of gaining and securing the friendship of the Colonies; and that as our trade was rapidly increasing with our increase of people, and, in a greater proportion, her part of it will

[18] B. Franklin et al., Committee of secret correspondence to Silas Deane, 3 March 1776, in F Wharton ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States* (Washington, 1889), p. 78.
[19] Benjamin Franklin (1776), Committee of secret correspondence to Silas Deane, p. 78.

be extremely valuable'.[20] France was determined to restore its prestige on the world stage following the devastating losses it suffered during the Seven Years' War. France had ceded to England its vast North American territory which stretched from Canada to Louisiana on the Mexican Gulf coast and emerged from the conflict with huge debt, resulting in humiliation for the monarchy.[21] Thus, the potential for revenge was attractive, but all aspects of involvement had to be considered before entering into a costly war. This hesitancy characterised the early reaction of the monarchy to the war.

France was presented with the option to support the rebel cause, the success of which would result in a major geopolitical and financial loss for its rival Britain. However, the rebels were aware that no European power would interfere in Britain's colonial affairs without just cause. Additionally, the French government needed to justify the expenditure on the war, and the rebels needed French naval and financial support in order to achieve independence, and thus a complex set of interests were aligned. France was reluctant to enter into war because the navy was insufficiently prepared, and Vergennes wished to restrain expenditure by maintaining a non-interventionist approach to the war and avoiding unnecessary conflict with Britain.[22] Vergennes was also determined to convince Spain to enter the war on the side of the Americans to distribute responsibilities. The issuing of the Declaration of Independence six months earlier on July 4 1776, however, made the French more amenable to the rebels' appeals since their position against Britain was solidified. The personal relationships that developed between the Americans in Europe and the French cannot be overlooked as a source of effective persuasion. Pierre de Beaumarchais, an influential figure in French court life, met the American diplomat Arthur Lee in London, and together they lobbied the French

[20] Franklin (1776), Committee of secret correspondence to Silas Deane, p. 79.
[21] C.H. van Tyne, 'French Aid Before the Alliance of 1778', *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 31, No. 1 (1925), p. 21.
[22] J.R. Dull, The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774-1787 (Princeton, 1976), p. 33.

government either to provide aid or to be prepared for the reconciliation of Britain and its colonies and a subsequent attack on France. This daring manoeuvre spurred other ministers into action, and eventually Beaumarchais received a sum of money to establish the false merchant company Hortalez and Company in Paris to supply arms to the revolutionaries.[23] In late December 1776, Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris along with Charles Lee and joined Silas Deane to continue their secret mission of persuading the French court to support them. The reception of the rebels in the court of Versailles was communicated by Benjamin Franklin in Paris in a letter to the rest of the secret committee:

> We have had an audience of the Minister, Count de Vergennes, and were respectfully receive*d*. We left for his consideration a sketch of the propose*d* Treaty. [...] By his advice we had an interview with the Spanish Ambassador, Count d'Aranda, who seems well dispose*d* towards us [...] The Cry of this nation is for us; but the court it is thought views an approaching war with reluctance.[24]

Benjamin Franklin spearheaded propaganda efforts in France, and made connections with sympathisers to spread awareness of the cause for American independence. He became somewhat of a celebrity on the continent and presented himself as a humble 'rustic sage'[25]; personifying the radical political ideas of the new world that contrasted with the archaic institutions of the old. This social status, coupled with Franklin's abilities as a writer and political philosopher, put him in a convenient position to involve himself in the European press. The press, therefore, represented a social channel through which the supporters of the American cause could convey pro-American sentiment and anti-British attitudes. It was against the backdrop of the American Revolution that the political press within France, and French language publications in neighbouring countries, became the key means of generating

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[23] C.H. van Tyne, 'French Aid Before the Alliance of 1778', *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 31, No. 1 (1925), p. 40.
[24] Benjamin Franklin to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 4 January 1777, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, W.B. Willcox ed., (London, 1983) pp. 113–114.
[25] J.D. Popkin, *A New World Begins* (New York, 2019), p. 71.

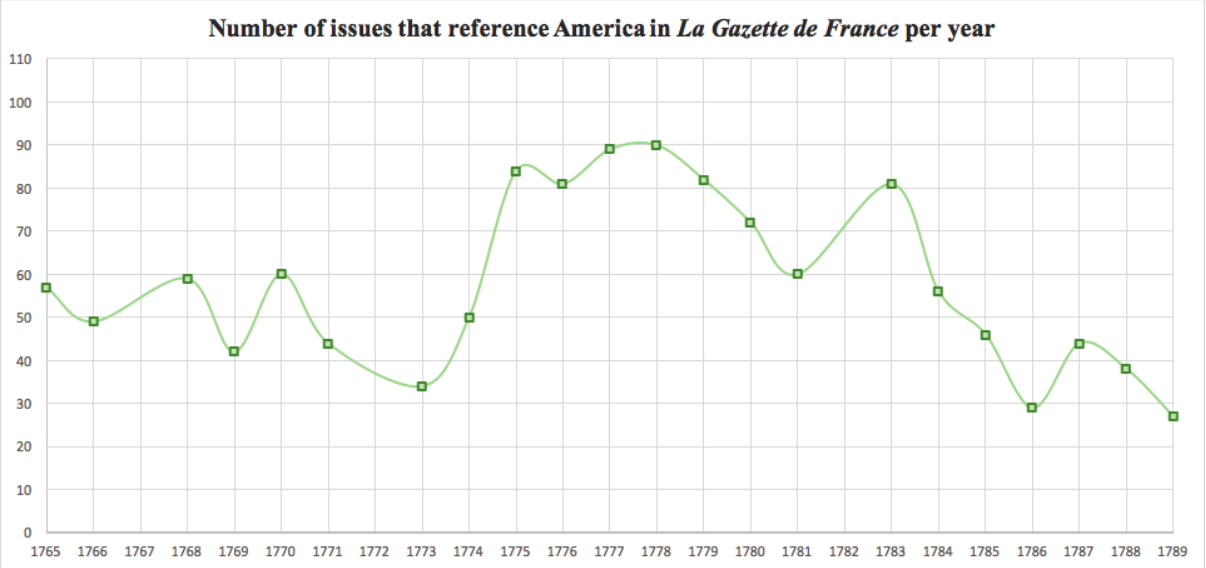
support for French involvement in the war. These publications, vital to understanding how the narrative and realities of war were communicated, will be analysed and discussed. This thesis has placed them along a spectrum that considers the extent to which they were constrained or interfered with by French government authority. Identifying and tracing the increase and content of pro-American material in Francophone newspapers therefore affirms the government's intentions in the war.

The circulation of information under the Ancien Régime in France was characterised both by internal government control and the influence of foreign French-language publications that succeeded in crossing the border. The content of the weekly *Gazette* changed little over the subsequent centuries, but firmly reflected and upheld the image of the French monarchy. Christopher Todd demonstrates that the structure and content of the newspaper began to change significantly from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. For example, two-columns of news now adorned the pages that also began publishing on a bi-weekly basis. However, this did not necessarily result in a higher quantity of contemporary news. Todd points to the assorted collections of correspondence that appeared, having made their way from North America to London, and onwards to Paris.[26] This was a typical example of how many European papers acquired their news, however it was the increase in this type of material that reflects the heightened interconnectivity of American propagandists and the French-language press.

Analysing *La Gazette de France* (GF) has revealed the extent of coverage of news from America before, during, and after the American Revolution. Non-numeric evidence of references to America in the individual issues of GF has been changed into numeric form to

[26] C. Todd, *Political Bias, Censorship and the Dissolution of the "Official" Press in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lewiston, 1991), p. 279.

aid this visualisation. These figures were obtained from inputting the chosen reference words into the Gallica database and compiling the number of issues from the results.



