

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Mightier than the Sword:
Benjamin Franklin's Satirical Rebuke of British Policy

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Abstract

The genius of Benjamin Franklin resides not in his unique personality or worldly manner but in his distinct ability to eloquently express his ideas in written form. One of his most notable and peculiar scripted expressions emanated from his desire to assert American authority in peace negotiations with Great Britain in the final stages of the American Revolution. Franklin's "Supplement" to the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, printed in 1782 at his press at Passy, satirized British political and economic procedure in an effort to illuminate British hypocrisy and defend American interests in the peace process. Though the "Supplement" has only recently earned a noticeable position in the narrative of Franklin's biographical studies, the "Supplement" provides not only a glimpse into the evolution of Franklin's philosophical ideas and political mentality but also a reflection of his efforts to secure a beneficial compromise through the Treaty of Paris. The two letters contained within the "Supplement," a letter by Samuel Gerrish on Indian violence against American soldiers and civilians and another by John Paul Jones on British claims of piracy against America, were fabricated by Franklin and published as authentic articles by newspapers throughout both America and Britain. Though there is no evidence Franklin ever intended to mislead his audience with his claims, Franklin expected his publication to instigate conversation and provoke public reaction over the conduct of Parliament and the Crown. The "Supplement's" allegations reflected Franklin's purpose throughout the peace process to ensure restitution between American and Britain and arrange American's diplomatic future as an autonomous nation.

Chapter 1:

Introduction, Background, and Historiography

Benjamin Franklin remains one of the most recognizable figures in American history. His appearance graces the face of American currency; his adages are quoted in spite of their antiquity. Dozens of biographies have been written on his life while there additionally exists hundreds of focused studies on his faith, politics, and personality. His reputation continues to provoke historians and scholars to study his numerous broad interests and occupations.¹ Franklin is perhaps most famous for the numerous articles, essays, letters, and pamphlets he produced concerning a vast array of subjects from science to religion. Known for his clever humor and perceptive intellect, Franklin often chose the written word as an outlet for both his frustrations and achievements. Some of Franklin's most intriguing compositions dealt with topics on politics and the American Revolution; his Revolutionary publications and propaganda continue to offer insight into the political ideology that Franklin embraced. Franklin wrote deliberately, placing much care and thought into his expositions. Each article had objective and purpose. Franklin frequently used his masterful wit and sarcasm to address controversial topics and scold powerful entities without directly challenging authority. These qualities helped produce some of the most fascinating political literature in early American history.

One of Franklin's more obscure publications and a portion of his work which still deserves historical analysis due to its intriguing political messages is the "Supplement" to the

¹ For standard academic biographies of Benjamin Franklin, see Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003); H.W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Thomas Kidd, *Benjamin Franklin: The Religious Life of a Founding Father*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); and Ellen R. Cohn et al, eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

Boston Independent Chronicle, published in 1782 as the Revolutionary War drew to a close and peace negotiations between Britain and America commenced. Franklin, acting as American ambassador, had been stationed in France for several years and established his own printing press just outside of Paris in the village of Passy. There Franklin resided in an estate allocated to him by the wealthy French businessman Jacques-Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont until 1785 when Franklin concluded his tenure in France. In Passy, Franklin created important and amusing works such as the *Bagatelles* and other articles and essays on his political ideas. One of his most notable publications on the press at Passy was his “Supplement” which he intended to distribute as an authentic issue of the newspaper the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, a colonial periodical produced in the city whose name it bears. The “Supplement,” however, was an entirely fictitious exposition of Franklin’s own design. A product of Franklin’s frustrations concerning Britain’s past conduct toward America as well as the details of the peace negotiation process, the “Supplement” itself included two separate and distinct letters written under the aliases of important American military officers. These letters challenged the intentions and exploits of the British government and military and illuminated important aspects of Franklin’s political opinions.

Franklin’s “Supplement” was an expression of his frustration with British control and conduct as well as an attempt to uncover the duplicity of the British government. This research will seek to evaluate the context for the details of the “Supplement” as well as express the value of the article as a recorded summation of Franklin’s concerns with British political designs and his desires to affect impending peace. The first section of the “Supplement” included the fabricated letter written by Captain Samuel Gerrish and addressed gruesome attacks by the Seneca Indians on American civilians and soldiers while the second section of the article

contained a fictional letter written by American naval commander John Paul Jones addressing charges of piracy and misconduct against the American navy, especially charges against Jones's exploits and the mistreatment of American prisoners of war.² The brilliance of Franklin's "Supplement" dwells not in its satire or deception but in its candid expression of the British brutalities and injustices against America.

Franklin, though not a pacifist in the truest nature of the word, possessed an aversion to open opposition as well as a distinct distaste of direct altercation. Franklin turned to his writing to convey his opinion on sensitive subjects, sometimes preferring to remain completely anonymous while he attacked his enemies by paper and pen.³ Franklin preferred print even for assessment of his own flaws. His catalogue of virtues and private appraisal of his weekly conduct in his autobiography regarding virtues such temperance, order, humility, and other admirable qualities reveal his desire for personal growth and maturity. Franklin sought a life void of spectacle and mayhem, desiring peace rather than conflict.⁴ These qualities led Franklin to publish essays and articles not only on personal idealism but also on the necessary qualities of empires and nations. Because of Franklin's aversion to open hostility, he chose to verbally attack entities such as the British government and the Crown at the press level instead of directly approaching Parliament or King George.⁵

² Benjamin Franklin, "'Supplement' to the *Boston Independent Chronicle*, [before 22 April 1782]," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 184-196.

³ Jonathan Dull, *Benjamin Franklin and the American Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 1.

⁴ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Albert Henry Smyth, ed. (New York: American Book Company, 1907), 152-154.

⁵ Dull, *American Revolution*, 86.

Franklin used print for decades as a medium to circulate his thoughts and opinions regarding the British Empire. In 1729, Franklin acquired his own newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Through this newspaper, Franklin often published his political opinions, sometimes using pennames to maintain anonymity. Franklin said of his newspaper in his autobiography, “I considered my newspaper, also, as another means of communicating instruction.”⁶ Franklin often established the objectives of resistance and political protest through his editorials. The infamous cartoon “JOIN, or DIE” Franklin published in his newspaper in 1754 was widely circulated throughout the colonies as a symbol of unified resistance against the French during the French and Indian War. Franklin’s cartoon also represented an effort to rally support for unification of the colonies under his proposed Albany Plan, a political proposal for an integrated colonial government.⁷

In 1766, in response to the Stamp Act and Britain’s growing pressure on the American colonies, Franklin produced the grotesque propaganda piece “Magna Britannia,” a picture depicting a woman with amputated extremities representative of both the disbandment of the American colonies and the destruction of the British Empire as she increasingly alienated her foreign holdings and supporting populations.⁸ Despite these bold publications, Franklin was careful to emphasize that his newspapers were not meant for defamation, but for the perpetuation of education on valuable subjects. “In the conduct of my newspaper, I carefully excluded all

⁶ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 170.

⁷ Benjamin Franklin, “JOIN, or DIE,” May 9, 1754, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, found in Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002695523/>.

⁸ Benjamin Franklin “Magna Britannia: Her Colonies Reduced [January - February, 1766,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1- December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 66-72.

libelling and personal abuse, which of late years become so disgraceful to our country,” Franklin insisted in his autobiography.⁹ In 1775, Franklin presented in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* a satirical inscription discussing the death of Charles I, British king beheaded during the English Civil War. In this passage, Franklin coined the phrase, “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God,”¹⁰ a slogan which became an important motto for the Revolution.¹¹ These excerpts from Franklin’s periodical represented his attempts at insurgence through printed means and illustrated not only his ability to articulate dissatisfaction with current political systems but also his aversion to direct confrontation with powerful entities.

The “Supplement,” written as the Revolution drew to a close and negotiations between Britain and America progressed, provided Franklin the opportunity to profess his controversial opinions over British policies and military conduct from the safety of his press at Passy. The “Supplement” to the *Boston Independent Chronicle* was printed in two editions. The first edition contained a letter by Samuel Gerrish as well as a few advertisements written by Franklin, although historians have found no evidence that the first edition was ever published.¹² The second edition, and the article discussed in this research, contained the letter by Gerrish on Indian atrocities as well as the fabricated letter by John Paul Jones.

⁹ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 171.

¹⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “Bradshaw’s Epitaph’: A Hoax Attributed to Franklin, 14 December, 1775,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 303-304.

¹¹ Carla Mulford. *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 278-279.

¹² Carla, Mulford, “Benjamin Franklin’s Savage Eloquence: Hoaxes from the Press at Passy, 1782,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152, No. 4 (2008): 496.

Franklin's first letter, written under Gerrish's name, was a message to Gerrish's commander following a raid by an American convoy on a stock of British army supplies. The letter included a register of items found among the discovered supplies written by British personnel James Crauford. The letter described the acquisition of scalps taken from an Indian raid against American soldiers and civilians and described the unfortunate events which led to the procurement of the scalps. The "Supplement" stated, "At the Request of the Senneka Chiefs I send herewith to your Excellency, under the Care of James Boyd, eight Packs of Scalps, cured, dried, hooped and painted, with all the Indian triumphal Marks, of which the following is Invoice and Explanation."¹³

The transcription continued to list a rather gruesome and shocking account of the numerous scalps obtained by the British convoy, including forty-three scalps of American soldiers, nearly three hundred scalps of farmers, as well as the scalps of women and children. Franklin's descriptions gave details to how and when the scalps were acquired which alluded to surprise attack and possible torture. Franklin also included in the letter messages from Seneca Indian chiefs. The messages were saturated with vicious mockery that berated not only the king of England, but the British people for their use of the native populations against the American colonies.¹⁴ Franklin, writing as one of the Indian chiefs, stated, "We have only to say farther that your Traders exact more than ever for their Goods: and our Hunting is lessened by the War, so that we have fewer Skins to give for them. This ruins us. Think of some Remedy. We are poor:

¹³ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹⁴ Ibid.

and you have Plenty of every Thing. We know you will send us Powder and Guns, and Knives and Hatchets: but we also want Shirts and Blankets.”¹⁵

Franklin additionally expressed through the comments of the Seneca Chiefs that the American colonies were no longer willing or able to be controlled by the British Empire. Franklin stated his frustration with the British-Indian alliance that was so blatantly one-sided. While the British reaped the benefits of the partnership by coercing the Indians into war against the colonies, the British made feeble, empty promises to compensate the Indians for their service. “Attend to what I am now going to say: it is a Matter of much Weight. The great King’s Enemies are many, and they grow fast in Number,” through the words of the Seneca chief, Franklin described the dilemma faced by those tribes who had allied themselves to the British. The enemies that were once “like young Panthers” were transformed to adversaries “big as the Elk, and strong as the Buffalo,” capable of overpowering and even destroying the native populations.¹⁶ Certainly, Americans were angered at British coercion of Indian force against American homes and populations, prompting Franklin to write, “They have driven us out of our Country for taking Part in your Quarrel,” but despite any protests from Indian authorities on these issues, Britain held the advantage monetarily, politically, and militarily over any native tribes or nations. Because of this advantage, there was little chance that Britain would ever provide fair compensation for Indian contributions to the war. Franklin satirized the false hope created by the British alliances with the Indian tribes with the following proclamation, “We

¹⁵ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

expect the great King will give us another Country, that our Children may live after us, and be his Friends and Children, as we are. Say this for us to the great King.”¹⁷

Carla Mulford argues in her ground-breaking work *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* that Franklin’s reference to civilian groups whom he viewed as non-threatening, such as women, children, and clergymen, reveals Franklin’s conviction that the British were prone to aggression and violence. Mulford states, “The Selection brings home the seediness and brutality of British war efforts: Britain rewarded, with liberal presents of arms, Indian hatchet-men who otherwise were abhorred, and Britain supported attacks against noncombatant American civilians of British descent.”¹⁸ Though some historians have suggested Franklin exaggerated his points in the “Supplement,” he fully believed he was accurately if not conservatively representing British atrocities. In a letter to John Adams in April of 1782, Franklin admitted, “I believe the Number of People actually scalp’d in this murdering War by the Indians to exceed what is mention’d in the Invoice, and that Muley Istmael (a happy Name for a Prince as obstinate as a Mule) is full as black a Tyrant as he is represented in Paul Jones’s pretended Letter.”¹⁹

Franklin’s second letter of the “Supplement,” written in the name of John Paul Jones, was an expression of Franklin’s frustration toward British colonial processes and Britain’s refusal to acknowledge the misconduct toward America. Franklin was particularly disturbed by British refusal to exchange American prisoners of war and by the treatment of American prisoners

¹⁷ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹⁸ Carla Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 299.

¹⁹ Benjamin Franklin, “To John Adams from Benjamin Franklin, 22 April, 1782,” *The Papers of John Adams*, vol. 12, *October 1781 – April 1782*, eds. Gregg L. Lint et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 447-448.

whom the British consistently terrorized with malnutrition and mistreatment and coerced into military service. America was a colony of Britain, yet Britain regarded Americans as traitors, refusing to give American soldiers the same courtesy of even Britain's international enemies.²⁰ Franklin, in turn, called British actions piratical for their blatant disregard of diplomatic and moral standards, "You had even the baseness to corrupt our servants, the sailors employed by us, and encourage them to rob their masters, and bring to you the ships and goods they were entrusted with. Is there any society of pirates on the sea or land, who . . . have less authority than your parliament? Do any of them more justly than your parliament deserve the *title* you bestow on me?"²¹

In the objective of the second letter was a longstanding point of indignation for Franklin. One of Franklin's primary objectives in his diplomatic mission was to oversee the affairs of prisoners. Franklin's position as ambassador as well as the various political connections he made throughout his years as diplomat made him an ideal candidate to negotiate prisoner exchanges. Britain, however, was notoriously uncooperative in conducting negotiations with prisoners.²² Franklin was not only alarmed by British refusal to exchange prisoners, but he was also disturbed by the treatment American soldiers received once captured, who often were deprived of adequate food and shelter and frequently confined to prison ships or sent to various other corners of the British Empire. Franklin noted in a letter to Lord Viscount Stormont, prominent British politician, "The United States are not unacquainted with the barbarous Treatment their People

²⁰ Caroline Prelinger, "Benjamin Franklin and the American Prisoners of War in England during the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 32, No. 2 (1975): 290.

²¹ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

²² Prelinger, "Prisoners," 261-263.

receive, when they have the Misfortune of being your Prisoners here in Europe: And that if your Conduct towards us is not altered, it is not unlikely that severe Reprisals may be thought justifiable, from the Necessity of putting some Check to such abominable Practices.”²³

British attitude toward American prisoners was in part due to an act issued by Prime Minister Frederick North, Second Earl of Guilford, or Lord North, as he is more commonly known, and passed by Parliament five years before. This act not only sentenced all captured American prisoners with the crime of treason and piracy, but also discouraged standard humane treatment to such prisoners, degrading American prisoners below the status of even Britain’s international enemies.²⁴ Franklin and American naval commander John Paul Jones had a long history of correspondence on prisoner of war exchange. Franklin, concerned with the welfare of American prisoners because of the act instituted by Lord North, was determined to arrange negotiations to exchange American prisoners with captured British soldiers. Jones shared Franklin’s frustration with British lack of cooperation and Franklin’s desire to capture British sailors for leverage against the British. Jones attempted to act as an intermediary for Franklin in handling the details of arranging prisoner exchanges but in doing so, alienated the British.. A battle between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the British ship the *Serapis* in 1779, where Jones seized British sailors and their ship, prompted Franklin’s letter in the “Supplement.”

The British were furious with Jones’s detention of British soldiers and property, but Jones intended to retain the British prisoners he had captured in particular defiance to the British

²³ Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee, “The American Commissioners to Lord Stormont, April 2, 1777,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 23, October 23, 1776 through April 30, 1777, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 548-549.

²⁴ Prelinger, “Prisoners,” 264.

capture and mistreatment of American Naval Captain Gustavus Conyngham who had been arrested several times by the British, accused of piracy, and imprisoned.²⁵ Jones wrote to Franklin, “I am determined to keep in my hands the Captain of the Serapis as an Hostage for Cunninghams release as a prisoner of War.” Jones, like Franklin, wished to see an exchange of troops initiated by the British, “With respect to the other prisoners now in my hands, If the English Ambassador Sir J.Y. will give us Security *in his public Character* that an Equal number and denomination of Americans shall be Sent immediatly to France,”²⁶ Jones promised.