The graph above shows an increase in the number of *La Gazette* issues per year that reference America. The increase is most obvious from one year before the official starting year of the conflict, 1774, until one year after the conflict ceased, 1784. According to Bob Harris, the American Revolutionary War gave rise to an increase in the circulation of the paper, thus there is a correlation between the number of copies purchased of the paper and the increase in coverage of the war. This number had dipped and stagnated since the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 but by the height of the war in 1781, circulation had risen to 12,000 subscriptions.[27] Understanding these subscriptions, and who had access to them, is a vital part of reconstructing the role of the political press in society at this time. Of course, the literate and the wealthy made up the majority of the readership of both the domestic and the foreign press in France. A change in the subscription system in 1761 when the Minister for Foreign Affairs assumed control of its distribution further limited the accessibility of the paper.[28] On

[27] B. Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press, Britain and France 1620-1800* (London, 2008), p. 101.
[28] G. Feyel, 'La distribution des gazettes et des journaux, de 1740 à 1830', in G. Feyel (ed.), *La Distribution et la Diffusion de la Presse, du XVIII Siecle au III Millénaire* (Paris, 2002), p. 22.

top of having a private yearly subscription, one could obtain a copy of an issue through contacting the bureau of the newspaper directly, or renting one through an approved paper peddler. Gilles Feyel identified the professions of Parisian subscribers to *La Gazette* in 1756 which provides an insight into the social strata that had access to the news. Titled nobility made up the largest share at 31.6%, followed by high financiers at 20.6%. Court members and administrators each made up 8.5%, and clergy just below at 8%.[29] The rest consisted of bankers, other court offices and employees of nobles. Certainly, these individuals made up a minuscule portion of the population, and thus reveals the conditions of press circulation in France at the time, as well as the prestige that came with the ability to pay the large subscription fees.

The *Courrier d'Avignon's* legal and geographical position enabled it to publish news events that may otherwise have been prohibited within French borders, and thus shows the proximity of French readers to an alternative source of information. However, as a significant number of the *Courrier's* subscribers did live in mainland France, approximately 4,000 in 1778, it conceded to some of the demands of the French authorities in order to sustain this source of revenue.[30] It also was required to pay a postal fee of approximately 1200 *livres* from the mid-eighteenth century onwards in order to circulate throughout France.[31] This arrangement denotes the French government's ability to use the strong demand from within its borders to force the shaping of foreign news in its favour. It shows an awareness of different methods of press manipulation, in this case an economic leverage. Despite these restrictions, the *Courrier* initially went against the French line of policy regarding the coverage of British affairs and the progression of the war itself. As late into conflict as 1779, an article appeared which

[29] G. Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle. La presse d'information en France sous l'ancien régime (1630-1788),* (Oxford, 2000), p. 732.
[30] B. Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France 1620-1800* (London, 2008), p. 102.
[31] Feyel ed., *La Distribution et la Diffusion de la Presse,* p. 17.

exalted the good governance of King George III, which introduces the fuller picture of the diverging approaches to presenting news that goes against core French policy interests[32]. In the same issue, the reprinting of news and commentary from both London papers and *La Gazette* in Paris created a unique insight into how the newspapers were reliant upon each other for information, and that the *Courrier's* distinct position reveals this dialogue, perhaps in a way that was not meant to occur. For example, the French government relies on London gazettes to know the whereabouts of French ships in the Caribbean: 'We still have no definite news of 20 ships missing from the Santo Domingo fleet. We flatter ourselves, however, that they will have been released into an American port; especially since no English paper mentions that they were taken'.[33] The French government took advantage of the free communication of the English newspapers to track military movement, and thus identified them as key sources of diplomatic and military intelligence. This is in stark contrast to how the censored French newspapers operate, and may shed light on the hidden advantages of concealing the government's position, and why in turn they would want the French-language press to be under their control.

The *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique* was, from its nascency, a key organ of the French government's external propaganda efforts. According to Jack Censer, the *Affaires'* 'pro-American propaganda released the poisons of problematic political forms'.[34] This aligns with one of the three main objectives of the paper, which was to spread writings that would be of particular interest to the readers. The other two were the narration of events in America, and the communication of parliament proceedings in Britain.[35] Overtly anti-British material

[32] *Courrier d'Avignon,* 17 December 1779.
[33] *Courrier d'Avignon,* 17 December 1779. 'On n'a toujours aucune nouvelle certaine de 20 bâtimens qui manquent de la flotte de St. Domingue. On se flatte cependant qu'ils auront relâche dans quelque Port d'Amérique; d'autant plus que nul papier Anglois ne fait mention qu'ils aient été pris'.
[34] J. Censer, 'France 1750-89' in H. Barker and S. Burrows ed., *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 175.
[35] P.L. Ford, 'Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1889), p. 222.

was prevalent in the *Affaires* from the beginning, with one volume including a speech made by John Adams in which he explained what he viewed as the weaknesses of Britain.

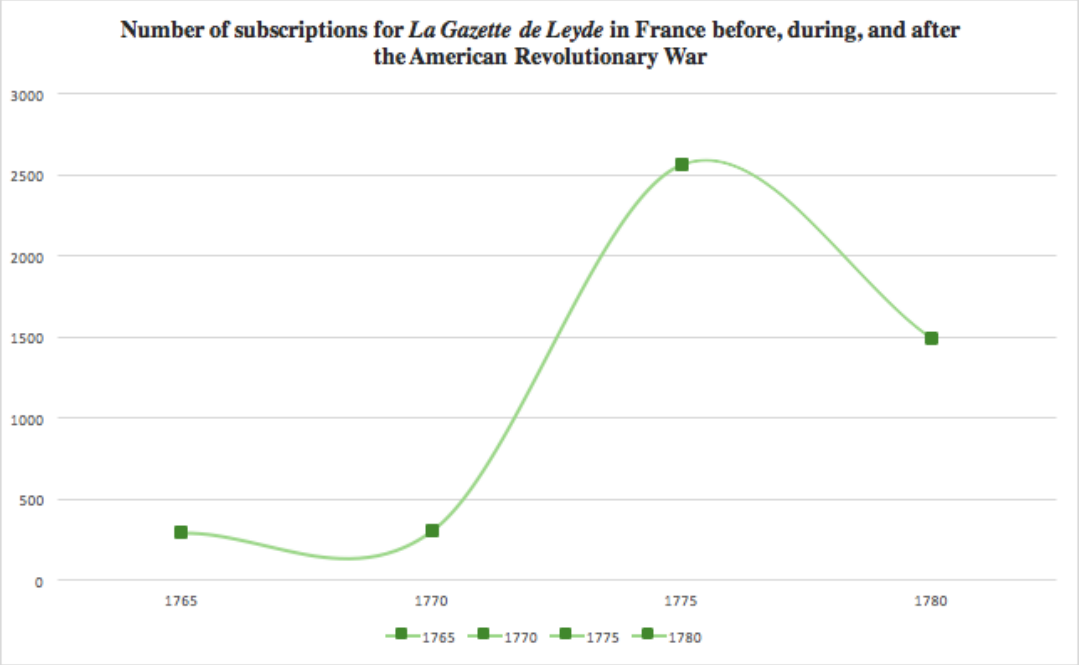
> The childhood of the Colonies, instead of keeping us away from independence, is on the contrary an argument in its favour. We are quite numerous, and if our population were more considerable, we would perhaps be less united. [...] Trade energises the spirit of patriotism and military defence. By increasing her trade, England lost her energy. The city of London, despite its large population, daily allows itself to be insulted with patience, or rather inconceivable cowardice.[36]

By identifying how the limited commercial position of the colonies had produced a strong sense of identity and desire for self-preservation, Adams conveyed to French readers that the patriotic fervour of the colonies would contribute to success against Britain. This signifies an early use of propaganda which draws on the strength of civic values as well as solidifying in the minds of the readers the economic failures of Britain and the untapped potential of the colonies. The paper formed a part of showcasing early manifestations of the highly focused nature of the American diplomat's efforts to justify the rebellion. The paper's concentrated subject matter - the inadequate economic environment of Britain - set a strong foundation for the more abstract methods of propaganda that were to follow.

The *Gazette de Leyde* was more influential in the French-language press environment during the war than any of the other publications. The French monarchy allowed these *gazettes etrangères* to circulate in France due to the high demand, yet their existence alongside the traditional *La Gazette de France* produced a dual system of information. On the one hand, *La Gazette de France* published the government's interpretation of news stories from abroad, as

[36] *Affaires de l'Angleterre et l'Amérique,* Vol. 1 (1776), pp. 75-75. Original text: 'L'enfance des Colonies, au lieu de nous éloigner de l'indépendance, est au contraire un argument en sa faveur. Nous sommes assez nombreux, et si notre population était plus considérable, nous serions peut-être moins unis. [...] Le commerce énerve l'esprit de patriotisme et de défense militaire. En augmentant son commerce, l'Angleterre a perdu son énergie. La ville de londres, malgré sa grande population, se laisse journellement insulter avec patience, ou plutôt une lâcheté inconcevable'.

well as diplomatic news. On the other hand, the foreign gazettes supplied readers with alternative perspectives on the same stories, in addition to commentary on French domestic issues.[37] The *Gazette de Leyde* became even more popular in France in the late 18th century, as it provided vast amounts of coverage on the war. The graph below helps to visualise the increase in subscriptions for *GL* in France before, during, and after the American Revolutionary War.[38]



The trend shows that the *GL* experienced a peak in subscriptions during the first year of the war. Jean Luzac was a fervent advocate for the cause of the American rebels, and thus influenced the amount of space dedicated to coverage of the war in the *GL*. It was therefore a key source of information on the war for French readers, and those involved in its publication and dissemination controlled how French involvement in the war would be perceived.

[37] B. Dooley and S. Baron, *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2001), p. 172.
[38]

The events that led up to the American Revolutionary War were reported across Europe, and attracted readers to bear witness to the conduct of Britain in the colonies. Coverage of the fall out of the Boston Tea Party, for example, was included in the *Gazette de France* on 15 April 1774, under the London dateline. The paper reproduced a text that demonstrated the legal injustices being experienced in the colonies, and thus exposed French readers to the debates surrounding political representation. It argued that:

> Several Americans who are in this City have presented a petition to the House of Commons, by which they declare that they and their fellow-citizens may claim justice and the common law of England, and that it is contrary to both to condemn someone without hearing him or without informing him of the grievances of which he is accused, leaving him the means to defend himself. [...] They represent that the attachment of America cannot survive the injustice of Great Britain, and that consequently, animated by the challenge to see the rights of their fellow-citizens maintained and to prevent the annihilation of the friendship, harmony and confidence which subsist between the two countries, they entreat the House to reject this Bill.[39]

This marked the beginning of how the government controlled French press was to communicate the war, through its reliance on London correspondents and potentially biased information from Britain. However, the other publications that had limited circulation within France contributed to the realities of the precarious situation. The *Courrier* published an edict of the Continental Congress in March 1776 which outlined the atrocities committed by the British army in Boston at the start of the war. The passage provides a detailed account of the

[39] *La Gazette de France,* 15 April 1774. All translations of primary sources are the author's own, unless otherwise stated. Original text: On apprend de Boston que les habitants sont prêts à dédommager la Compagnie des Indes des pertes qu'elles a essuyés, et qu'ils se sont relâchés sur quelques articles concernant le Gouvernement, sans qu'ils fussent informés des mesures qu'on prenait ici contr'eux. Plusieurs Américains qui se trouvent en cette Ville, ont présenté une pétition à la Chambre des Communes, par laquelle ils exposent qu'ils peuvent, eux et leurs Concitoyens prétendre à la justice et à la loi commune d'Angleterre, et qu'il est contraire a l'une et a l'autre de condamner quelqu'un sans l'entendre ou sans lui faire part des griefs dont il est accusé en lui laissant les moyens de se défendre, [...] Ils represent que l'attachement de l'Amérique ne peut survivre à l'injustice de la Grande-Bretagne, et qu'en conséquence, animés par le désir de voir les droits de leurs Concitoyens maintenus et de prévenir l'anéantissement de l'amitié, de l'harmonie et de la confiance qui subsistent entre les deux Pays, ils supplient la Chambre de rejeter ce Bill.

realities of war, and shows how Congress carefully framed it in a way that may evoke an emotional response to the ongoing violence against colonial citizens.

> In this unfortunate war our enemies are conducted with atrocious barbarism, they have burned towns and villages which were defenseless, without distinguishing between sex and age [...] they have stirred up domestic revolts, murders, assassinations, they have paid the savages to devastate our frontiers [...] they make them languish in irons and misery; they force the unfortunate inhabitants of Boston to remain in this City, where they are exposed to all the insolence of the soldiery.[40]

The *Courrier* was in an advantageous position to publish such anti-British sentiment, and contributes to changes in French readership that were not wholly defined by borders.

As the passage from America to Europe took approximately three months, news only filtered from the London publications into the Netherlands and France a long time after events had taken place. This meant that as the French court was deciding on whether or not to aid the rebels, news had not reached them of pivotal victories in the war, such as the Battle of Trenton in December 1776 in which General Washington defeated Hessian soldiers fighting as reserves for the British. This proved the Continental Army's ability to beat the British army, which encouraged renewed support for the revolution. *La Gazette* reported the battle on 10 March 1777, maintaining a predominantly neutral tone while conveying the losses of the Hessian regiment and the new position of the Continental Army. At the end of the two whole pages dedicated to the report however, a remark is made that provides a glimpse into the intrigue regarding the proceedings of the war, 'Two vessels, which left New York towards the end of January, have just arrived; the news they brought is still in the greatest secrecy'.[41] This minor detail of the article elucidates as to the clandestine operations that are used to transport news of the war from the battlefields to London, the dateline under which this article is

[40] *Courrier d'Avignon,* 5 March 1776.
[41] *La Gazette de France,* 10 March 1777. Deux bâtiments, partis de New-York vers la fin de Janvier, viennent d'arriver; les nouvelles qu'ils ont apportées sont encore dans le plus grand secret.

published. Undoubtedly, many were eager to acquire up-to-date information on the excitement across the Atlantic, but the government carefully interposed themselves between the press and the reading public in a manner that revealed so much about the central administration and the monarchy's perception of the power of the political press in the final years of the Ancien Régime.

The range of publications available to the literate French population at the onset of the American Revolution represented both a challenge and an opportunity for the French government. The press offered an alternative source of political, diplomatic, and military information, but began to be viewed as a threat to the integrity and authority of the royal institutions themselves. The Abbé Joseph-Alphonse de Veri was an influential figure in the French court, being a close confidant of Louis XVI's chief adviser, the Count of Maurepas. The Abbé Veri's journal reveals how the foreign French-language gazettes influenced how France conducted its affairs. Under Louis' reign, it became evident that the gazettes were assuming a greater role in determining the government's foreign affairs and diplomacy than was justifiable This extract bears witness to his annoyance at the royal council's reliance on information taken from these gazettes.

> When Louis XVI ascended the throne, M. d'Aiguillon prepared, for the first council, a general picture of Europe to inform the new King of his situation with regard to foreigners. I have not seen this table, but I know from M. de Maurepas that it contained only what the gazettes and daily conversations in Paris had taught us. I also know that, for two months, the Councils of State have only had to read and deal with reports equivalent to those of the gazettes [...] Happy the nation that does not know politics from the gazette![42]

[42] J.A. de Véri, *Journal de l'abbé de Véri* (Paris, 1774), p. 138. Lorsque Louis XVI monta sur le trône, M. d'Aiguillon prépara, pour le premier conseil, un tableau général de l'Europe pour instruire le nouveau Roi de sa situation à l'égard des étrangers. Je n'ai pas vu ce tableau, mais je sais, par M. de Maurepas, qu'il ne contenait que ce que les gazettes et les conversations journalières de Paris nous avaient appris. Je sais encore que, depuis deux mois, les Conseils d'Etat n'ont eu à lire et à traiter que des relations équivalentes à celles des gazettes [...] Heureuse la nation qui ne connaît la politique par la gazette!

The circulation of foreign publications and the uncensored commentary they contained was rapidly becoming an issue for those who wanted to protect the interests of the monarchy. The continuation of the censorship structure before the war, however, was unlikely to be maintained for long. The excitement surrounding the outbreak coupled with France's desire for revenge set the stage for drastic changes for press culture and the spread of revolutionary material. In the following chapter, this thesis will analyse newspapers' coverage of the war to understand how it was communicated differently across the newspapers, the reasons for these variations, and how this affected the relationship between the government, the reading public and the press.