These words provoked British outrage against Jones and the American navy and triggered the accusations of piracy which Franklin addressed in the Jones letter. Franklin asserted, “A pirate makes war for the sake of *rapine*. This is not the kind of war I am engaged in against England.” Franklin championed American defense of British encroachment, “Our’s is a war in defence of *liberty* . . . the most just of all wars; and of our *properties*, which your nation would have taken from us, without our consent, in violation of our rights, and by an armed force.” Franklin then turned the accusations of piracy on Britain, “Your’s, therefore, is a war of *rapine*; of course, a piratical war: and those who approve of it, and are engaged in it, more justly deserve the name of pirates, which you bestow on me.”²⁷

Both letters in the “Supplement” were the response to broader issues which Franklin spent much time and energy not only writing about but also attempting to rectify. Franklin’s article has been called an exaggeration by historians, yet there is evidence that the British were

²⁵ Prelinger, “Prisoners,” 277-280.

²⁶ John Paul Jones “To Benjamin Franklin from John Paul Jones, 11 October, 1779,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 30, *July 1 through October 31, 1779* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 520-521.

²⁷ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

guilty of the allegations Franklin identifies. Though Franklin's article was indeed a fabrication and neither Jones nor Gerrish were the authors of the two letters, the political messages within the correspondence are worthy of examination and validation.

Franklin, to his peers, did not acknowledge his authorship of the bogus article yet made a point to send his fellow peace commissioners as well as his friend and British colleague James Hutton, a copy of the article. To John Adams Franklin stated, "I send enclosed a Paper, of the Veracity of which I have some doubt, as to the Form, but none as to the Substance," Franklin went on to say that he believed the atrocities listed in the article were mild in comparison to the violence executed by the British and their Indian allies. He hoped the article would be reproduced in England to prick the guilty consciences of those who read it. Franklin did not admit to producing the article himself to Adams and while Adams acknowledged receiving the letter, he never commented on the contents of the article itself.²⁸

In a letter to John Jay, Franklin expressed the same sentiment, "I inclose what I suspect to be a pretended American Paper, which, however, tho' it should be found fictitious as to the *Form*, is undoubtedly true as to the *Substance*. For The English cannot deny such a Number of Murders having been really committed by their Instigation." Franklin questioned, as he did with his letter to Adams, the legitimacy of the article, acknowledging that the accounts were extreme but then reaffirmed his belief that the basis for its accusations were true.²⁹ There is no record of Jay's receiving the letter or his response to its accusations.

²⁸ Franklin, "To John Adams, 22 April, 1782," *The Papers of John Adams*, 447-448.

²⁹ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to John Jay, 24 April 1782," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 205-207.

To James Hutton in July of 1782, Franklin sent his “Supplement” with the same summary, though without acknowledgement of its authorship. In the letter, Franklin railed against the injustices promoted by King George “who happens to love Blood, and to hate Americans; been permitted to gratify that bad Temper.” Franklin described the massacres committed in the name of the king by British and Indians over “defenseless” civilians. In Franklin’s words, King George ignored the plight of his own citizens while he “enjoys all the good Things this World can afford, and is surrounded by Flatterers, who keep even his Conscience quiet, by telling him he is the best of Princes!”³⁰ Hutton responded with an acknowledgment of the many atrocities committed by the British but also provided a rebuttal of the sordid descriptions the “Supplement” portrayed. Hutton argued, “That article in the Boston Paper must be Romance. All of it Invention, cruel forgery I hope & believe. Bales of Scalps!!! Neither the [King] nor his old ministers . . . are capable of such atrocities.”³¹ Franklin seemed to understand that his article was risky in its claims but believed in its implications enough to circulate it. As usual for Franklin’s rebukes, Franklin chose to remain cleverly anonymous but not adamantly secretive.³²

Although the fame of Franklin’s hoax has been briefly incorporated into Revolutionary discussions since the nineteenth century, only a few historians, most notably during the twenty-

³⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Hutton 7 July, 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 586-588.

³¹ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Hutton 23 July, 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 586-588.

³² The editors of the *Franklin Papers* reveal that Franklin included a few special font types that would have alluded to his authorship. The Jones’ letter contained an italic font used only by the press at Passy, a font that a perceptive printer would have recognized as foreign to the original publication of the *Boston Independent Chronicle*. Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

first century, have attempted to examine the details of Franklin’s most articulate deception and evaluate it for the authenticity of its claims and the margins of its political implications. The historiography of Franklin’s “Supplement” is not as well developed as that of his other famous works, yet the “Supplement” has existed in historical record since shortly after its publication. Still, the article has not always been recognized for the deception that it was. Not until the mid-nineteenth century was there definitive expression that Franklin was the author of the “Supplement” and that the article was indeed a fabrication published by Franklin for political reasons. A New Jersey newspaper acknowledged the article as bogus in the 1850s.³³ Jared Sparks’ multivolume publication in 1844 describes the “Supplement” as a “fictitious article.” Though Sparks states that Franklin’s article was published for no other reason than to “merely to amuse the author and his private friends,”³⁴ Sparks acknowledges that Franklin’s desire was to enlighten British readers to their government’s conduct against Americans; however, Sparks ends his analysis here. There is no examination of Franklin’s political motives for the article or his frustration with British military and government practices.

Nineteenth century scholarship on Franklin’s “Supplement” maintains the general trend portrayed by Sparks. Only brief references to the article are made throughout historical scholarship, and there is little analysis of the impact or implications of the article. In 1896, John Bach McMaster gives a short summary of the “Supplement” in his work *Benjamin Franklin a*

³³ Carla, Mulford, “Savage Eloquence,” 518.

³⁴ Jared Sparks, ed., *The Works of Benjamin Franklin: Containing Several Political and Historical Tracts Not Including in Any Former Edition and Many Letters Official and Private Not Hitherto Published with Notes and a Life of the Author*, vol. 5 (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1844), 125.

Man of Letters, yet this summary is nothing more than declaration of the article's existence as one of Franklin's hoaxes with a concise description of the article's convincing authenticity.³⁵

Not until the twentieth century did greater discussion emerge concerning the events that provoked Franklin to write the article or even the techniques Franklin used to master his deception. In 1914, Luther S. Livingston published his comprehensive volume *Franklin and His Press at Passy: The Books Pamphlets, and Leaflets Printed There, Including the Long-Lost 'Bagatelles'*. Though this resource is primarily a compilation of Franklin's own work, Livingston offers commentary on Franklin's publications and the deception of his article as well as analysis on Franklin's intentions for publishing the "Supplement."

Livingston's analysis offers one of the first definitive examinations of the details and reasons for the publication of the "Supplement," including descriptions of Franklin's intentions for enumerating a list of Indian atrocities. Livingston includes Franklin's letters to John Adams and Charles Dumas in order to provide context for Franklin's publication and offer support for his grievances against Britain. Livingston ascertains that Franklin was greatly disturbed by British use of Indian warriors to kill civilians, actions which eventually provoked him to write the "Supplement." Livingston alludes to the argument that Franklin wished for those in Britain to read his "Supplement" and respond accordingly although there is no profound discussion of this topic within the work.³⁶ Though Livingston never expressly declares that Franklin's intentions were to persuade the British people of their government's indiscretions, Livingston claims the

³⁵ John Bach MacMaster, *Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 239.

³⁶ Luther Samuel Livingston, *Franklin and His Press at Passy: The Books Pamphlets, and Leaflets Printed There, Including the Long-Lost 'Bagatelles'*, (New York: The Grolier Club, 1914), 64.

article was published and “circulated with a political purpose”; however, Livingston never really clearly defines this purpose.³⁷

In 1961, Carl Berger published his volume on Revolutionary propaganda *Broadsides and Bayonets: The Propaganda War of the American Revolution*, a work which defines the concept of propaganda as “any organized or concerted group effort or movement to spread particular doctrines, information, etc.”³⁸ This is a different definition than the traditional, negative connotation of propaganda which alludes to the dispersal of misinformation in order to manipulate or persuade. Berger explains the reason Franklin published his article or “black propaganda” (information published under the name of someone other than the true author)³⁹ was to “stir public opinion against Britain during the peace talks, in hopes of gaining concessions.”⁴⁰ Berger argues that the “Supplement” was printed in conjunction with additional propaganda material in order to influence British public opinion and steer the course of the war. Franklin was intentional with his publication and articulated his convictions by subtly interlacing fact and fiction.⁴¹

No other definitive analysis exists from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on Franklin’s “Supplement.” Though there are a few works which weave the context of Franklin’s piece into biographical sketches or narratives and discuss colonial and early American perceptions following the Revolution, there is no work which specifically examines or analyzes

³⁷ Livingston, *Franklin and His Press*, 62.

³⁸ Carl Berger, *Broadsides and Bayonets: The Propaganda War of the American Revolution*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 194, 210.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

the “Supplement” entirely until the twenty-first century. Carla Mulford, an English professor at Penn State, began publishing her scholarship on Franklin ten years ago, providing much needed analysis on Franklin’s famous deception. Mulford’s first work “Benjamin Franklin’s Savage Eloquence: Hoaxes from the Press at Passy, 1782” was published by the American Philosophical Society in 2008 and is one of the broadest analyses of Franklin’s “Supplement” to-date. Mulford’s work describes the lack of scholarship on Franklin’s article while providing important research on its publication and circulation following the American Revolution. Mulford’s invaluable examination not only lists the newspapers and periodicals which printed Franklin’s article as an authentic issue of the *Boston Independent Chronicle* but also includes an explanation of how the article increased in fame and circulation as the Revolution came to a close and tensions between America and Britain intensified until the outbreak of the War of 1812.⁴² Mulford’s historiography explains that many newspapers and other commentary sources published the article as proof of Indian atrocities and in defense of Indian expulsion. Mulford remarks, “The metaphysics of Indian hating in the nineteenth century required repeated accounts of atrocities by Indians rather than reasonable argument about the problem of the reservation system, fair trade with Indians, and preservation of Indian lifeways, all topics that Franklin himself had remarked on in his own day.”⁴³ Essentially, Franklin’s “Supplement,” though originally intended to call out British misconduct against the colonies by exploiting the Indians became an example for Indian brutality and justification for Indian repression.⁴⁴

⁴² Mulford, “Savage Eloquence,” 519.

⁴³ Ibid., 520.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 519.

Mulford's examination is primarily dominated by a literary interpretation of the significance of Franklin's work. This is not to say that Mulford does not provide important historical background and evaluation of the source, yet Mulford fails to analyze the authenticity of Franklin's claims based on descriptions and accounts of British exploitation of Indian warriors against American civilians or the claims of piracy against the British. Franklin's article was fabricated information, yet Franklin based his claims on authentic events. Mulford offers a minor analysis of the political context of Franklin's article based on Franklin's opinion toward the British as well as a preliminary evaluation of Franklin's intentions to influence peace negotiations between American and the British.

In her work, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* published in 2015, Mulford gives broader explanation to the reasons for Franklin's publication, including the political objectives behind his frustrations. In her narrative, Mulford briefly examines the purpose of British use of Indians against Americans during the Revolution, concluding that "in the context of Franklin's peace negotiations and his other writings on the problems with the British ministry, the hoax is not really about the Iroquois so much as it is about British atrocities against their own countrypeople."⁴⁵ This is an important assertion on Franklin's "Supplement" and one that is not found in nineteenth or twentieth-century scholarship. Though the implication of this conclusion is supported by previous research, Mulford compiles the information known about the "Supplement" and Franklin's intentions and reveals the importance of the "Supplement" to the American Revolutionary narrative.

⁴⁵ Carla Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 300.

Mulford also discusses Franklin's connection to American prisoners of war and his desire to see these prisoners exchanged or liberated, particularly naval prisoners whom Britain had mistreated and conscripted into service. Mulford details Franklin's relationship with John Paul Jones in reference to the Jones' letter, analyzing Franklin's use of sarcasm, irony, and mockery throughout the letter in order to convey his point that Britain was misusing her power against her own citizens.⁴⁶

Some of the most recent research to examine Franklin's "Supplement" is found in Gregory Evans Dowd's book *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier* (2015), a work which analyzes the deceptions and fallacies of early America that helped shape culture and society within the young colony and nation. Dowd explains that by the War of 1812, the article achieved rejuvenated interest and contributed to reigniting American bitterness toward British Revolutionary violence.⁴⁷ Dowd's work largely pulls from Mulford's research though his scholarship offers a synopsis of Franklin's association with the Indian issues of the day, focusing largely on Franklin's goals to influence negotiations between Britain and America in relation to these concerns. Dowd emphasizes Franklin's fabrication of the article, particularly in context to the scalping accounts but offers little discussion of the events which prompted Franklin to write about the Indian massacres. Dowd's work analyzes some of the speculative reasons behind Franklin's publication of the "Supplement," arguing that Franklin took advantage of some of the worst, most shocking stories of the war and attempted to spark conversation and

⁴⁶ Carla Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 304-305.

⁴⁷ Gregory Evans Dowd, *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015) 191-193.

even speculation on the subjects he wished to address through peace negotiations.⁴⁸ Dowd's analysis also extends to the publication of the article in both America and England and examines the article's influence beyond the Revolution.

Franklin's "Supplement" has received greater scholarly attention in recent years; however, there lacks discussion on the authenticity of Franklin's claims of British misconduct as well as an examination of how the "Supplement" fits into Franklin's political views. Franklin's declarations are assumed to be exaggerated, yet historians have recognized that there are elements of truth to his assertions. In order to assess the validity of Franklin's implications, there must be analysis of Franklin's claims against the British regarding both the use of Indian force against the American colonies and the American prisoner of war situation. There must also be an assessment of the extent the "Supplement" summarizes Franklin's political opinions since the article was composed in reference to peace negotiations. For the first letter of the "Supplement," Franklin expressed his belief that the British exploited the Indians against the colonies, forcing the Indians, or at least allowing the Indians, to commit gruesome crimes against civilians who were technically still British citizens. According to Franklin, the Indians were indebted to the British for supplies; the British knew this and exploited them for it.

As for the claims of the second letter, Britain was reluctant to exchange American prisoners with their own, often mistreating and abusing these men and sometimes even coercing American soldiers into service to the British army. To Franklin, these actions were reprehensible and unfitting of a civilized nation. Franklin had worked for several years to try to rectify this issue and encourage the British into some kind of trade of prisoners, but with little avail. He even secured the help of John Paul Jones in order to compel the British to rectify the situation, yet the

⁴⁸ Dowd, *Groundless*, 193-196.

outcome proved less than desirable. Through the Jones' letter, Franklin conveyed not only the bitterness and frustration toward British authorities he had carried for many years for their lack of cooperation, but also expressed his motivations for influencing peace negotiations between America and Britain.

Franklin's accusations regarding British brutality against the American colonies do not seem too outrageous after examination of British military practices during the Revolution. Historical scholarship supports the argument that Britain was not above using violent methods to subdue insubordinate populations. Historiography is varied on how British use of Indian manpower fit into American Revolutionary experiences. Early discussion of British use of Indian tribes against the American colonies reflects the various attitudes toward Indian tribes during the nineteenth century. These include arguments that maintain that American atrocities against native tribes rivaled Indian attacks on American settlers such as described in the work of William Stone's *Life of Joseph Brant*, published in 1851.

Other authors such as Andrew MacFarland Davis in his 1887 article "The Employment of Indian Auxiliaries in the American War" address the lack of British supervision over Indian recruits which led to many of the recorded atrocities against American soldiers and civilians. Davis argues that no matter the reason for the British employing Indians or despite the fact that Americans employed Indians as well, the British were still responsible for the actions of the Indians against American civilians.⁴⁹ Historian Francis Halsey Whiting in his work *The Old New York Frontier* published in 1902 uses state archives and government records to analyze Indian violence against American civilians in the Revolution while later historians such as James Axtell

⁴⁹ Andrew MacFarland Davis, "The Employment of Indian Auxiliaries in the American War." *The English Historical Review* 2, No. 8 (1887): 712-713.

and William Sturtevant writing in the 1980s challenge traditional scholarship on Indian brutality in the American Revolution by tracing the history of the gruesome native practices.

Authors such as Colin Calloway in his work *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* published in 1995 offer an expansive interpretation of how the Revolution affected Native Americans at every level of their society in relation to their relationships with both sides in the war. Calloway also includes information on how the Indians responded to the various associations they encountered with white men throughout this experience. Likewise, Wayne E. Lee, in his work *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (2014), discusses Indian-colonial relations but also delves deeper into the social and cultural differences between these two groups and the causes of the initial conflicts between the white settlers and the natives. Lee analyzes how these populations worked to either resolve their differences on some occasions or remain in direct opposition to one another in most instances.

Franklin's "Supplement" promoted the argument that the British government was in violation of moral principles and legal obligations toward the American colonies. Stephen Conway's article "To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War" analyzes the conduct of British army officers during the Revolutionary War toward both enemy soldiers and civilians. Not all British officers and soldiers were inclined to Franklin's generalizations even though there is enough evidence to argue that Franklin's claims were not simply based on rumors. Holger Hoock's recent work *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (2017) offers an examination of the ferocity and brutality of the Revolution, defining the offenders and casualties of the war. Rather than focus on the

compromises and triumphs of the war, Hooch addresses the hostility that is often overlooked in historical scholarship and which characterizes the accusations in Franklin's "Supplement."