Chapter II: Coverage of the War in French-language Publications

As newspapers became a channel for French popular enthusiasm for the American war, they consequently became a mechanism with which to convey criticisms and encourage reforms of the existing societal and political order. The French were exposed to the radical ideals of the rebels and the messages of liberty and freedom became synonymous with the struggle against Britain. The circulation of the gazettes and the increased coverage of the war meant that, despite their geographical distance, French readers were enabled to experience a deeper emotional and psychological proximity to the war. This phenomenon calls for a greater examination of the dynamics between the press, the public, and the royal authorities. Control is a central aspect of this system, as the absolute authority of the king was beginning to wane towards the end of the eighteenth century. Internal calls for political and administrative reform and the reinstatement of the provincial *parlements* after Louis XV's death had major implications for how the government were to deal with transparency and the influence of public opinion on state matters. Looking at how the government controlled the flow of

information, therefore, is an essential part of understanding the extent to which this could be successfully managed.

The issue of censorship and the control of public opinion in the late eighteenth century was inextricably linked to the circulation of foreign gazettes, and various methods were used to manipulate and restrict their ability to influence and criticise internal affairs. Chrétien Lamoignon de Malesherbes, Director of the Book Trade and later a court aid to the king, grappled with the ideas of censorship and how to curate the image of the French monarchy in the press. Malesherbes' political ideology was shaped by a 'sceptical view of royal power, and thus became an eloquent proponent of civil toleration within a progressively stagnant and unjust political order'.[43] Jeremy Popkin labels him as 'one of the most enlightened French officials of the century',[44]who set an ideological precedent for how the government should interact with, and respond to, the foreign political press. Malesherbes' approach was a reference point for how enlightened ideals and political material that was potentially detrimental to the image of the monarchy should be dealt with. In *Mémoires sur la Librairie et la Liberté de la presse,* published in 1788, Malesherbes advocated for reforms of the state's censorship policy. He also claimed that the transfer of particular ideologies from America to France would encourage the French public to challenge the social order. He wrote that: 'The fear that facts or maxims put forward by the French will be argued against France is more plausible, and it is justified by what has recently happened with regard to the French and English possessions in America'.[45] This reveals a clear awareness amongst those at the centre

[43] G.A. Kelly, 'The Political Thought of Lamoignon de Malesherbes', *Political Theory,* Vol. 7, No. 4 (1979), p. 486.
[44] J.D. Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution : Jean Luzac's "Gazette de Leyde"* (Cornell, 1989), p. 38.
[45] C.L. Malesherbes, *Mémoires sur la Librairie et la Liberté de la presse,* (Paris, 1809), p. 86. Original text: 'La crainte qu'on n'argumente contre la France des faits ou des maximes avancés par les Français est plus plausible et elle est justifiée par ce qui est arrivé en dernier lieu au sujet des possessions françaises et anglaises en Amérique'.

of government of the potential harmful effects of a politically-savvy public as a result of an increasingly critical press.

The French government's influence on the press can be traced across the four publications during the American Revolution. Pro-American sentiment and coverage of the war was communicated differently in the domestically produced newspapers and the foreign gazettes. Through textual analysis and comparisons, it is possible to discern the extent of control exerted by influential state figures. A deciding factor in Louis XVI's decision to enter the war on the side of the rebels was the rebels' success at the Battle of Saratoga, which took place between 19 September and 17 October 1777. Under the command of General Burgoyne, a British Army regiment of 5000 men surrendered to the Continental Army officer Horatio Gates. This development has been viewed as a major turning point in the war, as the American troops were gaining significant advantages over one of the most powerful armies in the world. When word reached Boston that Burgoyne had signed a capitulation agreement, bonfires, cannons and fireworks were set off in celebration[46]. The changing tide of the course of war soon swept across the Atlantic, with news reaching Versailles of the victory on 4 December 1777.

The change in the French government's attitude towards the war is reflected in how coverage of America was structured and communicated in the newspapers. France divulged her position in the conflict by including politically sensitive and militarily important news at strategic points. For example, eight days after the news of Saratoga was received, *La Gazette* reported the events leading up to the surrender, in addition to publishing the full terms of capitulation:

[46] K.J. Weddle, *The Complete Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (New York, 2021), p. 342.

> We have received here, by way of Nantes, news which fixes the ideas on the fate of General Burgoyne. This General, after having vainly attempted to seize the stores which the insurgents had at Bennington, was himself attacked in his Camp at Saratoga by the American Generals Gates & Arnold, and having been forced to abandon it, he perceived no other resource, to save his Army from utter destruction, than to capitulate on the 16th of October, and to surrender himself prisoner of war [...] The Capitulation signed by General Burgoyne is of the following content[...][47]

By situating this description of the surrender as well as the publication of the terms of capitulation in the context of how the French were changing their approach to the press, a number of conclusions can be drawn. *La Gazette* had never previously published news about the American War under a Paris dateline. As mentioned earlier, the news came directly from correspondents based in Britain and was therefore under a London dateline. This was most likely due to Benjamin Franklin's presence on the continent and his involvement in the coordination and supply of transatlantic information to the French government. Franklin initially arrived in France through the port of Nantes in the west and wrote letters to Congress regarding his mission. Historians have pointed towards the possibility of Franklin stationing an aide there to deliver news from the colonies to him in Paris, further reinforcing the growing efficiency of news information systems within the borders.

The inclusion of the capitulation of Burgoyne caused a stir in the political press scene. Jean Luzac, editor of *La Gazette de Leyde,* included a commentary on the news from Paris:

> It was remarked, that Mylord Stormont, Ambassador to England, was not at the Audience on Tuesday, which the King gives to Foreign Ministers every week: It is believed, that he wished to avoid appearing in public in the midst of the glamour caused here by the reverse that happened to General Burgoyne. The Gazette de France, which hitherto had never spoken of the Insurgents except in the London Article, gives today, under

[47] *La Gazette de France,* 12 December 1777.

> that of Paris and before all the other sheets of Europe, the Capitulation of this Commander, as received by way of Nantes.[48]

Luzac's remarks, while reading more like scandalous gossip than political opinion, nonetheless displays his understanding of the gravity of the situation. After the Battle of Saratoga, the publication of correspondence between the Continental Congress and the British Army documented their worsening relations as the Americans gained the upper hand in the war. Henri Clinton, a British general, wrote a letter to the Continental Congress that was published in the 1779 issue of the *Affaires*. In it, he accuses the Americans of disregarding their obligations to protect prisoners of war as agreed upon in the Convention of Saratoga, and sarcastically requested that they inform them of the 'new system that you were pleased to introduce'[49]. The single-sentence response denotes the bitterness of exchanges: 'Your letter of the 19th has been placed before the eyes of Congress, and I have orders to inform you that the Congress of the United States of America *does not respond to insolent letters*'.[50] The choice of the editor of the *Affaires* to italicise these final words brings the readers' attention to the bold stance taken by the Congress, affirming the *Affaires* interest in publishing the more exciting or scandalous side of the war.

The translation of works by influential political philosophers in newspapers demonstrates the efforts by French supporters of the Americans to inspire unity and the feeling of a shared conflict. Virtually every issue of the most popular French-language publication featured letters, reports, and political material by authors that scrutinised state authority in a way that

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[48] *La Gazette de Leyde,* 19 December 1777. 'Il a ete remarque, que Mylord *Stormont*, Ambassadeur *d'Angleterre*, n'a pas été Mardi à l'Audience, que le Roi donne aux Ministres Étrangers chaque semaine: On croit, qu'il a voulu éviter de paroitre en public au milieu de l'éclat, que cause ici le revers arrivé au Général *Burgoyne*. La *Gazette* de *France*, qui jusqu'ici n'avoit jamais parlé des *Insurgens* qu'à l'Article de Londres, donne aujourd'hui, sous celui de Paris et avant toutes les autres feuilles de l'Europe, la Capitulation de ce Commandant, comme reçue par la voye de Nantes.'

[49] *L'Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique,* Vol. 12 (1778), p. 354. 'du nouveau système qu'il vous a plu d'introduire'.

[50] L'Affaires, Vol. 12, p. 354. 'Votre lettre du 19 a été mise sous les yeux du Congrès, et j'ai ordre de la part de vous informer que le Congrès des Etats-Unis d'Amérique *ne répond point à des lettres insolentes*'.

had not been done before. Certain texts condemned autocracy and advocated for the idea of a consensual relationship between the people and the state. Richard Price was an author of such a text which made its way into the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique.* A Welsh philosopher, Price was a fervent supporter of both the American Revolution, and, later, of the French Revolution. His 1776 publication, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America,* espoused political and moral ideals that originated in his belief in the individual rights of man, and which was similarly espoused in the rhetoric of the Continental Congress. It became a bestseller within a matter of months, having sold over 60,000 copies in London and with copies being sent to French ministers as well as to the American diplomats present in France.[51] Interference by the French government is possibly evident in the translation of part of this text in the *Affaires.* A line from the original text reads: 'If the laws are made by one man, or a junto of men in a state, and not by common consent, a government by them does not differ from Slavery'.[52] However, the reproduced text translated into French in the *Affaires* volume three changes the word from 'junto' to 'assembly'.[53] This dilutes the meaning from a specifically British political term, to one that can be more easily recognised by, and applicable to, a French audience. Nonetheless, the presence of a text that condemned minority rule, and compared the absence of political representation to slavery, demonstrates the increased focus in the press to provide material to readers with which they could reconsider their own relationship to the political order.

While the word 'assembly' may have been used simply because 'junto' might have been unfamiliar to many French people, it nonetheless allowed the possibility for readers to

[51] C.B. Cone, *Torchbearer of Freedom : The Influence of Richard Price on 18th Century Thought,* (Kentucky, 2014), p. 77.
[52] R. Price, *Observations on the nature of civil liberty, the principles of government, and the justice and policy of the war with America*, (London, 1776), p. 7.
[53] *Affaires,* Vol. 3 (1776), p. 60, 'assemblée'.

legitimately view themselves as being in a similar situation under autocratic rule. The publication of this work is particularly relevant to the American cause, since a major source of discontent for the rebels was their lack of ability to consent to the laws since they were not represented in the Westminster government. This was specifically touched upon by Price later on the same page, who advocated that members of a state should be able to contribute their input to society 'by the appointment of substitutes or representatives'[54], particularly when a part of a state is at a substantial physical distance from the political centre, such as the case for America. The inclusion of controversial material, specifically that which was aimed at condemning British policy towards its American colonies, contributed to the growing political potency of the gazettes and the potential influence they could have on their audience. Price's work was circulated in the press, and was sent to the leading revolutionary figures including Benjamin Franklin, further signifying its popularity amongst individuals who determined the political content of the press.

The rebels became increasingly aware of their enemies using the gazettes to falsify the narrative of war. Their attempts to retaliate through similar means demonstrates how the political newspaper became an easily identifiable method of curating a positive image of the revolution, and thus a focal point of wartime strategy and propaganda. Diplomatic correspondence reveals how the gazettes were used not only to spread radical political thought, but to curate a particular narrative of the course of the war. They were used both by American rebels and their French aids to establish historical fact. Arthur Lee wrote to Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane in February 1777 to lament the playing down of atrocities committed by the British army:

[54] Price, *Observations*, p. 7.

> I observe by the Papers, that the Agents of the Ministry are endeavoring to cover their cruelties on Long Island, by charging us with having wantonly hangd some hessian Prisoners previous to that transaction. This they are constantly repeating both in the foreign and domestic Gazettes, in order to establish it as an historical fact. I think some steps should be taken by the Congress to publish an authentic contradiction of it, that so infamous an imputation may not go down to posterity, with whom, I hope our name will be unblemished.[55]

The American diplomats utilised their European networks to counteract stories that were harmful to the cause. In a letter from Isaac-Jean-Georges-Jonas Grand, a French Lieutenant based in Amsterdam, to Franklin and Deane in Paris, he explained how the American diplomats can rely on his support for the war, and encouraged them to utilise his involvement in the French-language press to flood the newspapers with news of military victories.

> I have ordered that You receive a copy of the Leyden Gazette, addressed to my brother; and it is important to your interests that you send me all the good news you receive to have it inserted in our Dutch and French papers, to support your credit, and to maintain the good dispositions of minds in this country, which I find most favorable to Your cause than before, which gives me the greatest pleasure.[56]

This correspondence signifies how the diplomats utilised their personal networks to gain headway in propaganda efforts.

On the other hand, Britain ensured that their military efforts were cast in a favourable light. Britain enjoyed a much freer press environment with virtually no censorship, and the gazettes that were operated by the court were able to shape the narrative of the war at a much earlier stage. The editors and contributors to the pro-American publications were aware of this

[55] A. Lee to Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane (18 February 1777), *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-23-02-0218. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 23, ed. W. B. Willcox, (London, 1983), pp. 339–342.

[56] G. Grand to the American Commissioners (27 February 1777) " *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-23-02-0252. Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 23, ed. W. B. Willcox, (London, 1983), pp. 393–394.

disadvantage, and spoke out against the individuals who were manipulating the readers' perception of the war. The reaction to the contrast between British and French press cultures can provide insights into what the reading public desired from the newspapers, and the extent to which they were aware of biases and propaganda. Thus, the way in which the reading public perceived their relationship with the wider sphere of news circulation changed during the war. They were perhaps starting to feel a stronger link with those affected by war across the Atlantic. Nonetheless, there was anger regarding the unfairness of how important news could be withheld at the whim of the person receiving it. This was described in a letter in the *Affaires*, written anonymously under the alias of a London banker, who explained how the British court journals excluded news of the military gains being made by the rebels, particularly at Saratoga:

> How wise one becomes, sir, by experience! The Gazetier de la Cour, whom you have seen so eager to announce the slightest advantages gained over the Americans, and to whom it cost so little to compromise himself by exaggerating their losses: Mr. Scot Frazer does not want to tell us anything more, although his portfolios are full of extremely curious and interesting news from America. He kept, for several weeks, the letter of Captain Peason of Quebec, of which he published a fragment on September 27, where it was said, that General Arnold had joined the Rebels at Saratoga with twelve pieces of cast iron cannon, and that the officer, who had taken command of the army of the North, was preparing to make a vigorous resistance at the post of Saratoga.[57]

This awareness of how the journals failed to communicate the realities of war and the losses being incurred by the British illustrates that readers were becoming more engaged with press culture, and in turn wanted to make known their expectations for a more truthful and to provide them with what they were now viewing as exciting modern political ideas.

[57] *Affaires,* Vol. 6, 1777.

This eruption of modern political thought illustrates the broader intellectual connections that were forged between America and France at this time. In his seminal work *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, R.R. Palmer contends that the revolution '[...] gave a whole new dimension to ideas of liberty and equality made familiar by the Enlightenment. It got people into the habit of thinking more concretely about political questions, and made them more readily critical of their own governments and society. [...] It brought written constitutions, declarations of rights, and constitutions conventions into the realm of the possible'.[58]

Political newspapers were conceivably a critical mechanism that contributed to these processes and intellectual developments. The reading culture surrounding reading in France and the presence of these publications in people's daily lives, however, greatly determines how this content can be viewed as having an intellectual impact. The social exercise of reading was not limited to the literate, as cafes, gardens, and the bustling salons in the cities acted as public spaces for information exchange.[59] Exclusive reading clubs and the expansion of the masonic lodges also contributed to a deeper connection between those 'fired by ideas of liberty, progress, and reform', which Franklin himself took advantage of for his propaganda mission by joining the Lodge of the Nine Sisters upon his arrival in Paris.[60]

The deep entanglement between France and America, therefore, solidified the American Revolution as an instigator of change beyond its own borders. This was resolutely reflected in the changing content of the newspapers. Propaganda and the individuals that utilised it were at the heart of the expanding field of literature and debate on the relationship between monarchies and their subjects. However, through source analysis and consulting Peter M. Ascoli's work on the American propagandists, the work of the diplomats in supplying this

[58] R.R. Palmer, *The age of the democratic revolution: a political history of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Oxford, 2017), p. 282.
[59] B. Dooley, *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Surrey, 2010), p. 180.
[60] Palmer, *The age of the democratic revolution,* p. 245.

material to papers was largely confined to the early years of the war.[61] The next chapter analyses later years of the war and how the changing relations between the diplomats and the French government affected the press environment, as well as continuity of political debates as a consequence of the war.