Franklin's purpose for publishing the "Supplement" rested primarily on informing his readers of what he believed was the British government's endorsement of barbaric military standards against Americans. Franklin's intentions were not merely to inform, but to politically engage his audience against British policy. Though proof that Franklin affected peace negotiations with the "Supplement" is not expressly evident, Franklin influenced the final discussions between Britain and America at the close of the war. Jonathan Dull, a historian who has spent much of his career studying Franklin and editing Franklin's papers and essays, examines in his recent work *Benjamin Franklin and the American Revolution* (2010) Franklin's position as an agent of opposition against the British and a minimizer of anti-Americanism. Dull specifically discusses Franklin's use of print to convey his opinions since Franklin's personality lent itself to only indirect opposition rather than open confrontation.⁵⁰ In an earlier work of Dull's, "Franklin the Diplomat: The French Mission" published in 1982, Dull examines Franklin's diplomatic role within the American Revolution, including Franklin's propaganda publications. He argues that Franklin had a distaste of the British which prompted him to write and publish things that reflected this animosity; however, Dull fails to include discussion on Franklin's "Supplement" in his work despite his analysis of Franklin's propaganda publication.⁵¹

Franklin wished to portray the irrationality of the British through his publication and hoped to enlighten the British public to what he perceived as barbarianism promoted by its

⁵⁰ Dull, *American Revolution*, 1.

⁵¹ Jonathan Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat: The French Mission," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 72, No. 1 (1982): 26-27.

government and military. The press, as Franklin well knew, provided a convenient opportunity to sway public opinion. Solomon Lutnick's work, *The American Revolution and the British Press, 1775-1783* (1967) provides one of the first comprehensive analyses of the British press during the Revolution. Examining the role of the press on public opinion and its influence on political perception, Lutnick's focuses on how the British public perceived the war by way of the press and offers some discussion on Franklin's relationship with British newspapers. Barton E. Price's work *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (2009) analyzes the role of newspapers and other public channels within Great Britain during the Revolution, examining how the war was received within Britain while describing British reaction to controversial topics such as the use of Indians against Americans. Overall, reception of the war was mixed although some British citizens overwhelmingly supported American independence.

The scholarship surrounding the "Supplement" remains largely constricted to literary analyses and limited to discussions of propaganda history; the historical investigation of Franklin's "Supplement," including the reasons for its publication, the authenticity of its allegations, and the effect of its political suggestions have been generally neglected. The article has been evaluated as a reflection of Franklin's attitude toward British political dealings with the colonies, but there is little evaluation of the authenticity of Franklin's claims on British military and government misconduct. The circulation and publication of the article in America and Britain has been investigated, but there is minimal analysis on the political ideas which prompted Franklin to publish the "Supplement." Franklin used the "Supplement" as an expression of his frustration in an attempt to uncover to those ignorant of the atrocities what he felt was duplicity within British government and barbarianism displayed by their military.

This chapter has introduced the “Supplement” as an important expression of Franklin’s ideas and opinions on British conduct and American peace and evaluated the presence of the “Supplement” in historical scholarship. The second chapter of this project will critically assess the first letter of Franklin’s “Supplement,” evaluating the events which prompted Franklin to write the article and reviewing British and American responses to British conduct in addition to Franklin’s own reaction. The third chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the second letter of Franklin’s “Supplement” and review the political instigations for his reactions to British claims of piracy as well as an assessment of the experiences of American prisoners of war. The fourth chapter will examine Franklin’s role in peace negotiations between America and Britain, providing context for Franklin’s outcry against British conduct during the war and establishing the “Supplement” as a summation of Franklin’s grievances against Parliament and the Crown. The fifth chapter will summarize this research and reassert the position that the “Supplement” holds a position among Franklin’s most important works due to its political significance as a summary of Franklin’s ideas on British political policy and a testament of his opinions on peace negotiations between America and Britain.

Chapter 2

The Gerrish Letter: A Rebuke of British Policy

Franklin published the “Supplement” to express his political opinions in a typical literary fashion and reveal to the public the hypocrisy of British colonial policy. The first half of Franklin’s “Supplement” examined an important issue not only for Franklin, but many Americans – British use of Indian force against American civilians. Despite Franklin’s exaggeration of British and Indian atrocity throughout the first letter of the “Supplement,” Franklin based his hyperbole on genuine encounters between colonial and Indian forces. There was a general lack of restraint within British regiments in charge of Indian forces, infuriating not only Franklin but numerous Americans. The slackness in British military authority gave Indian warriors free-reign in assaults against American settlements which often resulted in damage to civilian homes and livestock. Sometimes, Indian raids ended in the capture or slaying of both soldiers and civilians, provoking outcry from British and American citizens alike. Franklin mocked Parliament’s indifference to these atrocities throughout the first section of the “Supplement” by describing appalling yet embellished stories of Indian raids where dozens of the scalps of soldiers and settlers were captured through gruesome attack and torture. Franklin also expressed his resentment toward British management of its colonial holdings and native populations as well British political designs toward the American colonies, reiterating opinions he had possessed before the Revolution began. Franklin’s descriptions were shocking and extravagant by any standard, but his point was clear: There was blood on British hands, Parliament’s and King George’s hands chiefly.⁵²

⁵² The American Revolution was a universally violent war that involved brutality on all sides. Not only were the British and their Indian allies guilty of assault against American civilians and soldiers, but American patriots were responsible for aggression and hostility against Indian tribes such as the

Franklin was not the only American who believed that Parliament and the king were responsible for violence against the colonists. Influential officials from Congress agreed with many of Franklin's points. Though Franklin's descriptions were exaggerated, the motives for his protest were reasonable. Iroquoian forces had conducted raids against colonial settlements in Pennsylvania and New York throughout 1778, prompting outcry and retaliation from American civilians and officials in vengeful assaults against Indian settlements. Indian tribes responded to this retaliation in a brutal attack against the American Fort Alden in Cherry Valley, New York where an Indian force led by Joseph Brant, Indian chief of the Mohawk Indian tribe, burned white settlers' property and murdered civilians. Unable to contain the Indian force, the British received great backlash from the incident in addition to extensive criticism against their military conduct in the war and treatment of American colonists, only supplying Franklin with additional evidence of British misconduct and providing motive for the points of Franklin's "Supplement" in its protest of the unseemly British policies.

In negotiations for peace between America and Britain, Franklin expressed his desire for the British to acknowledge their offenses so that both nations could arrive at a mutual political understanding for peace. To David Hartley, in the same month Franklin published the "Supplement," Franklin wrote, "When you consider the Injustice of your War with us, and the barbarous manner in which it has been carried on, the many suffering Families among us from your Burnings of Towns Scalpings by Savages &c. &c. will it not appear to you, that tho' a

Cherokee in the South as an effort to thwart support for British forces as well as the slaughter of Loyalist groups who supported the Crown. Franklin's purpose for publishing the "Supplement" depended on those atrocities committed by the British and their Indian allies; therefore, his accounts of injustice neglected references to American violence or aggression. This research has sought to assess Franklin's suggestions of British and Indian atrocity in an effort to understand his reasons for publishing the "Supplement" and reveal the article's importance in Revolutionary literature.

Cessation of the War may be a Peace, it may not be a Reconciliation?”⁵³ Franklin intended to portray, rather explicitly, the atrocities he and his fellow Americans had witnessed throughout the war. The “Supplement” provided Franklin an avenue by which he could not only vent his frustrations regarding British policy but also summarize his life’s work in the development of the political opinions that opposed British imperial expansion and encouraged resolution to the American war.

Franklin began the first section of his “Supplement” with an unassuming title and a date of publication, “Numb. 705 Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle. Boston March 12.”⁵⁴ Franklin’s intentions were to have the article appear as an addition to the Boston newspaper with authentic type press, advertisements, and credible content. The first portion of the article began with the introduction, “Extract of a Letter from Capt. Gerrish, of the New-England Militia, dated Albany, March 7.”⁵⁵ Following this introduction, Franklin described the disturbing contents of the letter Captain Gerrish had acquired. Gerrish’s regiment had not only attained a healthy supply of goods and materials but also packages of American scalps secured by the Seneca Indians. These scalps were supposedly in route “as a Present to Co. Haldimand, Governor of Canada,”⁵⁶ meant for the king’s inspection. An enclosed letter accompanying the scalps read, “At the Request of the Senneka Chiefs I send herewith to your Excellency, under the Care of James Boyd, eight Packs of Scalps, cured, dried, hooped, and painted, with all the Indian

⁵³ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 31 March, 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vo. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 78-79.

⁵⁴ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

triumphal Marks, of which the following is Invoice and Explanation.”⁵⁷ Franklin painted a vivid picture with his opening remarks, working to reveal his disdain for British military policy in the first few sections of his “Supplement.” The scalps obtained by Gerrish were in route to England as victory trophies of British accomplishments and military achievement. The idea that such atrocity would be condoned by the British government or even celebrated reveals the depth of Franklin’s disdain. Franklin’s ultimate goal in producing the “Supplement” was to uncover the hypocrisy of Britain’s political and military practice toward America and in doing so, affect peace between the two nations.

The first detail Franklin included in the record of Indian assaults were descriptions of the soldiers’ scalps and details on how they were obtained. The letter stated that amidst the confiscated bounty were bags “containing 43 Scalps of Congress Soldiers killed in different Skirmishes; these are stretched on black Hoops, 4 inches diameter; the inside of the Skin painted red, with a small black Spot to note their being killed with Bullets.”⁵⁸ Though alarming, the death of soldiers was not quite as disturbing as the subsequent accounts Franklin provided of the hundreds of civilian scalps packed and ready to be shipped. Franklin’s explanations included details on how the victims died and where they were attacked. The political messages behind these descriptions would not have been lost on any observant reader. The civilians were those who Franklin and many others in colonial culture considered the most defenseless and innocent of society (women, children, clergy). Not only were these people killed without opportunity for defense but attacked in a gruesome manner, tortured, and maimed in Franklin’s descriptions. A

⁵⁷ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

sample of the civilian deaths suffered at the hands of the Indians included “62 of Farmers, killed in their houses; . . .surprised in the Night, and a black Hatchet in the Middle, signifying their being killed with that Weapon.”⁵⁹ Subsequent descriptions continued in gory detail.

Among the dead were ministers both young and old, women with “hair long, braided in the Indian Fashion, to shew they were Mothers,” and children and babies “ript out of their Mothers’ Bellies.”⁶⁰ Though the descriptions are obviously Franklin’s own embellishment, these summaries reveal several things about Franklin’s own ideas regarding British military policy as well as the political climate between America and Britain as the two nations approached peace negotiations. Franklin’s disdain for the British was deeply rooted in his distaste for their contradictory policies and violent military conduct. In language that conveys Franklin’s embittered resentment toward the Crown and Parliament for their betrayal of civilized war standards and abandonment of imperial loyalty, the “Supplement” represented the realities of the Revolution and a sentiment expressed most vehemently by Franklin but also by many Americans. Indeed, the “Supplement” reflected the claims of the Declaration penned six years earlier at the initiation of the conflict. Though perhaps not as eloquently or tastefully as those words penned by Thomas Jefferson, Franklin’s rebuke was just as clear as that of the Continental Congress in July 1776. King George represented all that Congress and Franklin despised with British policy. In the Declaration, the Founders accused, “He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.”⁶¹ Descriptions of the Indian

⁵⁹ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/>, Accessed August 5, 2018.

uprisings the British provoked against the colonists mirrored the implied complaints of the “Supplement,” “He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”⁶² Franklin’s “Supplement” summarized not only Franklin’s own political opinions but also the primary issues of the Revolution and the peace negotiation process. In 1779, three years following the signing of the Declaration but several years before Franklin published his “Supplement,” Franklin, John Adams, and Arthur Lee penned a letter to Comte de Vergennes of France in the First Joint Commission at Paris, expressing concerns on British policies and conduct very similar to the message of Franklin’s “Supplement”: “They have already burnt the beautiful Towns . . . [and] . . . innumerable single Buildings and smaller Clusters of Houses, wherever their Armies have march’d. They have also done their utmost in seducing Negroes and Indians to commit inhuman Butcheries upon the Inhabitants sparing neither Age, Sex, nor Character.” The commission went as far as to complain about the treatment of American prisoners of war as well, “They have thrust their Prisoners into such Dungeons, loaded them with Irons, and exposed them to such lingering Torments, of Cold, Hunger and Disease, as have destroyed greater Numbers, than they could have had an Opportunity of murdering,”⁶³ a topic Franklin addressed in the second letter of the “Supplement.”

⁶² Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence.”

⁶³ Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee, and John Adams, “The Commissioners to the Comte de Vergennes, 9 January 1779,” *The Papers of John Adams*, vol. 7, *September 7, 1778 – February 1779*, eds. Gregg L. Lint et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 305-311.

In the same year Franklin, Adams, and Lee wrote to Vergennes, Franklin was commissioned by Congress to gather a compilation of British crimes against America in an effort to unite the colonies against British tyranny and provoke sympathy from British civilians. This collection included descriptions and illustrations of the violence the British promoted with their political policies and military campaigns. Franklin wrote to David Hartley, an English politician and friend of Franklin, in 1780 concerning the directive, “Every kindness I hear of done by an Englishman to an American Prisoner makes me resolve not to proceed in the Work, hoping a Reconciliation may yet take place. But every fresh Instance of your Devilism weakens that resolution, and makes me abominate the Thought of Reunion with such a People.”⁶⁴ Franklin could not ignore the consistent hostility of British forces and allies toward American colonists.

Though there are no specific records which authenticate Franklin’s claims to mother’s having their babies “ripped” from their wombs or clergymen axed to pieces by Indian warriors, there were numerous accounts of Indian assaults which resulted in the burning of civilian homes, killing of women and children, and unnecessary torture of soldiers all while under the authority of the British military. The year 1778 brought a string of Indian raids against colonial settlements in Pennsylvania and New York, prompting outcry and retaliation from American civilians and officials. The Indians responded to this retaliation in an attack against the American Fort Alden in Cherry Valley, New York where an Indian force led by Joseph Brant, Indian chief of the Mohawk Indian tribe burned property and murdered civilians. Unable to contain the Indian force, the British received great backlash from the incident in addition to extensive criticism on their

⁶⁴ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 2 February, 1780,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 31, *November 1, 1779 through February 29, 1780*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 436-439.

military conduct in the war and treatment of American colonists, only supplying Franklin with additional evidence of British indifference and providing motive for the points of Franklin's "Supplement" and its protest against British policy.

Despite the lack of supervision on the conduct of Indian forces, Indian hostility most often occurred in opposition to British commands. The British were not entirely calloused to American appeals for protection; however, there were only minimal attempts to quell the reckless behavior for which Indian forces were known. The British, especially British officers, did not usually condone Indian violence or brutality, though this was not often advertised to the American public.⁶⁵ However, in context to Franklin's claims in the "Supplement," many times the British were simply unable to contain Indian warriors once their attacks began. This was the pinnacle of Franklin's frustration. Regardless of good intentions by any of Britain's soldiers or officers, British policy allowed for the use of Indian force against the colonists and did little more than verbally warn the Indians to avoid violence. The year 1778 brought several assaults on American civilians that neither Franklin nor the American public could ignore.

By the late 1770s, the effects of the Revolution could be observed throughout the entirety of the American colonies. While the Continental Army and British forces waged war in the southern colonies and eastern seaboard, British Major General John Butler was commissioned to undermine American forces on the frontier and throughout New York and Pennsylvania. Mohawk Indian chief Joseph Brant was paired with Butler and commissioned to attack forces and settlements in the north, around New York and Pennsylvania. Tensions ran high among colonists there due to decades of unrest between Indian tribes and white settlers and incoming

⁶⁵ Colin Calloway, "Suspicion and Self-Interest: The British-Indian Alliance and the Peace of Paris," *The Historian* 48, No. 1 (1985): 46.

European groups; this dynamic created a hazardous situation for British troops. Sometimes white settlers were inclined to exaggerate any raid against their settlements as Indian tribes periodically sought revenge on settlers under the guise of military attack. The relationship between the two groups remained less than cordial into the Revolution.⁶⁶

Although Indian attacks were nothing new by the time of the Revolution, they became the subject of Revolutionary propaganda and cause of public hysteria as the war progressed. Historian Holger Hock argues that Indian aggression would have been “less shocking to Americans on the frontier who had long since become habituated to unlimited warfare,” but Indian violence had been an issue for Americans living in cities and villages since the beginning of the war and would have been particularly egregious to those not accustomed to persistent conflict.⁶⁷ As the war progressed so did the intensity of the conflict between frontier Americans and Indian forces commissioned by the British. Though initial Indian attacks were usually no more shocking than earlier skirmishes between American settlers and Indian tribes, by the end of 1778, Indian aggression against American civilians intensified. Tragic accounts exaggerated by newspapers in the beginning of 1778 evolved into authentic stories of plunder and destruction by the end of the year.