Chapter III: After the Dust Had Settled

This chapter seeks to place the position of France at the end of the American Revolutionary War, and to explore how the relations between the two countries were shaped in the context of the developing press culture. The French government's understanding of the role of the press in society was changed by the commercial success of the newspapers and by increased active engagement of readers with domestic and foreign publications. This altered the boundaries between government authority and public involvement in societal affairs. The efforts and influence of individuals involved in the government and the press are much more accentuated in these later years, particularly as the war ended, with the press and its masters essentially becoming actors in state affairs. Thus, to understand what changes had occurred as a consequence of France's involvement in the revolution, and the manner in which the press became increasingly intersected with politics, it is essential to look at what the press had exposed after the dust had settled. Wider debates about aspects of French governance, particularly the financial difficulties, became more accessible through press exposure, and this chapter will demonstrate how this reflected both continuity and change in the interaction between the press and politics. European circles of intellectual and political elites engaged in these debates as the press coverage of the war demonstrated to them the practical implementation of the core ideas of the Enlightenment, in addition to the extent to which a

[61] P.M. Ascoli, 'American Propaganda in the French Language Press during the American Revolution' in C. Fohlen ed., *La Révolution Américaine et l'Europe,* Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 1978), p. 305.

newly sovereign nation could navigate the construction of a polity. The eight years of war between Britain and America aided this intellectual transfer, and thus invites an inquisition into what France's new-found impression of America was, and how this in turn informed France's own identity and determined its path as the sensationalism of war died down.

As the war entered its final stage, it became clear that France's weakened financial position had major implications for national politics and for the array of personalities involved in supporting the American Revolution. At the forefront of this was Jacques Necker, director-general of the treasury from June 1777 to May 1781. Long considered to be an Anglophile, Necker became entangled in American affairs from the moment he took up office. Vergennes convinced Necker early on of the potential commercial benefits to France of reducing Britain's global influence. Despite not being wholly in favour of engaging in the war, Necker nonetheless yielded to the pressure of his fellow ministers. Hailed as a genius for aiding the American Revolution without raising taxes, Necker was however now aware of how close the treasury was to financial ruin. Avriel Goldberger emphasises the fact that the total cost of the war for France was escalating to approximately a billion *livres,* an unsustainable reality that Necker tried to warn of.[62] Over the course of his career, Necker warmed to the ideas of the *philosophes,* particularly Voltaire and Rousseau, who critiqued the old system of abuses.[63] Furthermore, Necker's beliefs were at odds with the absolute monarchy that he was charged with upholding, and he preferred a constitutional monarchy.[64] He was eventually temporarily dismissed after publishing the *Compte Rendu* in 1781,

[62]A. Goldberger, 'Sur les Traces d'un Buste Inconnu de Necker Chez Washington à Mount Vernon', *Cahiers Staëliens*, La Société des études staëliennes (Paris, 2004), p. 148.
[63] W. and A. Durant, *Rousseau and Revolution, A History of Civilisation in France, England, and Germany from 1756, and in the Remainder of Europe from 1715, to 1789* (New York, 1967), p. 867.
[64] L. Burnand, *Necker et l'opinion publique* (Paris, 2004), p. 61.

exposing France's financial accounts. This act was a reflection of his desire for a more aware and participatory citizenry.[65]

The editors of French-language publications in Europe were very engaged in French domestic affairs, and continued to make known their expectations of, and attitudes towards, French foreign policy in the press both during and after the war. The *Gazette de Leyde* editor Jean Luzac expressed such opinions as early as 1774 in a commentary on the new French ministry. He was particularly fascinated by the enlightened reformer Jacques Turgot. Turgot became minister of the navy and was appointed Controller-General of Finances soon after, giving him power over France's naval agenda in addition to the taxation system. Turgot was a believer in the physiocratic school of thought of economics, which expressed the view that government interference in trade should be minimal, and that land agriculture is the true source of national wealth. He was also amicable with the *philosophes* while in the government of Louis XVI, and from this became favourable to the idea of enlightened absolutism. One of his most significant acts was the proposal of a tax system that would derive government revenue from landed individuals without class distinctions.[66] Turgot was fearful of the ministerial despotism that plagued the government and of the persistent corruption and deficits that dogged France's economic wellbeing. Thus, he was at odds with ministers who valued the heroic idea of aiding the birth of a new nation and defeating Britain over the straightening of affairs within France itself. It is therefore unsurprising that before France entered into an alliance with America, Turgot fervently opposed naval aid to the rebels. It was not only France's financial difficulties that plagued the minister's mind however. France's censorship policy was also seen by Turgot as reducing the country's preeminence on the continent, 'I cannot conceive how a nation, which has cultivated with so much success of branches of natural

[65] S. Shama, *Citizens, A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York, 1989), p. 95.
[66] M. Price, *Preserving the Monarchy, The Comte de Vergennes, 1774-1787* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 46.

science [...] a science in which liberty of the press, freedom only found in England, should have given that nation a marvellous advantage over all others of Europe'.[67] His direct involvement in the war, while also reconciling the competing interests for the future of the king's new government, made him a target in ministerial circles, and these difficulties were exposed through the press.

Turgot did, however, find support in Luzac. In September 1774, Luzac explicitly stated his support for radical French tax reform. He thought it legally correct for the *parlements,* France's powerful and ancient law courts, to tax themselves, and drew a clear parallel between them and the American Colonies. While Luzac understood the potential obstacles to such a change, he utilised his paper to highlight the striking similarities between the unjust system of taxation of both the British colonies and France. Shedding light on the parallels between the suffering of Americans and French people and critiquing the existing form of taxation demonstrates how Luzac saw the paper as influencing readers' awareness of potential alternatives, and convincing them that they too were entitled to enact radical change. Turgot's efforts to implement reforms based on economic liberalism aligned with the personal politics of Luzac, and thus were initially praised by him, allowing the readers of one of the most influential publications in Europe to become aware of the possibility of change within France. This was highly beneficial for Turgot's attempts to steer the new government at the beginning of Louis XVI's reign. Luzac wrote in 1774:

> Mr. Turgot, the new Comptroller-General, also enjoys a reputation of the most exact probity. Projects are attributed to him, which would certainly be infinitely useful and agreeable to the People Of this number is that of putting all the Provinces into Pays d'Etats, so that each can determine the distribution of its taxes itself. [...] If such a Project, the existence of which must still be doubtful for many reasons, were really carried out, it would

[67] J. Barnard, *A sketch of Anne Robert Jacques Turgot: with a translation of his letter to Dr. Price* (Boston, 1899), p. 46.

> not be one of the least remarkable singularities of our Century, that France should restore to the Nation the Right to tax yourself. Right so sacred to which could appear imprescriptible for any People who are not Slaves, while England works to despoil her Subjects in America.[68]

The comparisons made between the American subjects under the dominance of King George III and the lack of ability of the provinces to tax themselves implicated Luzac in a severe critique of the French monarchy. The reference to sacred rights as well links this to the divine right of kings that Louis XVI relies upon for his power. Thus, the inclusion of a highly condemnatory piece demonstrates a shift in who understood themselves to be in control of public opinion. It therefore illustrates how ministers were increasingly dependent on the foreign French-language press to see how their efforts were being perceived. Understanding the power and trying to maintain that influence beyond a time of war could prove extremely useful in maintaining a positive image in the Francophone world.

The political crises in the Netherlands during the 1780s impacted the extent to which the *Gazette de Leyde* could be used for propaganda or generally advantageous purposes by French government officials. Turgot's reforms were met with fierce resistance from the masses, who blamed high grain prices on his reduction of internal commerce restrictions.[69] In 1777, Turgot was dismissed by the king because of his efforts. However, Jeremy Popkin asserts the view that Turgot also failed to strengthen his image and did not 'cultivate the paper and made no effort to use it to shape public opinion in his favour'.[70] Luzac attempted to persuade the readers of the possibility that the king would continue to consider the implementation of Turgot's reforms, but the press was not powerful enough on its own to influence domestic matters. It required an exchange between government figures who desired change and those commandeering political publications who saw it as an opportunity to

[68] *Gazette de Leyde,* 16 September 1774.
[69] J.A. Wendel, 'Turgot and the American Revolution', *Modern Age,* Vol. 23, No. 3 (1979), p. 282.
[70] J. Popkin, *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France* (California, 1987), p. 91.