In July 1778, Butler and Brant led an attack on the Wyoming Valley, now present day Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, which resulted in the capture of a Continental Army militia. The battle did not end with the defeat of the American forces, however; and Indians attacked settlers’ homes and land holdings following the battle. Many patriot dwellings and a great amount of

⁶⁶ Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, 217-218.

⁶⁷ Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence: America’s Violent Birth* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017): 278.

property were completely destroyed by the Indians Butler was unable to contain. Rumors spread throughout the colonies, exaggerating the attack despite the lack of civilian deaths. Those soldiers captured by the Indians were imprisoned and tortured which further contributed to growing fears and frustration toward the British.⁶⁸

In late September 1778, Americans received some retribution for the Indian attacks made against them. Colonel Thomas Hartley and Colonel William Butler of the Continental Army combined their forces against the Indian settlements at Oquaga and Tioga in New York in retaliation against the attacks against Wyoming and other settlements. Though the assaults at Oquaga and Tioga were not overwhelming victories for the Americans, they did result in the destruction of the Indian property and the death of several dozen natives. This outcome worked to further incite the Indians against Americans and became the justification for the notorious Cherry Valley Massacre.⁶⁹

In fall of 1778 clashes between Indian and American forces persisted, although one incident proved irreparably damaging to British and Indian reputations. Following the raid on Wyoming Valley in the summer of 1778, Butler and Brant continued their string of attacks in the North along New York and Pennsylvania, plundering and pillaging villages and settlements while taking prisoners of civilians and soldiers. In early fall, as British forces approached Forts Dayton and Herkimer near German Flatts, a settlement in northern New York, the Indian and British forces demolished the entire area of homes and property. By November, despite Butler and Brant's efforts to minimize civilian casualties, their forces had destroyed enough of the

⁶⁸ Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, 217-218.

⁶⁹ Max Mintz *Seeds of the Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 69-71.

settlements to raise public anxiety and frustrate American forces.⁷⁰ Historian Max Mintz explains that despite American efforts to secure the vulnerable settlements in Brant's path, "attacks by bands of Indians on men in the fields and women and children in their homes were so widespread that there was no safety outside of the forts."⁷¹

By early November 1778, the British were in position to attack Fort Alden in Cherry Valley, a settlement of several hundred inhabitants as well as dozens of officers and soldiers who occupied the fort. This attack was in part planned by Indian leaders as an act of revenge in response to the American attack at Tioga and Oquaga. Unfortunately for American forces, the American commanders and soldiers of Fort Alden were not only untrained but also unprepared for a surprise Indian attack. The initial strike on the outskirts of the settlement resulted in the capture of several officers and the death of almost two dozen soldiers as well as several casualties of women and children. The British and Indian forces were unable to infiltrate the Fort but did not stop their tirade at this offensive. The Indian force raided the surrounding settlement, violently killing civilians while destroying homes and property.⁷²

Captain Benjamin Warren, American officer present at Fort Alden during the attack, recalled the gruesome events which unfolded as the Indians concluded their assault on the settlement:

In the afternoon and morning of the 13th we sent out parties after the enemy withdrew; brought in the dead; such a shocking sight my eyes never beheld before of savage and brutal barbarity; to see the husband mourning over his dead wife with four dead children lying by her side, mangled, scalpt, and some their heads, some their legs and arms cut off,

⁷⁰ Mintz, *Seeds of Empire*, 66-67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 72-73.

some torn the flesh off their bones by their dogs-12 of one family killed and four of them burnt in his house.⁷³

As for the reasons for the assault, Joseph Brant reiterated his own frustrations as well as those of his people's toward the American strike against Indian forces in Tioga and Oquaga, "You burned our houses, which makes us and our Brothers the Seneca Indians angry, so that we Destroyed men, women, and Children at Chervalle [Cherry Valley]." Brant threatened, "We, therefore, Desire that you will Let our brothers live in peace, least ye be worst dealt with, then your Neighbours the Cheryvalle People was."⁷⁴

American response to Cherry Valley was as expected. The string of Indian attacks that had preceded Cherry Valley throughout 1778, though mild compared to the Cherry Valley incident, had only worked to incite disdain for the enemy. The scale of the Cherry Valley incident was not as grave as initially believed and even George Washington admitted to Henry Laurens by the end of November 1778 that "though the ravages at the Cherry Valley settlement were great in the late attack by the Savages, yet our loss was much less than we had reason to apprehend it from our former advices."⁷⁵ By false intelligence, the Americans had been under the impression that British and Indian forces were able to overtake Fort Alden and isolate the American force there.⁷⁶ However, both the American military and the American public were

⁷³ Benjamin Warren, "Diary of Captain Benjamin Warren at Massacre of Cherry Valley," Transcribed by David E. Alexander, from the Jared Sparks Collection of Manuscripts Deposited in the Library at Harvard University, Originally published in the *Journal of American History*, 1909.

⁷⁴ *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795, 1801, 1804*, vol. 4 (Albany: James B. Litton State Printer, 1900), 364.

⁷⁵ George Washington, "From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 23-24 November 1778," *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 18, 1 November 1778 – 14 January 1779, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 267-269.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

provoked beyond conciliation. Washington revealed to Henry Laurens regarding the Cherry Valley attack, “These depredations of the enemy give me the most serious concern—I lament that we have not yet had it in our power to give them an effectual check. I am perfectly convinced, that the only certain way of preventing Indian ravages is to carry the war vigorously into their own country.”⁷⁷

American newspapers recalled the event to the public, describing the violent scenes in graphic detail although some articles embellished the stories of assault and murder. A Pennsylvania publication recalled disturbingly, “The enemy killed, scalp, and most barbarously murdered 32 inhabitants, chiefly women and children. . . Robert Henderson head was cut off, his skull bone was cut out with the scalp - Mr. Willissister was ripup, a child of Mr. Willis 2 months old, scalp and arm cut off - the clergyman wife leg and arm cut off, and many others as cruelly treated.”⁷⁸

These attacks naturally sparked fear for future assault and contempt for British and Indian forces. Regardless of the exaggeration by the press, most civilian apprehension and distress was not unfounded. The British were not effective in quelling Indian hostility against civilian populations which was one of the primary points of Franklin’s article. “He [King George] engages savages to murder their defenceless farmers, women, and children,”⁷⁹ Franklin bitterly

⁷⁷ George Washington, “From George Washington To Henry Laurens, 16 November 1778,” *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 18, 1 November 1778 – 14 January 1779, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 169-170.

⁷⁸ “Dec. 3. From an Officer Who Was in the Fort at Cherry Valley, Nov. 11th, When It Was Attacked, We Have the Following Accounts,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 19, 1778, *Accessible Archives*, Accessed August 4, 2018.

⁷⁹ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

remarked. Franklin rebuked the British and Indian attacks which had terrorized colonists into a perpetual state of panic. This violence, Franklin believed, deserved acknowledgement and apology by the British government before peace could be restored.

In spite of Franklin's protests against Indian violence, the British were not alone in their use of Indian force in the Revolution. Early into the war, America adopted a policy to use Indian force against the British. As early as June of 1776, the Second Continental Congress permitted George Washington to "employ. . . a number of Indians" for American defense.⁸⁰ Though the British began the discussion of using Indian reinforcements as early as 1775, there was not extensive use of Indian support against America until 1777. Once the implementation process began, however, the British worked effectively to supplement their depleted regiments with Indian force to quell uprisings on the frontier. America, on the other hand, was slow in supplementing Indian force into colonial ranks and even slower in commissioning them on the battlefield.⁸¹

Previous historians have argued that American use of Indian force against the British justified British manipulation of Indian warriors against American civilians. Nineteenth century historian Andrew Davis, however, argues that the British were not released from their obligation to acknowledge the atrocities committed by the Indians while under the charge of the British military simply because they were not the first military to use this type of force. The British were still accountable their use of Indian force in situations that allowed the warriors unsupervised

⁸⁰ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1775-1789*, vol. 5, 1776 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 421.

⁸¹ Jack Sosin, "The Use of Indians in the War of the American Revolution: A Re-Assessment of Responsibility," *The Canadian Historical Review* 46, No. 2 (1965): 119-120.

access to civilians. In these cases, the British should have more prudently designated Indian forces to regiments where British soldiers were the majority force. Allowing the Indians nearly full control over attacks created opportunities for unsavory outcomes. Davis contends that British use of Indian force greatly subjected American civilians to native attacks, although those Indians employed by the Americans primarily limited their assaults to British soldiers.⁸² “As allies of the American forces,” Davis asserts that the Indians “would have been able to vent their passions only on soldiers. Acting as auxiliaries of the English, the homes of hundreds of border settlers were exposed to their raids.”⁸³ Despite Davis’s oversight to the Loyalists and Tories and other the Crown supporters who would have also been exposed to the Indian raids commissioned by the Americans, his points remain relevant. American efforts to use Indian force were far inferior to that of the British. Although Congress had petitioned for their place beside American soldiers, Indian support of British efforts far outweighed any use of Indian power by American regiments. By commissioning Indians to fight against American forces, the British assumed responsibility of any unbridled aggression. Since Britain possessed the advantage of greater support from native populations, she carried the weight of responsibility for their decorum.⁸⁴

More recent historians have maintained similar positions on the right of responsibility concerning Indian atrocity on the American frontier. Both American and British armies used Indian force against their opponents; however, the British were able to obtain the greater support from native tribes because of British willingness to provide economic benefits in exchange for

⁸² Andrew Davis, “The Employment of Indian Auxiliaries in the American War,” *The English Historical Review* 2, No. 8 (1887): 728.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 728.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 727-728.

this loyalty. Unfortunately for the reputation of the British military and the welfare of American civilians, these Indian warriors acted in a way that often negatively affected American across the frontier and that was hard to contain by British officers.⁸⁵

The violent nature of Indian warfare had been an ongoing struggle for Europeans since the beginning of colonization of the New World. Scalping was a particularly heinous war ritual that disturbed white immigrants yet was used extensively among many native tribes as a signal of victory for Indian warriors following battles. The act of scalping was significant to many Indian cultures and engrained in their customs long before Europeans arrived in North America; scalps represented “trophies” for valiant efforts in conquest. Though Europeans had their own versions of violence and genocide they practiced against the Indians who occupied the land the Europeans laid claim to, scalping was unique to American indigenous populations.⁸⁶ In the centuries and decades leading up to the Revolution, vicious fighting broke out among American colonists and Indian warriors. The Indians were responsible for many vicious raids against colonial settlers while settlers were, in turn, guilty of brutal offensive attacks against their Indian opponents. A primary crux in the American assertion of independence from Great Britain and a principal complaint of Franklin’s was the unchecked violence that the British government and military had negligently ignored.⁸⁷

At the heart of Franklin’s frustration lay not vexation with Indian hostility but a disgust with British efforts to not only ignore American requests for protection against native tribes but

⁸⁵ Sosin, “Indians in the War,” 120-121.

⁸⁶ James Axtell and William Sturtevant, “The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37, No. 3 (1980): 466.

⁸⁷ Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 277-278.

also British endeavors to subdue the American rebellion with those Indian forces and castigate the colonists for attempts to assert their rights as Englishmen against such violence. Lieutenant governor of Fort Vincennes located near the present day Indiana-Illinois border, Edward Abbott, wrote in 1778 that the American colonists wished to “put themselves under His Majesty’s protection,” but also complained that the colonists were “forced to take up arms against” the king unwillingly.⁸⁸ Though some colonists were surely more eager than Abbott described to throw off the constraints of British rule, the general consensus among most Americans was compromise before conflict. The act of pitting native populations against colonials in addition to the force of the British army infuriated most Americans but also created a universal sense of panic among civilian populations. Abbott summarized this fear with a reference to Indian violence, “It is not the people in arms that the Indians will ever daringly attack, but the poor inoffensive families who fly to the deserts to be put out of trouble, & who are inhumanly butchered sparing neither women or children.”⁸⁹

While American reactions to British use of Indian force were as expected, British public reaction was not entirely different from American protests. Troy Bickham in his work *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* asserts that the British believed that the Americans, despite their rebellious state, remained a vital part of the British Empire. The British public believed that normal British behavior against international enemies would not be appropriate against American patriots, this included an expectation of humane

⁸⁸ Edward Abbott to Sir Guy Carleton, June 8, 1778, *George Rogers Clark Papers*, vol. 3, *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Society*, James Alton James, ed., (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1912), 47.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

treatment for captives and the protection of American towns and villages. Unlike those British wars such as the French and Indian War, the British public largely believed that Americans deserved a higher standard of military conduct. Although Americans used their fair share of underhanded military tactics including their own use of Indian manpower, in the eyes of the British public and consequently the British press, it was the British military, not America who bore the brunt of criticism regarding the use of outside forces such as Indian populations and the maltreatment of American prisoners and civilians.⁹⁰

Bickman points out that based on evidence from reports of several British newspapers, the majority of the British believed that any British acts of violence would only promote hostility and American insurgence. Even the use of outsider groups like Indians and German Hessians against American forces bothered British readers as much as American patriots. Bickman remarks, “Complaints contained in the Declaration of Independence about these groups’ participation would have struck a chord with British readers. The means with which the British government waged the war in America clearly mattered to many Britons at home.”⁹¹ If the Declaration “struck a chord” then so did the “Supplement.” Franklin’s reiteration of the Declaration’s points revealed the root of the colonists’ problems with Britain during the Revolution, highlighting the lack of resolution to these issues.

Another section of the Supplement and subsequent portion of the letter found by Gerrish among the discovered Indian scalps included an explanation written by an Indian chief of why the scalps were packaged and ready for shipment. In this portion of the article, Franklin boldly

⁹⁰ Tory Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 208-209.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

chastised King George and the British government for their endorsement and authorization of the atrocities committed against America. In rebuke of British use of Indian force against the colonies and their extortion of Indian dependence on British trade, Franklin satirized the callous nature of the king and the brutality of the British political position. “We wish you to send these Scalps over the Water to the great King,” the Indian chief announced, “that he may regard them and be refreshed; and that he may see our faithfulness in destroying his Enemies, and be convinced that his Presents have not been made to an ungrateful people.”⁹² Franklin exposed the nature of British intentions which sought to prey upon the neediness of native tribes and intimidate them to fight against America. Great Britain progressively alienated entire nations with her encroachment on lands and resources; Franklin recognized this trend with not only the American colonies but also native populations, “The great King’s Enemies are many, and they grow fast in Number. . . They have driven us out of our Country for taking Part in your Quarrel. We expect the great King will give us another Country, that our Children may live after us, and be his Friends and Children, as we are.”⁹³ This was a false hope and impractical request, but not a ridiculous point for Franklin to make. The Proclamation of 1763, enacted by George III following the conclusion French and Indian War between Britain and France, had sought to establish standards for the settlement of Indian lands. This Proclamation ensured protection of lands not “ceded” to the American colonies or Britain from confiscation or disruption without contract or agreement for Indian use. All of those lands not purchased by the British were meant to be possessed by the native tribes. The Proclamation acknowledged the “Frauds and Abuses” performed against the Indians involving their lands, and in an effort to avoid future injustices, the

⁹² Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Proclamation dictated the terms of any future acquisitions of Indian land and prohibited private purchase of any land from Indian tribes.⁹⁴ Theoretically, the Indian tribes were protected under British proclamation, but the tribes were not only dependent on the British government for staying true to their agreement regarding the protection of Indian property but also reliant on the white mans' supplies and services for mere survival. Despite their desire to be autonomous, the Indian nations were unable to survive independently of their opposition.⁹⁵

The British actively engaged in acquiring Indian support in the beginning of the war and had been fairly successful throughout the war in protecting this alliance. Historian Wayne E. Lee describes the collaboration the Iroquois tribes formed with the British as a result of strategic British attempts to obtain Indian support over American forces. The influential, highly skilled, and Western educated Indian Joseph Brant possessed influence over his people that proved highly beneficial to the British militarily. Brant's authority and position enabled him to pledge his allegiance to the nation whose government would best benefit his own nation's interests. In the debate over which power he should lend his support to, Lee explains that "[Brant's] choice was easy. His efforts, combined with intense British diplomacy, pulled four of the Iroquois nations into war on the British side."⁹⁶

Regardless of the easy choice, the Iroquois were caught between their need for trade and protection and their desire to remain neutral in the impending conflict between America and

⁹⁴ King George III, "Proclamation of 1763," *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/proclamation-1763-1763>, accessed August 28, 2018.

⁹⁵ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31.

⁹⁶ Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 217.