expand freedoms in the press environment of the continent. It reveals the ambitions of editors and publishers in trying to establish a transnational network of journalism, which consequently impacts the dynamics of political culture. While Necker had initially been praised in the *Gazette de Leyde* for supporting the war without raising taxes, the wider criticism he received from 1781 for trying to change too much too fast, placed Luzac in a difficult position. He could not lose the support of the minister who had spearheaded pro-American propaganda efforts, and risked suffering a ban if it did not position itself with the French foreign ministry. The loss of revenue and influence would damage the publication's preeminent position in Europe. Thus, the *Gazette de Leyde* was forced to reduce coverage of the competing interests and discord amongst the ministers, and maintained overall support for French involvement in the war.[71]

The end of the war marked a decline of the *Gazette de Leyde* in the French political and public sphere. The emergence of the Dutch Patriot movement distracted Luzac, and these events occupied more space in the newspaper. Despite the shift in priorities, Luzac continued to be hailed as a hero of the European political press. John Adams, who in 1780 became minister plenipotentiary to the Dutch Republic in order to secure support, regarded Luzac as being 'universally beloved'.[72] Adams succeeded in obtaining the recognition of America as one of the only republics in the world. These connections further entangled France's and the Dutch Republic's overseas interests, and placed even greater pressure on France to secure victory over Britain. Jean Luzac and his impact on internal French affairs continued into the 1780s, with Vergennes going so far as to compromise his good standing with the king in order to protect Luzac's reputation when the king unexpectedly banned the publication in 1785. The divergence in opinion of the king and his minister over the editor of a foreign newspaper

[71] J. Popkin, *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France* (California, 1987), p. 150.
[72] L. H. Butterfield (ed.), *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, Volume 3* (Harvard, 1961) p. 19.

sheds light on the importance of the development of diplomatic relations that had been forged during the American Revolution. It not only demonstrates the loyalty between the two men, but the king's conscious decision to intervene in the circulation of a foreign publication within France. Vergennes wrote:

> I have the honour to send your Majesty a letter from the Marquis de Verac relating to the prohibition which your Majesty has ordered of the Gazette de Leyde. My obedience has forbidden me any representation, but your Majesty is punishing one of the best citizens of Holland, the one who has always shown himself most attached to the good cause and particularly to France.

Vergennes' regret at the decision may be reflective of his desire for a more productive dialogue between the government and the public through a freer press. Louis' action may indicate his awareness of the stature of the *Gazette de Leyde,* the potential dangers it posed as it was held in high esteem, and how he could utilise his power to ban it to prevent further speculation on French affairs. While this motivation for censorship had existed prior to the revolution, Vergennes may have viewed this ban as discouraging or even embarrassing given the government's reliance on this publication for its contribution to propaganda efforts and its general alignment with and support of French policy during the war. This disagreement illustrates how the bias and emotions of government officials themselves contributed to the changing perception of the role of the press in society.

Foreign French-language publications had witnessed a surge in popularity because of their extensive coverage of the war. The elite readership demanded a specific type of content, and this in turn fed into a changing social culture of political debate. It may be assumed that they were not fully aware of the extent to which they were aware of interference by the government, but certainly the influx of alternative information provided by the foreign

publications provided them with the opportunity to look at the state of France from the perspective of those with the ability to provide commentary unmarred by government control. Luzac's personal opinion on his role in this provides an insight into how the functioning of the French government was being interpreted and debated in a transnational context. Luzac identified himself as playing a key role in persuading the French court to aid the rebels. The high regard Luzac had for his ability to have his paper influence French monarchy sheds light on how gazetteers and editors were starting to perceive their own role in the intersection between the press and politics during the early development of press culture. This points to why the French government found it so important at the time to place a part of their war efforts in the modern social force that was the press. Luzac reminded John Adams in a letter written in 1781 that the *Gazette de Leyde* was the only publication in Europe to have supported the cause from the beginning:

> When the struggles of America were in their infancy; when Europe despised that Country or knew it little, when no other European News-Paper mentioned ever Bostonian courage, constancy, and Patriotism; when Mr. Tronchin du Breuil, the Proprietor of the Amsterdam-Gazette, was silent on it, as the rest of public Writers, the Leyden-Gazette was the first, which faithfully adhered to that Cause [...] Yes, Sir, I dare to say, we, in those early times (already in 1774.) contributed a great deal to awake the French Court on that subject; and Mr. Dumas, whose acquaintance we made by that only means, can bear testimony to it.[73]

The role of American diplomats and intellectuals stationed in France during the war, as previously discussed, had a positive effect on French people who were aware of the involvement in the war. It stimulated public intrigue, and those aware of the rebels and their popularity took pride in knowing that France had been sought out as an ally for the new nation. Additionally, soldiers returning from war had observed first-hand the fight against Britain, and thus could contribute their own stories and perspectives on the reality of war, a

[73] John Adams from Jean Luzac, 10 December 1781, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-12-02-0084. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 12, ed. ed. Lint, G.L. et al. (Harvard, 2003), pp. 125–127.

source of information uncensored by the government. This invites the question as to how the departure of the Americans and the dying down of excitement affected French people and how they would come to view their own position in society Despite the faltering of the strong relationship between the French foreign ministry and the American diplomats towards the end of the war, those at the forefront of the American cause found their footing in the new political structure as the competing ideological factions strove to emerge as the dominant system. As a result, France realised that it was no longer just a straightforward effort of winning a war against Britain. It had also become implicated in the formation of the new American government.

Peter M. Ascoli claims that Adams had been wrong to assume that public opinion affected events, and that American military victories had more sway in influencing French ministers.[74] However, this is limited to viewing it from the perspective of eliciting direct French financial aid. This thesis asserts the view that the propaganda efforts of the American diplomats did much more than simply achieve the immediate goals of receiving French aid. The type of material sent to the French-language press, particularly the *Gazette de Leyde* went further than laying out the immediate economic advantages of French support. It was intent on circulating amongst French-speaking readers the most up-to-date political and philosophical works. This of course was due to the inclinations of its editor. What perhaps the French government did not realise was the extent to which the entanglement it found itself in with the American propagandists would affect France's own internal affairs and people's notions of the existing social order. Thus, changes to the limitations of the press during this time were highly significant as they shaped how French audiences interpreted the future of the relationship between the two countries.

[74] P.M. Ascoli, 'American Propaganda in the French Language Press during the American Revolution' in C. Fohlen ed., *La Révolution Américaine et l'Europe,* Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris, 1978), p. 305.

Deteriorating relations between the core group of ministers, diplomats, and editors shaped how the press environment would emerge from the turbulent period of war. In January 1781, Luzac published in a supplementary column to *GL* his support for a peace treaty between Britain and the Americans, which would cede Georgia and New Hampshire to Britain.[75] John Adams wrote a letter to Luzac expressing displeasure at his decision to publish a commentary on a complex issue without consulting the Americans. While Adams accepted Luzac's subsequent apology for the overstep and showed gratitude for the free environment of Dutch newspapers, Adams dismissed the possibility of further discussion of the matter in the press, as he suspected that this kind of debate would be censured. He wrote to Luzac to make clear his stance on the matter:

> I could not wish, if it were in my Power, to diminish the Utmost Freedom of Speculation upon American Affairs, and especially yours, which are generally with a great deal of Knowledge of the Subject [...] However I don't mean to enter into a discussion of the question, for which I might perhaps be justly censured. I am glad to find that those Ideas were not held up to the public by any one who meant to do mischief or to carry any Point.[76]

The American diplomats who were responsible for curating the European press in favour of their cause evidently could not expect total conformity to their agenda from the editors. This posed a major risk for France's larger war ambitions, particularly as 'both France and the thirteen states had agreed that absolute independence must be the first condition of peace'.[77] Luzac's scolding from Adams highlights the precarious nature of the political situation, and the ripple effect of speculative content in the papers.

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[75] *Gazette de Leyde,* 19 January 1781.
[76] John Adams to Jean Luzac, 22 January 1781, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-11-02-0047. [Original source: *The Adams Papers, Papers of John Adams*, vol. 11, ed. Lint, G.L. et al. (Harvard, 2003), p. 70.
[77] J.B. Perkins, *France in the American Revolution* (Boston, 1911), p. 440.