Britain. Many of the tribes did not want to alienate the Americans or the British, since both groups had proved economically beneficial in the past. Colin Calloway in his work *The American Revolution in Indian Country* argues that the Indian nations were in the habit of pitting each side against one another in order to avoid choosing their allegiance and in an effort to keep dialogue open with white settlers. The struggle of loyalties created division even among the Iroquois tribes due to growing tensions between Britain and America as Britain continued to flex its military, political, and economic muscles in Indian country.⁹⁷ “Nothing hurt the pro-American and neutral Delawares more,” Calloway explains, “than the United States’s failure to supply them with goods and trade in time of war.”⁹⁸

Despite strong efforts to stay out of the war, it became increasingly difficult as the war progressed for the Indian nations to remain impartial. War within their own land and increasing demands by both American and British officials required the Iroquois to pledge their support for one nation or the other. Supplies and weapons became a determining factor in the choice. Long before the Revolution British authorities had formed a strategic alliance with Indian tribes based on a mutual understanding that Britain would provide security for the Indian nations as well as much needed food and supplies and trade in return for their allegiance and cooperation. Though American and British interests had coincided in the past and the Indian tribes did not have to divide their loyalties, the Revolution brought an entirely new dynamic to the situation, one that jeopardized Indian assets.⁹⁹ Although the Oneida and portion of the Tuscarora tribes chose to fight with American forces, Calloway argues that “most of the Indians who eventually sided with

⁹⁷ Calloway, *Revolution and Indian Country*, 35-37.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

Britain did so after American acts of treachery, inability to provide trade, and continued pressure on their lands convinced them they had no choice in the struggle for survival but to support the crown.”¹⁰⁰

To those tribes who decided to remain loyal to the American side, there still persisted questions on the economic and financial merit of the decision. The Iroquois were in desperate need of supplies that the British more often than the Americans generously offered. Concerning this dilemma, an Indian council expressed their dilemma to French minister M. le Chevalier de la Luzerne in 1780, “If our father is allied to the Americans, why do these allow us to be in want of everything; must we die together with our wives and children while rejecting the offers which the English make to us; we do not like them; we are ready to strike, but our urgent needs will finally force us to lend an attentive ear to their proposition.”¹⁰¹

In his “Supplement,” Franklin not only articulated his frustrations with British policy but also interpreted the dilemma of the Indian tribes regarding the American-British conflict. The increasing opposition to British control created an increasing hostility toward those native tribes who supported the British. The Seneca chief of Franklin’s “Supplement” naively believed that the British would protect and compensate the Indian people for their sacrifice, “We expect the great King will give us another Country, that our Children may live after us, and be his Friends and Children, as we are.” The growing dependency of the Indian tribes on British traders and merchants because of unfair trading practices and treaties further supported Franklin’s contempt

¹⁰⁰ Calloway, *Revolution and Indian Country*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Clarence Walworth Alvord, ed., *Virginia Series*, vol. 2, *Kaskaskia Records, 1778-1790* (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1909) 164.

for British procedure, “We have only to say farther that your Traders exact more than ever for their Goods: and our Hunting is lessened by the War, so that we have fewer Skins to give for them. This ruins us,” Franklin’s Indian chief complained in the “Supplement, “We are poor: and you have Plenty of every Thing. We know you will send us Powder and Guns, and Knives and Hatchets: but we also want Shirts and Blankets.”¹⁰²

Carla Mulford explains that Franklin would have known his audience when writing the “Supplement” and expected both American and British readers to absorb and understand his claims made throughout the “Supplement.” London’s *Public Advertiser* published Franklin’s article in September of 1782 and several references to the article such as those made by Horace Walpole in his letter to the Countess of Ossory reveal that the article was circulated and read by large audiences in Britain.¹⁰³ In a letter to John Adams, Franklin described his underlying motivations for publishing the article, “If it were re-publish’d in England it might make them a little ashamed of themselves.”¹⁰⁴

Mulford describes Franklin’s incentive for publishing the “Supplement” as going beyond simply relaying Indian atrocities to the general public; Americans and Britons alike would have already been familiar with the threat of Indian aggression. Franklin’s primary purpose for the “Supplement” rested in his desire to influence peace negotiations between the British and America by pointing out the depravity of British policy. “If we read the ‘scalping’ letter in the

¹⁰² Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹⁰³ Mulford, *Ends of Empire* Carla, 307.

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin Franklin, “To John Adams from Benjamin Franklin, 22 April 1782,” *The Papers of John Adams*, vol. 12, *October 1781 – April 1782*, ed. Gregg L Lint et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 447-448.

context of Franklin's peace negotiations and his other writings on the problems with the British ministry," Mulford explains, "the hoax is not really about the Iroquois so much as it is about the British atrocities against their own countrypeople."¹⁰⁵

With this knowledge, Franklin's motives for publication are clear. His sarcastic rhetoric and rebukes of the British Crown and Parliament were meant to provoke response. Franklin had strong opinions about British treatment of Indians and Americans as well as the colonials under British imperial rule. These were the British subjects without representation in Parliament or control over their own political and governmental affairs. Franklin's graphic descriptions were not meant to highlight the decorum of the Indians, but to emphasize British extortion of Indian force and neglect in restraining them. Franklin held fairly open-minded views on Indian relations. Although his opinions still predominately reflected eighteenth-century political theory, Franklin recognized the discrimination against many of the policies Britain implemented on native populations. To Franklin, alienating Indian groups were both economically and militarily unwise.¹⁰⁶ In his explanation for the goals and intentions of the Albany Plan which he presented in 1754, Franklin recognized that Indian populations were often taken advantage of and therefore provoked to violence, "Many quarrels and wars have arisen between the colonies and Indian nations, through the bad conduct of traders; who cheat the Indians after making them drunk, &c. to the great expence of the colonies both in blood and treasure." Franklin understood that often white men were the guilty party in instigating the conflicts between settlers and Indians, "The

¹⁰⁵ Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 300.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 127-130.

Indians have been cheated by such private purchases, and discontent and wars have been the consequence.¹⁰⁷

Franklin also asserted his low opinion of British oppressive authority and his infuriation with British extortion of her subjects in subsequent writings following his publication of the “Supplement.”¹⁰⁸ In 1784, in his essay “Remarks concerning the Savages of North America,” Franklin revealed his opinions on relations between the white man and Indian: “Savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the Perfection of Civility; they think the same of theirs. Perhaps if we could examine the manners of different Nations with Impartiality, we should find no People so rude as to be without Rules of Politeness; nor any so polite as not to have some remains of Rudeness.”¹⁰⁹

Franklin has long been recognized for his forward thinking and transcending ideas. What has not been so readily apparent to historians is the significance of the “Supplement” in context to the evolution of Franklin’s ideas. His satire emphasized the most extreme cases of British atrocities and misconduct, but the truth which underscored the primary points of Franklin’s article was the political, economic, and social domination Britain attempted to implement on her colonial subjects. In 1777, Franklin wrote to close friend, Dutch scientist Jan Ingenhousz, regarding the growing offenses of Britain and his increasing frustrations with British conduct in the war, “Indeed there is no Occasion for their Aid to sharpen my Resentment against a Nation,

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin Franklin, “Reasons and Motives of the Albany Plan of Union [July 1754],” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 5, July 1, 1753, through March 31, 1755, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962), 397-418.

¹⁰⁸ Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 301.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin Franklin, “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America,[Before January 7, 1784],” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 41, September 16, 1783, through February 29, 1784 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 412-423.

that has burnt our defenceless Towns in the midst of Winter, has excited the Savages to assassinate our innocent Farmers with their Wives and Children.”¹¹⁰ His contention here reflected the assertions of the “Supplement”: Franklin placed the blame of Indian atrocity not so much on the native tribes themselves but on what he felt was a destructive and manipulative government unwilling to control their military forces. In the same year he wrote to Ingenhousz, Franklin expressed his opinions on Britain’s economic and resource mismanagement in a publication he issued contending for financial support from European nations for American interests in the war. In this exposition, Franklin listed Britain’s mismanagement of funds and absence of new resources for wealth accumulation as reasons for her lack of credibility. Franklin believed British corruption extended to politics and economics and resulted in crimes against her own people. Franklin’s argument for the defense of American character sounded much like his complaints to Ingenhousz, “The English prosecuted the War against us with unexampled Barbarity, burning our defenceless Towns in the midst of Winter and arming Savages against us.”¹¹¹

These opinions marked Franklin’s conversations and publications until the close of the war. Franklin believed that the British were responsible for the behavior of their Indian mercenaries. With the conclusion of the first half of the “Supplement,” Franklin summarized the calloused posture of Britain’s foreign policy and Revolutionary conduct: “Thousands of People are flocking to see them [the scalps] this Morning, and all Mouths are full of Execrations.”

¹¹⁰ Benjamin Franklin “Benjamin Franklin to Jan Ingenhousz, February 12[-March 6, 1777], *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 23, October 27, 1776, through April 30, 1777, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 310-314.

¹¹¹ Benjamin Franklin, “Comparisons of Great Britain to America, as to Credit, in 1777, [Before 8 September 1777],” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 24, ed. William B. Willcox, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 508-514.

Franklin's description betrays his disgust with Parliament and the Crown, "It is now proposed to make them up in decent little Packets, seal and direct them; one to the King, containing a Sample of every Sort for his Museum; one to the Queen, with some of Women and little Children: the Rest to be distributed among both Houses of Parliament; a double Quantity to the Bishops."¹¹²

¹¹² Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

Chapter 3

The Jones Letter: A Censure of British Hypocrisy

The second half of Franklin's "Supplement" further addressed the hypocrisy of British policy. As was his custom, Franklin turned to paper and pen to express his frustrations with the economics and politics of British imperialism while providing a satirical rebuke of British policy. The second fictitious letter of the "Supplement," written under the name of John Paul Jones, was produced in response to Sir Joseph Yorke's accusations of piracy based on an encounter in 1779 between the *Bonhomme Richard*, an American ship commanded by Jones, and two British ships the *Serapis*, commanded by Captain Richard Pearson, and a smaller ship, the *Countess of Scarborough*. An American victory, the battle resulted in the surrender of the *Serapis* and *Countess of Scarborough* as well as the capture of the British crew and seizure of the badly damaged *Serapis*, which Jones sailed to the Netherlands for restoration purposes. This incident only enflamed British officials against American forces since Jones negated returning the ship and the *Serapis*'s commander to England as he had promised to do once he arrived in the Netherlands. Sir Joseph Yorke, British ambassador to the Netherlands, returned Jones's blatant defiance with accusations of piracy. Yorke deemed Jones's "claim [to] the *Serapis* & the *Scarborough* as being no legal prizes; being taken by rebels, & by a Subject of the English King."¹¹³ Since the British had shown reluctance to exchange American naval prisoners for British captives and generally refused to cooperate with American military demands, Franklin believed that British charges of piracy were not only unfounded, but hypocritical. The

¹¹³ Charles-Guillaume-Frédéric Dumas, "To Benjamin Franklin to Dumas, 12 October 1779," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 30, July 1 through October 31, 1779 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 527-528.

“Supplement” provided an outlet for Franklin to simultaneously express his frustrations and mock British hypocrisy.

The second letter of the “Supplement” described the key points of Franklin’s political opinions on America’s position within the British Empire and the war. Yorke had accused Jones, and by extension, America, of piracy. Franklin maintained that these claims were not only fallacious but reflective of British activities rather than American exploits. Franklin believed Britain had been overstepping her political boundaries for quite some time, as he demonstrated in the essays and articles which preceded the publication of the “Supplement.” Through his assertions in the Albany Plan of Union of 1754, Franklin expressed his design for the political and economic future of America while his later publication “On Claims to the Soil of North America,” published in 1773, explained the degree to which he believed colonial authority extended. Through these writings, Franklin’s revealed the future he saw for America, a future based on sovereign rights of economic and political liberty. Franklin’s opinions and explanations found in his articles, essays, and letters correlated to his complaints and criticisms of the “Supplement.” Franklin argued that British expansion across the globe increased hostility that subjugated the growing empire into not only paying taxes that stymied colonial economic development but also submitting to political encroachment that stifled individual freedoms. Franklin was unamused at British attempts to dominate American interests at the expense of imperial progress, but he was especially disturbed by how the opinions of British officials affected war related issues. For Franklin, any hopes of peace between America and Britain as the war drew to a close meant total reconciliation between the two nations or no peace at all. This further meant that Britain would need to acknowledge her diplomatic misbehavior in respect the atrocities Franklin believed were committed in the name of the King. These atrocities involved

not only the extortion of Indian force against the colonists but also the treatment and containment of American prisoners of war. Franklin was especially affronted by the general lack of exchange of prisoners between Britain and America as well as the poor treatment many American soldiers suffered. Franklin spent much of the war contending these issues, finally accumulating his frustrations into the satirical exposition which was the “Supplement” to the *Boston Independent Chronicle*.

Franklin’s initial contention in the second letter of the “Supplement” was based on Yorke’s claims of piracy. In the “Supplement,” Franklin defined *pirate* “to be *hostis humani generis*, [an enemy to all mankind].”¹¹⁴ Though Yorke had accused Jones of piracy for confiscation of British property, Franklin claimed American exploits were for the cause liberty rather than plunder, unlike the abuses of the British Empire. Britain’s exploitations were the root cause of Franklin’s aggravation expressed in the “Supplement.” The first half of the “Supplement” defined Franklin’s opinion of Britain’s extortion of Indian force and their atrocities toward civilians. The second half of his “Supplement” probed further into Britain’s illegitimate claims as an empire and her management of colonial possessions and interests. Furthermore, the both letters of the “Supplement” articulated the points of the Declaration of Independence by attacking Parliament and the king for forsaking the moral principles and individual liberties which so many Britons held dear.

In addressing the piratical claims Yorke made toward John Paul Jones, Franklin recalled the British politician John Hampden’s challenge of a ship tax issued by Charles I in the seventeenth century. Hampden had refused to pay the tax, claiming Charles’s actions were

¹¹⁴ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

unconstitutional since they were not initiated by Parliament. Hampden's actions triggered the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642. Franklin challenged, "Have you then forgot the incontestible principle, which was the foundation of Hambden's glorious lawsuit with Charles the first, that 'what an English king has no right to demand, an English subject has a right to refuse?'"¹¹⁵ Franklin called attention to the political alliances Yorke and his father, Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, avidly upheld. Hardwicke had been a prominent Whig and influential lawyer of the early eighteenth century, responsible for his son's significant rise in British politics. Yorke supported the Whig party throughout his political career, but Franklin claimed that Yorke had forsaken the essentials of Whig ideology. Franklin's insult was based on an American idea of Whig principles that differed from those of the British Whig party. These differences framed the argument of Franklin's "Supplement" as well as the Revolutionary conflict in general.

The Whig party that dominated British politics for over a hundred years had evolved from events that transpired during the seventeenth century following the English Civil War. In contrast to the Tory political party that sought for a more powerful, traditional monarchy, Whigs supported the power of a representative body and constitutional monarch over the absolute right and rule of kings; the Whig party had played an important role in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and was essential to the expulsion of Catholic King James II from the throne. Their politics were built on a tradition of individual liberty while advancing the concept of representative government that held kings accountable to their people and the ruling bodies that gave them

¹¹⁵ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

power.¹¹⁶ Yorke's father as well as Yorke himself supported the Whig party, but Franklin believed Yorke's loyalties were slipping. For Franklin, Yorke no longer represented the distinctive liberties that the Whig party claimed to uphold. Franklin asserted, "But you cannot so soon have forgotten the instructions of your late honourable father, who, being himself a sound Whig, taught you certainly the principles of the Revolution, and that, 'if subjects might in some cases forfeit their property, kings also might forfeit their title, and all claim to the allegiance of their subjects.'"¹¹⁷ Franklin, however, had a different view of Whig ideology than did Yorke or his fellow English politicians. Historian Lee Ward explains that the fanatical philosophy of individual rights or "popular sovereignty" and the concept of a king who derived his authority from the people rather than God was advanced by the radical British Whigs of the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century, however, this philosophy had tempered into a more conventional political ideology that called for centralized power within the representative body of Parliament rather than concentrated authority in the hands of the people. The British Whigs of the eighteenth century embraced this less extreme interpretation of power while American politicians in the colonies identified with a more fanatical interpretation of Whig politics.¹¹⁸ Ward argues, "The long experience of self-government and benign neglect from the mother country encouraged Americans to see their colonial assemblies as a reflection of popular sovereignty rather than merely subordinate legislatures governed by the supreme authority in

¹¹⁶ Melinda Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), xiii.

¹¹⁷ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹¹⁸ Lee Ward *The Politics of Liberty in England and Revolutionary America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17-18.

Britain.”¹¹⁹ Franklin’s accusations berated Yorke for abandoning his political heritage and his familial loyalties based on a radical Whig philosophy. The American colonies had revolted against the claims of Parliament and the Crown that sought to subject them to demands that raged against the concepts of self-government and popular sovereignty.

Many of the principles to which Yorke so vehemently held were also based on an aging diplomatic philosophy that joined Britain to Austria and the Dutch Republic against their mutual enemy, France. While eastern powers such as Russia grew in prominence and influence and the strength of the Dutch Republic and France waned, Yorke, along with other British politicians, remained fixated on maintaining a strong coalition between Austria and the Dutch. Following Jones’s refusal to obey Yorke’s orders to return the *Serapis* and its prisoners following the battle with the *Bonhomme Richard* and instead remain within the protective realms of neutral Dutch territory, Yorke attempted to persuade British authorities to apprehend Jones and his bounty despite Dutch stance to not get involved in the American war.¹²⁰ Franklin highlighted Jones’s ignorance and backward political mindset with his ridicule of Yorke’s hypocrisy.¹²¹

Franklin hurled accusations against Yorke and his colleagues. These accusations were composed as questions, carefully constructed to expose the duplicity of Yorke’s allegations against Jones. With his questions, Franklin summarized the claims of the Declaration of Independence, “If then a king declares his people to be out of his protection, violates their constitutional rights, wages war against them, plunders their merchants, ravages their coasts,

¹¹⁹ Ward, *Politics of Liberty*, 17.

¹²⁰ Hamish M. Scott, “Sir Joseph York, Dutch Politics and the Origins of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War,” *Historical Journal* 31, No. 3 (1988): 577-580.

¹²¹ Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 305.

burns their towns, engages savages to murder their defenceless [populations], excites domestic insurrections -- Does not so atrocious a conduct towards his subjects, dissolve their allegiance?"¹²² Franklin answered his own rhetorical questions with a comparison of George III to the sadistic Roman emperor Nero, "By continuing in his present course a few years longer," Franklin predicted, "[He] will have destroyed more of the British people than Nero could have found inhabitants in Rome."¹²³ Franklin's disdain for King George was openly apparent in this discourse. Franklin despised the tyrannical fashion of both the king and Parliament throughout the Revolution. In this "Supplement," Franklin made his audience fully aware of his disapproval with insults mocking the oppression with which Franklin believed British leaders enslaved their fellow citizens, "Voluntary malice, mischief, and murder are from Hell: and this king will, therefore, stand foremost in the list of diabolical, bloody, and execrable tyrants." Franklin did not forget Parliament's role in these grievances. For Franklin, Parliament's lack of restraint on King George constituted an approval of his actions. The graphic imagery Franklin used to describe the apathy of Parliament reveals his disgust with the British government, "His base-bought parliaments too, who sell him their souls, and extort from the people the money with which they aid his destructive purposes, as they share his guilt, will share his infamy." Franklin held the members of Parliament responsible for what he believed were devastating atrocities, all done in an effort to accomplish the demands of the Crown, "Parliaments, who to please him, have repeatedly, by different votes year after year, dipped their hands in human blood, insomuch that

¹²² Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹²³ Ibid.

methinks I see it dried and caked so thick upon them, that if they could wash it off in the Thames which flows under their windows, the whole river would run red to the Ocean.”¹²⁴

Franklin expressed his political opinions on British authority in the first few paragraphs of the Jones’ letter. These were ideals he had spent some time writing about in the decades preceding the Revolution and the publication of this “Supplement.” Carla Mulford in her work *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* gives an excellent analysis of Franklin’s ideas concerning British imperialism as well as his opinions on public and private authority in her interpretation of Franklin’s political and economic vision for North America and the British Empire. Franklin’s ideas represented in the Albany Plan of Union, composed in 1754 as well as the ideas he expressed in his other writings such as his essay “On Claims to the Soil of America” written in 1773. These publications reveal the evolution of Franklin’s standards for America’s future within the empire.¹²⁵

The Albany Plan of Union originated from the Albany Congress, a commission of representatives from seven of the thirteen colonies called together by government officials of New York in order to stabilize relations between the a Iroquoian tribes and the colonists. Initially organized as a response to the French and Indian War as an effort to anticipate and combat any French attack coming from the Ohio Valley, the congress evolved into an attempt to connect the colonies under a consolidated government for political and economic unification.¹²⁶ Franklin

¹²⁴ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹²⁵ See Mulford’s chapters “Franklin’s Imperial Imaginings: ‘Coined Land’ and Global Goals” and “Pennsylvania Politics and the Problems of Empire” in *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹²⁶ Murray N. Rothbarb, *Conceived in Liberty* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2011), 731.

became the primary draftsman of the Albany Plan, which was intended to merge the colonies with mutual governmental, economic, and defensive objectives in order to structure and simplify correspondence and relations while connecting the colonies under one political purpose. The plan also made allowance for taxation of the colonies by the new government and an appointed administrator and representative assembly.¹²⁷ The Albany Plan was the instigator of Franklin's "JOIN, or DIE" cartoon published in his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, representing the dysfunction of colonial division in the face of an impending French attack. Franklin's purpose for the plan was an indication of his ideas regarding America's position in the British Empire. Though at this point, Franklin was not promoting a separation from the British Empire as an independent nation, Franklin recognized the need for unity among the colonies for what historian Timothy Shannon has called a need to establish a "central role in Britain's future prosperity."¹²⁸ Franklin held fast to the hope that as America continued in the vein of economic sufficiency and near political autonomy, she could align herself neatly alongside Britain as a collaborator and colleague rather than subordinate colony. This "equal partnership" would only come from a collective effort of the colonists to combine their political and economic interests to assume a vital place within the realm of British interests and future growth.¹²⁹ The plan was wholly unsuccessful because many of the colonial representatives believed that it sequestered too much individual freedom that colonists were unwilling to part with at that time; however, an indication of Franklin's ideas regarding America's place in the British Empire, both politically and economically, were

¹²⁷ "Albany Plan of Union," From Office of the Historian, US Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/albany-plan>, Accessed August 4, 2018.

¹²⁸ Timothy J. Shannon, *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire: The Albany Congress of 1754* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 88.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

exposed through his efforts to combine colonial resources in an attempt to assert America's position as a valuable asset to British interests.¹³⁰

Nearly two decades later, on the eve of the Revolution, Franklin published his essay "On Claims to the Soil of America" which declared his frustration with British assertion of superiority over the American colonies and identified the idea that those people who held the land directly were the proprietors and therefore the administrators of the land. Although the British government's regulations and decrees insinuated that American interests were inferior to those of the British because America was a colony of Britain rather than the central headquarters of it, Franklin contested that American interests were equal to those interests of English residents living within the British Isles. Franklin believed that Americans were the rightful proprietors over the colonies since they were the ones who procured the land.¹³¹ Franklin contended that taxation of American colonies was in violation of American rights as Englishmen because Americans did not have a voice in Parliament. Many British politicians and King George counter-argued that the levying of taxes against Americans was justified regardless of the lack of representation in Parliament because numerous British citizens within Britain's borders were under the same condition. Franklin claimed the officials who defended this opinion were "arguing from bad to worse."¹³² He frustratingly contended, "If any here are unjustly deprived of that Privilege, restore it. Do right at home, if you please, and then make that a Precedent for

¹³⁰ Shannon, *Indians and Colonists*, 89.

¹³¹ Benjamin Franklin, "On the Claims to the Soil of America, 16 March 1773," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 20, *January 1 through December 31, 1773*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 115-122.

¹³² *Ibid.*

doing right abroad: But never think that doing wrong at home will justify your doing wrong all the World over.¹³³

Franklin's conceptions of political autonomy and national sovereignty were based on the idea that new nations are capable of creating and determining new, individualized directives for themselves based on their own cultural needs and philosophies. This perception differed from a more prevalent, traditional view of power existing during the eighteenth century which dictated that colonies and nations derived autonomy from those powers already established. With the burgeoning of new government and politics in the establishment of America as a nation, Franklin believed that American sovereignty was not dependent on British authority but contingent on American political standards and principles. Franklin's ideas were groundbreaking for his time and helped to influence the establishment of the new American government, first by the Articles of Confederation and then by the Constitution but most importantly with America's assertion of independence from Great Britain and the drafting of the Declaration of Independence.¹³⁴

Not only through his important published works, but also through his letters and personal writings, Franklin revealed his ideals on personal freedoms and the obligations of citizenry. These ideas developed into the opinions he manifested in the "Supplement." Early in Franklin's writings, such as in the expositions written in the 1750s and '60s as well as the 1770s, Franklin expressed his thoughts on preserving British authority and influence across the globe and growing the empire's economic and political power. These ideas developed to include Franklin's personal convictions on individual rights and responsibilities, specifically the right of colonies to

¹³³ Franklin, "Claims to the Soil," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 115-122.

¹³⁴ Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 276.

operate without economic and political constraints while maintaining a place under the protection and function of the empire. Franklin realized by the Revolution that neither Parliament nor the Crown considered its colonies equal participants in the affairs of the empire, and he believed that the only natural response to this dilemma was for America to assert her independence from Britain. These principles influenced Franklin's ideas and publications on rights to land and territory, strengthening his arguments for independence. Franklin believed that those people who contracted and obtained the land initially, whether by agreements with native populations or original settlement, were entitled to the ownership of the land.¹³⁵ For Britain to levy unreasonable taxes and assert ownership over American territory was in violation of a principle Franklin enumerated in the "Supplement," "the law of God— 'Thou shalt not steal,'" ¹³⁶

Britain spent the greater part of the eighteenth century at war with one or more European power, namely France. Despite a span of peaceful years in the beginning of the eighteenth century, Britain had engaged in several decades of conflict prior to the Revolution. These struggles were in direct correlation to British expansionism which vied for dependent holdings or colonies across the globe for the acquisition of wealth and material resources and the proliferation of political ideology, economic philosophy, and faith around the world.¹³⁷ Though Franklin was not opposed to the growth of the British Empire as a whole, he disagreed with British procedure that suppressed the rightful freedoms of colonial peoples for the purpose of advancing Britons on the main island without any thought to the welfare of colonials. He

¹³⁵ Mulford, *Ends of Empire*, 14-16.

¹³⁶ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹³⁷ Lawrence Stone, "Introduction," in *An Imperial State of War: Britain from 1689-1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (New York: Routledge, 1994) 24.

believed that the greatest success for the empire would come from policies which allowed Americans to operate their governments and economies under the protection of the British Empire but uninhibited by regulations established by an unrepresentative government body such as Parliament.¹³⁸ Franklin's ideals evolved throughout the eighteenth century to the place of the "Supplement." Not only a piece of propaganda meant to influence peace and ridicule British authority, Franklin's "Supplement" represented his ideas on liberty and an American future as well as an accumulation of his past frustrations with the policies of the British government.

Franklin addressed the issue of British aggression and hostility within the "Supplement," naming Britain, "An enemy to, and at war with one whole quarter of the world, America, considerable parts of Asia and Africa, a great part of Europe, and in a fair way of being at war with the rest."¹³⁹ Franklin attacked not only the actions of the empire as a whole but the spirit of British citizens, Parliament, and the king. Franklin mocked the beloved English stories of romanticized gallantry that accompanied the accounts of British exploits, condemning the idealization of characters like Robin Hood or historical figures such as Alexander the Great who were most famous for their acts of robbery and pillaging. Franklin argued that "this spirit" which prompted "more highway robberies that there [were] in all the rest of Europe put together" lent itself to the destructive wars Britain continually instigated. The height of British aggression, Franklin argued, materialized into warmongering propensities that turned destructively inward toward British colonial holdings rather than outward toward Britain's national enemies. Franklin criticized, "Hence, having lately no war with your ancient enemies, rather than be without a war,

¹³⁸ Carla Mulford, "The Imperial Franklin: Revisiting and Revising North America's Role in the British Empire," *Common-Place* 17, No. 1 (2016), <http://common-place.org/book/the-imperial-franklin-revisiting-and-revising-north-americas-role-in-the-british-empire/>, Accessed August 4, 2018.

¹³⁹ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

you chose to make one upon your friends.” The actions of the British government were insidious to Franklin because he believed that this “highway robbery” conducted in the name of Parliament and the Crown not only went against national standards of decorum but also moral standards. “In this your piratical war with America,” Franklin complained, “the mariners of your fleets, and the owners of your privateers were animated against us by the act of your parliament, which repealed the law of God— ‘Thou shalt not steal,’—by declaring it lawful for them to rob us of all our property that they could meet with on the Ocean.”¹⁴⁰

As the American colonists asserted independence over British authority and progressed toward settling peace and framing the margins of self-government, Franklin was compelled to reaffirm his opinions on British conduct in the war and her responsibility as an empire. The “Supplement” not only provided Franklin a medium by which to satirically rebuke the actions of Parliament and the Crown in respect to what he believed were reprehensible atrocities of the war, but also offered a place for him to express his dissatisfaction with British imperial diplomacy. Franklin hoped not only for peace, but also reconciliation, or an admittance by Britain to the atrocities committed during the war and a semblance of effort to make reparations on this point. Although Franklin could not ensure that his opinions transcribed in the “Supplement” would influence British officials to the point of transforming the attitude or engagements of Parliament and the Crown to reform on a global scale, Franklin recognized his influence on local affairs and sought to affect negotiations accordingly. To David Hartley in 1782 Franklin wrote, “I am pleased to see in the Votes & parliamentary Speeches, and in your public Papers that in

¹⁴⁰ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

mentioning America, the Word *Reconciliation* is often used. It certainly means more than a mere Peace.”¹⁴¹

Franklin’s frustration over British imperialism and the mismanagement of her colonial holdings spilled into another major argument. Because of the rebellious state of the American colonies, British officials were not always eager or willing to handle military situations with the level of decorum expected by international standards. From Franklin’s point of view, this most heavily affected American prisoners of war, who were in an unusual position due to their political status. Although they were not slaves, American soldiers were by definition traitors, which often brought on unfair treatment and punishment as a result of their insurgence. Franklin was frustrated by the poor treatment of American prisoners throughout the war as well as the general lack of exchange of prisoners between the two nations. The reluctance to exchange prisoners with America and their refusal to uphold international standards for prisoner treatment infuriated both Franklin and other American officials. Though at the beginning of the war Franklin’s hopes remained high for conducting prisoner exchange, by 1779 Franklin realized his efforts to secure exchanges were mostly in vain. Franklin wrote to David Hartley concerning the lack of cooperation on Britain’s part, “I a long time believed that your Government were in earnest in agreeing to an Exchange of Prisoners. I begin now to think I was mistaken. It seems they cannot give up the pleasing Idea of having at the End of the War 1000 Americans to hang for high Treason.”¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 5 April 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 94-96.

¹⁴² Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 25 January 1779,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 28, *November 1, 1778, through February 28, 1779*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 420.

Franklin believed that British leaders prevented successful prisoner exchanges in reaction to American independence, however, Britain was not alone in her unwillingness to conduct exchanges. Holger Hoock argues in his work *Scars of Independence* that America was reluctant to exchange prisoners as well, preferring to use prisoners as bargaining agents in persuading Britain to accept American independence. Congress did not want to readily offer the British back their highly skilled soldiers if America was not to receive something substantial in return. Americans such as Franklin and even Washington were more inclined to facilitate mutual tradeoffs, but more often than not, Congress in conjunction with British officials prevented these exchanges.¹⁴³ In his correspondence published after the war, General Cornwallis expressed frustration with Americans over their hesitancy to cooperate with British authorities over exchange of British prisoners. Despite British willingness to work out the terms of exchange on several occasions, Americans were content to hold on to British prisoners if their diplomatic qualifications were not met, especially following Saratoga. Editor Charles Ross discloses in his commentary of Cornwallis's correspondence that "the whole of the British prisoners were detained in captivity more or less close, till the termination of the war, the Americans preferring in this, as in several other similar cases, rather than to violate their pledges than to allow the English the advantage of a reinforcement of trained troops."¹⁴⁴

According to historian Philip Ranlet, one of the primary reasons most British commanders were hesitant to authorize an exchange was due to the difficulties in maintaining the prisoners for exchange. Cornwallis believed it much more convenient and beneficial to his own

¹⁴³ Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 183.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Cornwallis, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. 1, Charles Ross, ed. (London: John Murray 1859), 36.

soldiers if the prisoners were transported to prison ships instead of wasting British support as security for prison camps and transport within the colonies. His men were then available to fight rather than sentry the American prisoners.¹⁴⁵ In most instances, prisoner exchange was impeded by some effort from both sides. Neither the British nor Americans were wholly committed to cooperation in prisoner exchange. This was largely due to the fact that the American Congress and British officials usually acted according to their own nations' best interests and usually insisted on terms which best suited this agenda.

By 1782, Franklin fully condemned the British for their lack of collaboration on the prisoner situation despite some American efforts to thwart exchanges. Franklin's complaints also extended to British tolerance of horrible prison conditions. He used the "Supplement" to publicize his irritation, "During these six years past, [King George] has destroyed not less than forty thousand of those subjects, by battles on land or sea, or by starving them, or poisoning them to death, in the unwholesome air, with the unwholesome food of his prisons."¹⁴⁶

The treatment of American prisoners of war under British authority has been a topic of research and discussion since the end of the Revolution. Despite the tradition of downplaying the severity of treatment for American prisoners that tainted accounts and historical examination in the nineteenth century, recent studies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have determined that American soldiers were often malnourished and abused under British authority, with only few exceptions and especially in comparison to American treatment of British soldiers. Several factors including the extensive cost of the war and the lack of supplies and food available to the

¹⁴⁵ Ranlet, "In the Hands of the British," 743.