The peace reached between Great Britain and the American Colonies in 1783 transformed the global balance of powers and had significant consequences for the position of France due to its role in aiding the creation of a new republic. The Battle of Chesapeake in September 1781 and the subsequent surrender of General Cornwallis during a siege at Yorktown in October 1781 solidified the victory of the combined forces of the Continental Army and French troops. Representatives of Great Britain and America signed the Treaty of Paris on 2 September 1783, officially ending the war and reconstructing the boundaries of the British Empire and ensuring the independence of the colonies. Immediate coverage of the treaty differed in the French domestic and Dutch French-language papers. A short announcement of the treaty was made in the supplement of *La Gazette de France* on 5 September, and in the *Gazette de Leyde* a letter from Paris was published also on 5 September which made assurances that the ministerial papers from Westminster did not reference a possible attack on Holland as a result of their aid to the rebels. The terms of the treaty had been carefully negotiated. Vergennes was initially fearful that the Americans would fail to uphold Article 8 of the Franco-American treaty of alliance, which stipulated that 'Neither of the two Parties shall conclude either Truce or Peace with Great Britain, without the formal consent of the other first obtain'd'.[78] Despite conducting secret, albeit unproductive, discussions with the British, the Americans accepted the terms of the final treaty and entered into a critical period of nation-building. It was a turbulent period characterised by a conflict to determine the virtues of the new American society, and it was greatly defined by how American and French leaders and philosophers continued to interact beyond the scope of war.

The interactions between the American diplomats and the French officials would directly influence the way in which the French were to structure their own constitution. In 1784,

[78] 'Treaty of Alliance with France (1788)', https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-alliance-with-france (Last accessed 22 June 2022).

Richard Price published a letter he had received from Turgot in 1778. In it, Turgot criticised the individual state constitutions for replicating too many aspects of English government. John Adams formulated a response - seven years after Turgot's death - arguing in favour of a bicameral legislature.[79] The constitutions as well as the discussion surrounding them, were translated and printed for French audiences. The critical content of this debate in the transatlantic context demonstrates how France became further entrenched in the construction of new political realities as a consequence of the war. The influence of the American Revolution on that of the French has been thoroughly investigated. The example above shows how the debates that were developing between the two countries since the beginning of the revolution spilled beyond its time frame, and continued to inform French audiences of how their social order and government were being perceived, debated and challenged by the Americans.

Adams also criticised Turgot for having interpreted the constitutions incorrectly. This shows his understanding of how government manipulation and inaccurate translations of political texts in French had a detrimental effect on finding a common ground and productive foreign relations between the two countries. The continuity of criticisms on the lack of transparency in the French press environment becomes evident when looking at how the highly esteemed Americans continued to involve themselves in French political discourse. This posed a challenge for the strength of the monarchy itself, and it demonstrates how the government was unaware of the dangers of becoming involved in a war that ultimately presaged the sweeping power of democracy and fundamentally impacted France's control of the image of absolutism. John Lough underscores the importance of weighing up the total gain for France by entering into the war. Gaining prestige against Britain, he argues, was retrospectively

[79] W. Slauter, 'Constructive Misreadings: Adams, Turgot, and the American State Constitutions', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (2011), p. 33.

overshadowed by the influx of 'subversive ideas engendered by the American Revolution and its declaration of rights is clearly revealed [...] in the newspapers and memoirs of these years'.[80] The newspapers likewise continued to appeal to the interests of leading American politicians. In a letter to C.W.F. Dumas, an American diplomat living in the Dutch Republic, the Founding Father Robert Livingston requested Dumas to continue sending him the various French-language newspapers following the conclusion of the treaty between the Dutch and the Americans in 1783. The high esteem held for the authority of these papers demonstrates their newly defined role as key witnesses and communicators of European affairs. Livingstone, for example, wrote to Dumas that: 'You will be pleased to discontinue in future all the Dutch papers, and send us only the Leyden Gazette, the *Courrier du Bas Rhin,* and the *Courrier de l'Europe,* together with such publications on political subjects, written in French, as may be worth our attention'.[81] As a consequence of its role in propaganda efforts and news coverage of the rebellion, the French-language press had carved out a space in political relations and transatlantic information exchange which continued to develop after the war was over.

Conclusion

The political potency of the American Revolution sent shockwaves throughout France and the rest of Europe. The rebellion of colonies against the motherland was unprecedented, and the loss of such financially viable and prosperous territory damaged Great Britain's global preeminence. From a military point of view, the successes of the Continental Army were monumental and foreshadowed the emergence of a global superpower. From a more subtle, intangible point of view however, the revolution and France's decision to support the rebels

[80] J. Lough, *An Introduction to Eighteenth Century France* (London, 1960), p. 202.
[81] Robert Livingston to C.W.F. Dumas, in *The diplomatic correspondence of the American Revolution* (ed.) Sparks, J. (Boston, 1829), p. 526.

was a turning point in how King Louis' government acted and reacted to shifts in the social and political order. The onset of the revolution altered the stifling press environment within France. The interest of the government to see the rebels succeed in their ousting of France's traditional enemy was deepened, and this encouraged foreign affairs minister Vergennes to employ a propaganda campaign in some of the most widely read French-language newspapers circulating at the time.

The press in France before the war was relatively stagnant and rigid in form and content. Imposing the government's viewpoint and a strong image of the monarchy were the pillars on which national newspapers operated, particularly *La Gazette.* This essay has argued that the onset of the war in America drew intrigue from readers across Europe, as the number of copies printed as well as subscription rates rose from the early 1770s onwards. This intrigue was further stimulated by the arrival of the American diplomats and their meetings with the French government. The uncertainty and mystery surrounding the initial phase of French contact with the Americans meant that the most prominent newspapers in the French-language press had different approaches to coverage of the war. This was set against a changing political environment of the reign of King Louis XVI.

France's entry into the war against Britain following the Battle of Saratoga transformed their approach to the press, as they came to understand its importance as a propaganda tool and as a medium for public discourse. Certain publication decisions reflected a new kind of strategic diplomacy. The full publication of General Burgoyne's surrender under the dateline of a French city rather than that of London, for example, showed that the government was now relying on internal information from the diplomats to inform readers of events. This implicated France in the production of the narrative of war, and thus changed the role of the

press in French affairs and society.

The involvement of the government in the continental press scene enabled personal relationships and transnational alliances to be formed. The Comte de Vergennes, who corresponded with key figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Jean Luzac, oversaw most of the propaganda campaigns in the most popular publications. His proximity to the king and his involvement in and leniency towards the foreign publications gave him a central role in determining the French response to the war and how it would be communicated in the press. The reform-oriented ministers Turgot and Necker also set precedents for how the government would act during the war. Both understood the importance of a free press environment, and while they balanced the protection of the monarchy with arguing for internal changes, the curation of France's international prestige inevitably took on more importance than the pressing financial and agricultural issues. These problems reflected France's unyielding dedication to maintaining the status quo. After the peace arrived, the ideological differences between America and France filtered into the souring of relations between those who had become entangled in transatlantic diplomatic affairs. While the Americans still held the French-language press in high esteem, they realised that the formation of their new identity should take precedence over attempting to influence France to follow their implementation of democracy and representation.

A number of conclusions can be drawn as to the implications of this government involvement in the press. Firstly, the political newspaper as an entity became a more defined feature of everyday life for the literate population. The formalisation of news on paper, subscription access, and the overall clearer definition of what the purpose of a publication was solidified its presence as an intermediary between the government, societal affairs, and its readers.

Secondly, the popularity and presence of American diplomats in France transformed the way that the government and readers of the press imagined their proximity to international events. The direct contact made between these individuals, as well as the public fascination with them not only provided the press with plenty of stories, but brought the coverage of the conflict to life through those interactions. Finally, the ways in which the French government intervened with and communicated the narrative of the war fundamentally altered its internal diplomatic agenda and how the country was being perceived in a transatlantic context, with a greater emphasis on public dialogue through the press. France understood that the public discussions of its role in the war, and subsequently its own internal issues, were being increasingly circulated amidst the population. This led to major ebbs and flows in its desire and ability to control how its involvement in the war was written about in the press. However, as this thesis constituted an analysis of the government's response to the war, the full impact of the content of the newspapers on its readers cannot be fully appreciated. Further research may explore the input of readers, such as letters or opinion pieces, in order to ascertain the extent to which they approved of the government's course of action in the war. The ideological impact of the war and the fostering of strong transatlantic connections shaped the beginnings of Franco-American relations, but also of how the French public would come to understand the injustices of the social order. The unfolding of the American Revolution influenced the growth and development of the French-language press and gave it a more prominent role within the society of Ancien Régime France.

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