¹⁴⁶ Franklin, "Supplement," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

British weighed heavily on British officials and not only affected prisoner treatment but also conditions for British soldiers.¹⁴⁷ Part of the reason for British mistreatment of prisoners resulted from an act instated by Parliament in 1777 which dictated that those captured or “seized. . .in the act of high treason, committed in any of his Majesty’s colonies or plantations in America” would be subject to accusations and convictions of “high treason.”¹⁴⁸ Because American soldiers were considered rebels and traitors instead of enemy soldiers, the British government had very little desire or incentive to maintain any international standard of decorum for prisoner treatment. There was also the issue of how costly the war was for Britain; supplies and shelters for prisoners were only added expense to an already expensive war. Naval prisoners especially suffered extremely harsh conditions on British prison ships. George Washington pointed out to General Cornwallis in 1781 that “the inadequacy of the room in the prison-ships to the number of prisoners confined on board of them, which causes the death of many, and is the occasion of most intolerable inconveniences and distresses to those who survive”¹⁴⁹

Franklin’s grievances in the “Supplement” expressed his frustrations with Britain’s treatment of American prisoners, an issue which had irritated Franklin since the beginning of the war. By the eighteenth century, European standards for treatment of prisoners was fairly civilized and generous, even by today’s standards. Prisoners of war were to be supplied with adequate food and shelter. Unnecessary killing of prisoners was forbidden, and prisoners were

¹⁴⁷ Philip Ranlet, “In the Hands of the British: The Treatment of American POWS in the Hands of the British” *The Historian* 62, No. 4 (2000): 732.

¹⁴⁸ *The Parliamentary Register; or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons* (London: Burlington House, 1777), 156.

¹⁴⁹ George Washington, “George Washington to the Officer Commanding His Majesty’s Britannic Ships of War at New York,” August 21, 1781, In *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by Jared Sparks (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, 1839), 146.

not to be conscripted for the enemy army. These were all standards that General Washington sought to uphold in the Continental Army. Although officers on either side of the battle were given preferential treatment, British treatment of enlisted American soldiers was not in concordance with traditional British standards.¹⁵⁰

One American officer who witnessed prison life for American prisoners firsthand was Captain John Thornton, commissioned to board British prison ships with a few supplies in an effort to assess the conditions of American soldiers. Though his findings were not grotesque, he reported on the general lack of clothing and food prisoners received. Thornton was especially bothered by the treatment of officers who were given no special privileges aside from their lower ranking subordinates. He was allowed to visit Forton Prison located in Gosport, a district of England near Portsmouth Harbor as well. There he described the harsh penalties that the prisoners suffered as a result of an escape attempt, “They are punished with an unexampled severity for such an offence and tho’ many things that have appeared in the papers concerning the cruelty of [their?] Keepers have been exaggerated.” However, Thornton persisted, “There [are] many capricious and vexations arising from this quarter, which add greatly to the weight of their misery.”¹⁵¹

More accounts from those who suffered on prison ships confirm Franklin’s complaints. Charles Herbert, who was captured aboard the *Dolton* in 1776 when he was just eighteen years of age, recorded the details of the poor conditions that he endured aboard a British prison ship.

¹⁵⁰ Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 181-182.

¹⁵¹ John Thornton, “Memorandum for the American Commissioners, [Between 5 and 8 January 1778],” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 25, *October 1, 1777, through February 28, 1778*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 414-419.

Though his surroundings started out pleasant enough aboard the ship with adequate food and shelter, Herbert became desperately ill without necessary accommodations after several months of imprisonment. Herbert wrote on February 6, 1777, “We begin to grow very sickly, and twenty or thirty of us are suffering with the itch, and we are all dreadfully infested with vermin. I make a constant practice of examining my clothes every day . . . I often find them swarming with these.”¹⁵² For the sick, conditions were horrendous since many prison ships lacked the supplies or space to care for the diseased. Given the general standards of eighteenth-century medical practices, these men suffered greatly. “We are obliged to lay upon a wet deck,” Hebert wrote, “without even bedding or clothes, more than what we have on our backs – except a very few who have a very old blanket apiece.”¹⁵³

Herbert was eventually transported to a hospital in England after contracting smallpox and then taken to the Old Mill Prison in Plymouth. There, Herbert experienced the depraved conditions of inadequate food and supplies as well as deplorable living conditions. Spirits were low and many men resorted to eating grass and insects in order to stay off the pangs of hunger. Herbert recalled, “A great part of those in prison, eat at one meal what they draw for twenty long hours, and then go without until the next day. . . Often the cooks, after they have picked over our cabbage, will cut of the but-ends of the stalks, and throw them over the gate into the yard. . . These same cabbage stumps, hogs in America would scarcely eat if they had them.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Charles Herbert, *A Relic of the Revolution: A Full and Particular Account of the Sufferings of All the American Prisoners during the Revolution of 1776* (Boston: Charles H. Pierce, 1847), 22.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

American prisoners of war in the southern campaigns suffered especially harsh conditions. The Siege of Charleston, North Carolina in 1780, a victory for the British, brought in the largest amount of American prisoners of the entire conflict.¹⁵⁵ The prisoner population in Charleston proved difficult for the British to manage due to the constant threat of escape as well as the increasing influx of prisoners from subsequent victories. The great expense that the sheer number of prisoners placed on British finances made operations difficult. These demands provoked the British to move the American prisoners to decommissioned British ships docked in Charleston Harbor. These ships were usually secure enough to contain prisoners but became overpopulated breeding grounds for disease and filth. Historian Carl Borick estimates that six of the specific ships the British used for harboring prisoners in Charleston could only hold about 1,200 men although estimates for the prisoner population reached over 6,000 initially and grew over the passing months.¹⁵⁶ The conditions aboard the ships were often deplorable. Donald Sellers, Charleston prisoner held captive on one of the prison ships in Charleston Harbor, described his experience as “such a severe prison was more than what I was able to stand Being at the same time without Money and Clothes eating [eaten] up with lice and rotton [rotten] with dirt I laid down at night the same as I walked about all day neither Blankets nor anything But the hard boards to rest upon.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Carl P. Borick, *Relieve Us This Burthen: American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780-1782* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Borick, *Relieve Us This Burthen*, 15-16.

¹⁵⁷ Donald (Daniel, David) Sellers (Sellars), Pension Application File R9376, March 28, 1839, ed. Will Graves, *Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pensions & Rosters*, <http://www.revwarapps.org/r9376.pdf>, Accessed October 23, 2018.

Sickness abounded in the overcrowded, dirty quarters in which prisoners were forced to live while diseases such as yellow fever and small pox devastated prisoner populations. The lack of money and food for the British to supply their own forces further lowered any chances of American prisoners receiving extra rations or supplies from their enemy captors. Other organizational issues and budget constraints prevented sufficient provisions reaching the soldiers.¹⁵⁸ Robert Chambers, American soldier held captive aboard one of the ships of Charleston remarked, “We were entirely destitute of money and almost every other necessary we had suffered a long and severe captivity during which we had receiv’d neither clothing nor pay . . . officers sympathized with us in our distress and would fain have relieved us but they were too much in our own situation to afford us any relief the most of us.”¹⁵⁹ Chambers described his “distressed” condition aboard the ships as being “too great to be express’d.”¹⁶⁰

Franklin’s second letter of the “Supplement” was more direct than his first in that it did not graphically satirize atrocities conducted by the British military or their allies with fabricated accounts of murder and plunder; however, the purpose of the Jones’ letter paralleled the objective of the Indian letter quite closely. Over the decades preceding the American war for independence, Franklin had grown increasingly frustrated with British policy toward her colonial holdings. Britain’s handle of issues involving the conduct of her allied forces during the Revolution and the management of American prisoners of war worked to only further agitate him toward Parliament and the Crown. Franklin was known to express his frustrations through a

¹⁵⁸ Borick, *Relieve Us This Burthen*, 18-19.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Chambers, Pension Application File S8194, April 22, 1818, ed. C. Leon Harris, *Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pensions & Rosters*, <http://revwarapps.org/s8194.pdf>, accessed October 23, 2018.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

written medium; the “Supplement” was Franklin’s sardonic rebuke of the misconduct which he believed British officials were guilty. Safely disguised under the pennames of American heroes yet publically printed as an addition to a prominent colonial newspaper, Franklin berated British authority in an effort to expose what he perceived as the duplicity of their policies.

Chapter 4

Peace Negotiations: Beyond Publication

Franklin published his “Supplement” in the midst of serious peace negotiations between America and Britain as well as France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic. Efforts for peace and reconciliation commenced in earnest by the spring of 1782 following the American victory at the Battle of Yorktown in the autumn of 1781. Preliminary negotiations included British peace commissioner Richard Oswald as well as American negotiators John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and eventually Henry Laurens. Franklin assumed an important role in negotiations due to his prominent connections to British and French officials as well as his interest in securing reparations for American losses in the war. Britain’s initial reluctance to pay reparations for American losses and Parliament’s hesitancy to consider American sovereignty provoked Franklin to seek compromise that primarily benefitted the newly formed United States both politically and economically while compelling British officials to take responsibility for the violence promoted by British policy throughout the war. The “Supplement” revealed the basis for Franklin’s interest in negotiations and provided a foundation for the provisional peace treaty between America and Britain he created. This provisional peace was the essential workings of the peace treaty signed in 1783 that officially ended the war.

Through his letters, Franklin revealed that his primary intention for publishing the “Supplement” was to inform his English brothers and sisters of the plight of the American position. He believed the majority of the British public were unaware of how governmental policy affected their fellow British citizens in the colonies. There is evidence that British newspapers circulated the “Supplement” and proof that British citizens read the article although there is little information available on British reactions to Franklin’s appalling descriptions.

Considering his intention to influence negotiations with the “Supplement,” Franklin partially failed in this objective; there is no direct link between British approval of peace and Franklin’s persuasive power over British opinion through “Supplement”; however, Franklin’s chief purpose in negotiations was to persuade the British to agree to reparations and grant America complete independence. In this objective, Franklin succeeded. Though Franklin’s article did not definitively influence negotiations on Britain’s behalf, the “Supplement” did provide a medium for Franklin to express his resentment of British policy and conduct toward the American colonies while allowing him to publish these complaints in a brilliant satirical exposition. The accumulation of ideas found in the “Supplement” formed a foundation for the provisional peace treaty Franklin created. The “Supplement” further represented Franklin’s dissatisfaction toward the British, dissatisfaction that motivated him to seek reparations for American interests in the final negotiations that ended the war and secured American liberty.

The nature of the war and its progression as well as the remarkable outcome of the Battle of Yorktown were deciding factors in the final settlements of the Treaty of Paris in 1783 which effectively ended hostilities between Britain and America. The American victory at Yorktown and the surrender of General Cornwallis were naturally upsetting for the British but equally as surprising for Americans. America had suffered economic disruption and military difficulties throughout the war, saved only by the aid of the French who had significant military and political interest in an American victory. Even while the campaign on Yorktown progressed, there were influential American leaders who doubted the Continental Army’s capabilities. The extraordinary outcome of Yorktown solidified the terms of the Treaty of Paris. America’s

overwhelming victory in the battle assured American bargaining power against British interests in negotiations.¹⁶¹

Britain's reduced position proved essential to Franklin's entreaties regarding peace. Franklin had been involved with the diplomatic affairs of American politics before the war and throughout its duration. His negotiating skills and ties to Europe in addition to his residence in France offered a natural place for him in peace negotiations. For Franklin, French assistance in the war had earned the French a position as partners in peace. The Treaty of Alliance signed in 1778 which diplomatically tied France and America together also prevented separate peace from American negotiations with Britain.¹⁶² The leadership of Lord North in Parliament and the negligence of King George, however, frustrated any move toward lasting peace in the beginning stages of reconciliation. Historian Jonathan Dull argues that Franklin despised Lord North's leadership so incessantly because North wished to negotiate with France and America separately while continuing to regard colonials as insurgent. North's opinions closely reflected those of King George and Parliament which only further alienated Franklin toward British leadership. Franklin was willing to submit all negotiations to France in the beginning, in spite of British reluctance to negotiate with France and America collectively.¹⁶³ However, by 1782, Lord North

¹⁶¹ John E. Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: American Victory in the War for Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 568.

¹⁶² "Treaty of Alliance," February 6, 1778, *American Revolution & New Nation: Primary Documents in American History*, Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/alliance.html>, accessed October 11, 2018. The Treaty of Alliance was signed on February 6, 1778, creating a military coalition between France and America. The treaty stipulated that any peace made with Great Britain to end the Revolution would require a recognition of total American independence. Any attempt by Great Britain to separate America and France in the peace process would be rejected. Because of these stipulations, American and French officials refused early British attempts to establish peace due to their continuous attempts to settle peace separately.

¹⁶³ Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat," 53.

no longer occupied his position as Prime Minister and Lord Shelburne, who proved much more cooperative toward American interests, assumed office. Franklin considered Shelburne an associate and colleague and found this connection advantageous toward favorable peace.¹⁶⁴ In 1778, Franklin spoke of American prospects of peace pessimistically: “I therefore never think of your present Ministers and their Abettors, but with the Image strongly painted in my View of their Hands red, wet, and dropping with the Blood of my Countrymen, Friends and Relations. No Peace can be sign’d by those Hands.”¹⁶⁵ Conversely, in 1782, Franklin, waiting negotiations involving Shelburne, announced rather enthusiastically, “I embrace the Opportunity of assuring the Continuance of my ancient Respect for your Talents and Virtues, and of congratulating you on the returning good Disposition of your Country in favour of America. I am persuaded it will have good Effects.” Franklin expected negotiations to make a drastic turnaround in favor of American interests and end in substantial reconciliation, “I hope it will tend to produce a general Peace, which I am persuaded your Lordship, with all good Men, desires, which I wish to see before I die, & to which I shall with infinite Pleasure contribute every thing in my Power.”¹⁶⁶

Despite this favorable turn in negotiations, Shelburne continued to strive for peace independent of France. Shelburne recognized the motivation for French desire to remain a part of negotiations. British defeat had vast political ramifications for French interests, and the addition of a permanent French-American connection would only further deplete British global influence.

¹⁶⁴ Dull, “Franklin the Diplomat,” 53-54.

¹⁶⁵ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Hutton, 12 February 1778,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 25, *October 1, 1777, through February 28, 1778*, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 653-654.

¹⁶⁶ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to the Earl of Shelburne, 22 March 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 24-25.

Shelburne insisted on retaining some association with the American colonies regardless of the inevitable surrender of independence in order to preserve British dignity and interest. Shelburne insisted that if Britain must give up her valuable colonies, she would do so at least on favorable terms, uninhibited by French involvement.¹⁶⁷ Shelburne wrote to Richard Oswald in July 1782 concerning American independence, “You very well know that I have long since given it up *decidedly* tho’ *reluctantly*: and the same motives which made me perhaps the last to give up all Hope of the union, makes me most anxious if it is given up.” If Britain could somehow preserve a relationship with America as a political and economic ally, Britain could fortify her global position and interests. In order to maintain a cordial relationship with the former colonies, Shelburne had to recognize American stipulations, specifically Franklin’s stipulations, and at least partially meet American demands. Shelburne verbalized his intentions to Oswald in the midst of negotiations, “It shall be done *decidedly*, so as to avoid all further Risque of Enmity, & lay the Foundation of a new Connection better adapted to the present Temper & Interests of both Countries.”¹⁶⁸

Though initially reluctant, Shelburne came to realize that complete American independence from Great Britain was inevitable. Throughout the war, the idea of American sovereignty threatened the global authority of British interests and economic power and remained unpopular with many members of Parliament and the Crown. By 1778, a great number of British officials were more eager to offer America some sort of compromise that pacified her

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Stockley, “Shelburne, the European Powers, and the Peace of 1783,” in *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain*, eds. Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr (Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2011), 178-179.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in “To Benjamin Franklin from the Earl of Shelburne, 27 July 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 686-687.

desires for self-government but only within the supervision of British authority. By this time, however, American officials were fixed on nothing less than absolute freedom and determined to demand complete independence from British rule rather than settle for restricted liberty. While British position on American independence depended on the ever-changing opinions of the British ministers and varied controlling parties of Parliament, George III was resolved to maintain at least partial control of the colonies. A seesaw of concessions between Britain and America continued until early 1782 when the outcome of Yorktown and the length and expense of the war began to prompt British officials toward a peace more favorable to American interests. Shelburne, as well as the majority of Parliament recognized that the only hope for British interests in peace negotiations was to maintain some type of bargaining power over American demands.¹⁶⁹

For Shelburne, this meant that American peace was still contingent on separate negotiations between America and France; nevertheless, Franklin remained fixed on settling for peace only in conjunction with France in order to protect American assets. Shelburne, however, understood that one of his most important bargaining tools in negotiations were the demands of for American reparations. In these requests for restitution, Shelburne hoped to detach America from France and finalize a treaty that offered the best possible scenario for British interests. The general consensus of Parliament and Shelburne was that American independence was inevitable, but not without some stipulations. Most British officials recognized that the desire for peace on America's part overruled any insistence or stubbornness on Franklin's or the other

¹⁶⁹ Andrew Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America: European Powers and the Peace Negotiations of 1782-83* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 11-12, 33.

commissioners' part to insist on unconditional peace or full French involvement.¹⁷⁰ Shelburne strongly urged Richard Oswald, "Insist in the strongest manner, that if America is independent she must be so of the whole world. No Secret, Tacit or Ostensible Connection with France."¹⁷¹

Franklin was bothered by Britain's efforts to pursue peace with the United States and France separately rather than jointly; he believed that these terms would neither benefit the United States nor successfully end the conflict. "They still seem to flatter themselves with the Idea of dividing us," Franklin voiced in early 1782 to Robert Livingston, American secretary of foreign affairs. "Our Affairs," Frankling continued, "go on generally well in Europe. Holland has been slow, Spain slower, but Time will I hope smooth away all Difficulties. Let us keep up not only our Courage but our Vigilance, and not be laid asleep by the pretended Half Peace the English make with us without asking our Consent. We cannot be safe while they keep Armies in our Country."¹⁷²

Franklin had his own suggestions for peace that offered Britain some reimbursement for damages in an effort to secure American demands. The "Supplement" revealed that Franklin's primary focus was on reparations for American losses endured by Indian attacks and British malfeasance as well as the return of American prisoners of war. Franklin understood that in order to secure this compensation, the British would need to obtain their reimbursement in return. As

¹⁷⁰ Stockley, *Britain and France*, 38-39.

¹⁷¹ "Memorandums to Mr. Oswald in Conversation, 28th April 1782," in *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Review: For January 1854 – April 1854; To Be Continued Quarterly*, vol. 99 (Edinburgh: Longman, Brown, Green, Adams, and Charles Black, 1854),35.

¹⁷² Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, 30 March 1782," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 69-71.

peace negotiations progressed, Oswald met with Franklin in France and then returned to England with suggestions from Franklin for peace. Part of Franklin's recommendations included British relinquishment of Canada to America as well as an exchange of prisoners to resolve American losses. Franklin made a point to insist on a "general not partial a peace" for the betterment of the two nations.¹⁷³ Despite America's increased position at bargaining peace since the victory at Yorktown, the proposal of Canadian cessation to the United States was impractical. Britain was neither willing nor able to offer such enormous reparation for American damages, and Franklin recognized this following his suggestion.¹⁷⁴

During discussions with Oswald, Franklin also made suggestions regarding the damages against Loyalists during the war, a major point of contention for the British. The British insisted on compensation for Loyalist losses if they were to grant America complete independence. Franklin's desire to see reparations paid on American civilian losses of land and property prompted him to suggest that Britain cede Canada and abdicate any pursuance of compensation for Loyalists. With this agreement, Britain would sufficiently satisfy American reparations on civilian losses. Franklin expressed in his journal of negotiations, "I therefore wish'd England would think of offering something to relieve those who had suffer'd by its scalping and Burning Parties; Lives indeed could not be restor'd nor compensated, but the Villages and Houses wantonly destroy'd might be rebuilt."¹⁷⁵ These reparations coincided conveniently with one of

¹⁷³ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to the Earl of Shelburne, 18 April 1782," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 165-167; Benjamin Franklin, "Franklin: Journal of Peace Negotiations, 9 May[-July 1, 1782,]" *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 291-346.

¹⁷⁴ Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat," 54.

¹⁷⁵ Franklin, "Peace Negotiations," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 291-346.

Franklin's major frustrated expressions in the "Supplement."¹⁷⁶ However, these were suggestions that Franklin was under no authority to make and were not authorized by the American commission and could have potentially derailed negotiations entirely due to the absurdity of the request had Shelburne not been discreet about Franklin's propositions.¹⁷⁷ When conveying to John Adams the content of his conversation with Oswald, Franklin avoided telling Adams of his imprudent offer to compensate Loyalists on their losses in the war as well. Franklin admitted, "I was not pleas'd with my having hinted a Reparation to the Tories for their forfeited Estates; and I was a little asham'd of my Weakness in permitting the Paper to go out of my hands."¹⁷⁸

Franklin's reactions to British terms of peace and his efforts to solidify from Britain an assurance of reparations stemmed from his belief that Britain continued to treat America as a colony, not a nation. This position on American authority infuriated Franklin; he believed it was imperative a stable American future that Britain understand America's rightful place in the world as a sovereign nation. Franklin's expression of frustration within his personal letters and journal of peace negotiations were concurrent with his publication of the "Supplement." In April, 1782, the same month he produced his article, Franklin described to George Washington the trouble at making peace with the British and their reluctance to end the war on American terms:

The English seem not to know either how to continue the War, or to make Peace with us. Instead of entering into a regular Treaty, for putting an End to a Contest they are tired of, they have voted in Parliament that the Recovery of America by Force is impracticable, that an offensive War against us ought not to be continued, and that whoever advises it shall be deemed an Enemy to his Country.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Franklin, "Peace Negotiations," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 291-346.

¹⁷⁷ Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat," 54.

¹⁷⁸ Franklin, "Peace Negotiations," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 291-346.

¹⁷⁹ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to George Washington, 2 April 1782," *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 87-89.

Franklin's primary objective in procuring peace was to compel the British to admit their offenses, agree to reparations, and acknowledge America's place as a sovereign nation so that America and Britain could continue with a cordial diplomatic relationship in the future. To David Hartley, British statesman and politician, Franklin wrote in April, 1782, "I am pleased to see in the Votes & parliamentary Speeches, and in your public Papers that in mentioning America, the Word *Reconciliation* [emphasis his] is often used. It certainly means more than a mere Peace." His words reflected his anticipation at the prospect of reconciliation and, most importantly, reparations, "It is a sweet Expression. Resolve in your Mind, my dear Friend, the means of bringing about this *Reconciliation* . . . tho' a Cessation of the War may be a Peace, it may not be a Reconciliation . . ." ¹⁸⁰ The promise of peace was enough to stir Franklin to offer British officials some advantage of peace in hope of speeding up the process, but Franklin also remained diligent in his desire to maintain American status as the victor nation and obtain his most important demands.

Franklin's ideas on sovereignty and the future of America's place in a world post-revolution influenced his ideas on peace with Great Britain. Franklin desired the British to acknowledge American independence without prerequisite or stipulation. British officials were not so keen to grant independence without some effort to reinforce British imperial authority and secure land and resources for the empire. This expression of what Franklin believed was an assertion of superiority on the part of the British influenced how he conducted himself throughout the war and explains his position in peace negotiations. One particular point that frustrated Franklin was the British assumption that granting American independence would act

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 5 April 1782," *The Benjamin Franklin Papers*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 94-96.

as sufficient bargaining power in negotiations, providing Britain the opportunity to seek land and resources lost not only in the Revolution but also in previous wars. Franklin, like many Americans, believed that independence was not the only thing at stake in negotiations. American independence had already been declared and achieved. American losses were the thing to be restored. In conversation with Thomas Grenville, diplomat commissioned by Charles James Fox British Foreign Secretary to discuss peace negotiations, Franklin expressed this sentiment, “We do not consider ourselves as under any Necessity of bargaining for a Thing that is our own, and which we have bought at the Expence of so much Blood and Treasure, and which we are in full Possession of.” Franklin berated the audacity of British assumption that the point of negotiations was to merely extend an acknowledgment of independence and in return receive compensation for a war in which they were defeated. British officials had anticipated France returning her acquired assets gained in the war since the “Original Object of the War [had been] obtained.”¹⁸¹ To this Franklin replied, “As to our being satisfied with the original Object of the War . . . look back to the Conduct of your Nation in former Wars. [It is unreasonable] that a Nation after making an unprovok’d unsuccessfull War upon its Neighbours, should expect to sit down whole and have every thing restor’d which she had lost in such a War.”¹⁸²

British-American negotiations continued to delay through the summer of 1782 due in large part to Britain’s refusal to officially acknowledge American independence in the stipulations of the peace treaty. By fall of the same year, British officials, primarily Shelburne, decided to grant American demands of complete sovereignty as well as fishing rights in Newfoundland and land bordering the Mississippi River with rights to navigate the river.

¹⁸¹ Franklin, “Peace Negotiations,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 291-346.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Shelburne was eager to solidify the terms of peace before Parliament resumed session, knowing that his flexibility in negotiations would drastically diminish once Parliament returned.¹⁸³ The terms of peace extended to the withdrawal of British military forces from American soil without conflict. America offered compensation for Loyalist debts and the return of confiscated property. These preliminary negotiations did not involve France, but only on the stipulation that France would have part in the final negotiations and treaty.¹⁸⁴

Like Franklin and his fellow American commissioners, French commissioner Charles Gravier, Count of Vergennes was opposed to negotiating a peace specifically separate from America. In the beginning stages of negotiations, Vergennes did not wish to rush into any treaty, fearing that an expedited peace or individual treaty would not serve France's best political or military interest. France's military situation did facilitate a speedy peace, however. Despite the respite of major fighting between American and British forces following the Battle of Yorktown, French and Spanish forces continued battling over the Strait of Gibraltar during the negotiation process.¹⁸⁵ The Great Siege of Gibraltar, which began in 1779 with the French and Spanish contention for control over British claims to the strait, continued until February of 1783 following the signing of preliminary negotiations between Britain, Spain, and France. French and Spanish forces had organized a major attack against British defenses in September of 1782 but were utterly defeated by a much smaller British garrison. Following this demoralizing defeat of French forces, Vergennes became more enthusiastic about settling peace quickly and avoided

¹⁸³ Stockley, *Birth of America*, 78.

¹⁸⁴ "The Definitive Treaty of Paris 1783," signed September 3, 1783, *International Treaties and Related Records, 1778-1974*; General Records of the United States Government, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=6&page=transcript>, Accessed August 4, 2018.

¹⁸⁵ Stockley, *Birth of America*, 77-78.

disputing the preliminary peace treaty signed by Britain and American in November 1782.

Fortunately for Franklin, Vergennes lack of involvement in American negotiations until formal declarations were made allowed Franklin the liberty to discuss his most important points.¹⁸⁶

In November of 1782, Franklin summarized his stipulations for peace in his proposed articles for the peace treaty. Evidenced by the terms of the articles, Franklin sought for reparations for American losses. The articles included provisions for reimbursement of goods and property pillaged and devastated by the British Army including food, crops, and slaves. The nod to Franklin's "Supplement" was reflected in these preliminary terms, "It is further agreed that his Britannic Majesty will also earnestly recommend it to his Parliament, to make Compensation for all the Towns, Villages and Farmes burnt and destroyed by his Troops or Adherents in the said United States."¹⁸⁷ Also included within the stipulations were provisions for an important issue Franklin had been fighting for half a decade. The conditions specified that "all Prisoners on both sides shall be set at Liberty."¹⁸⁸ Franklin included terms for land boundaries along the Great Lakes and Mississippi River as well as American fishing rights along Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Provisions for the United States to return land to British citizens and to allow them to continue peacefully with the full return of all prisoners of

¹⁸⁶ Dull, "Franklin the Diplomat," 56.

¹⁸⁷ Benjamin Franklin, "Franklin's Proposed Article 5, [29 November 1782]," *The Benjamin Franklin Papers*, vol. 38, August 16, 1782, through January 20, 1783, ed. Ellen R. Cohn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 375-377.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

war were also made. The conditional articles ended with a stipulation for “firm and perpetual Peace between his Britannic Majesty and the said States,”¹⁸⁹

The conditional peace was signed by Franklin and Oswald on November 30th and became the basis for the Treaty of Paris signed in 1783 affectively ending the conflict.¹⁹⁰ Franklin’s provisions for peace were reflected in his “Supplement.” There were recommendations for compensation of American civilian losses as well as dictation for the return of prisoners of war. Though there is no clear evidence that Franklin’s “Supplement” affected the British commissioners’ acceptance of Franklin’s reparation suggestions, Franklin’s opinions affected the peace process substantially while his efforts solidified compensation for losses and complete independence. Arguably, Franklin was the primary reason America secured the reparations detailed in the Treaty of Paris and achieved enduring reconciliation with Great Britain. The “Supplement” laid a foundation for Franklin’s most important points for peace.

Franklin meant for his “Supplement” to be read by the public, most importantly by British readers in order to bring to light the conduct of the British in America and as a result, possibly influence negotiations. Franklin was under the impression that British citizens were naïve to American troubles at the hands of their own countrymen. Franklin wrote of British diplomats, “They fill their Papers continually with Lies to raise and fall the Stocks. It is not amiss that they should thus be left to ruin one another, for they have been very mischievous to the Rest of Mankind.”¹⁹¹ Carla Mulford points out that Franklin printed the “Supplement” after he

¹⁸⁹ Franklin, “Proposed Article 5,” *Papers*, 375-377.

¹⁹⁰ “Treaty of Paris 1783.”

¹⁹¹ Benjamin Franklin, “To John Adams from Benjamin Franklin, 22 April 1782,” *The Papers of Adams*, vol. 12, *October 1781-April 1782*, ed. Gregg L. Lint et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 447-448.

conversed with Richard Oswald on establishing peace between America and Britain based on certain preconditions. Oswald would have ended their conversations and travelled to England in order to inform the public of ongoing negotiations. For Franklin, the “Supplement” offered an opportunity to address the British public with his own words and ideas rather than rely on Oswald to convey the content of their discussions.¹⁹² Franklin believed of the “Supplement,” “If it were re-publish’d in England it might make them a little asham’d of themselves.”¹⁹³ He articulated the opinion that many British were unaware of the atrocities which took place in America. In the typical satirical fashion of the “Supplement,” Franklin proclaimed that American scalps were delivered to England and paraded through streets and villages where “thousands of People [were] flocking to see them. . . and all Mouths [were] full of Execrations,” perhaps in an effort to shock the British public into questioning the actions of their government overseas.¹⁹⁴

Shortly after he wrote the “Supplement,” Franklin sent a copy to America’s representative in Spain, John Jay. In his letter, Franklin did not reveal that he was the author of the article but did explain his growing anxiety over negotiations with England, “I inclose what I suspect to be a pretended American Paper, which, however, tho’ it should be found fictitious as to the *Form* [emphasis his], is undoubtedly true as to the *Substance*. For The English cannot deny such a Number of Murders having been really committed by their Instigation.”¹⁹⁵ Franklin was

¹⁹² Mulford, “Franklin’s Savage Eloquence,” 502.

¹⁹³ Franklin, “To John Adams, 22 April 1782,” *The Papers of John Adams*, 447-448.

¹⁹⁴ Franklin, “Supplement,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 184-196.

¹⁹⁵ Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to John Jay, 24 April 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 205-207.

hopeful as new developments in the negotiation process moved America closer to peace on his terms. He jubilantly explained to Jay, “The Parliament of Britain have just passed an Act for exchanging American Prisoners. They have near 1100 in the Goals of England & Ireland, all committed as charged with high Treason. The Act is to empower the King, notwithstanding such Commitments to consider them as Prisoners of War according to the Law of Nations, and exchange them as such.” This progress toward prisoner exchange represented a change in the attitude of British officials that Franklin recognized, “This seems to be giving up their Pretensions of considering us as rebellious Subjects, and is a kind of Acknowledgment of our Independence.”¹⁹⁶ Franklin believed the release and exchange of prisoners was severely limited throughout the war due primarily to the defector status that the British government had assigned to American soldiers. British policy that neglected basic civil liberties as well as international standards of war quickly changed with British desire to complete peace negotiations invited a rapid change in resolving American grievances.

The *Public Advertiser* of London is one English newspaper that historians have determined published Franklin’s “Supplement.” There is also evidence that other newspapers in both Britain and America published either the first or second section as a testament to British atrocities.¹⁹⁷ Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford wrote in a letter to the Countess of Ossory in October 1782, “Have you seen in the papers the excellent letter of Paul Jones to Sir Joseph Yorke? I doubt poor Sir Joseph cannot answer them!” Walpole recognized the tone and style of

¹⁹⁶ Franklin, “To John Jay, 24 April 1782,” *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 205-207.

¹⁹⁷ Mulford, “Franklin’s Savage Eloquence,” 502.

the letter in his declaration, “Dr. Franklin himself, I should think, was the author.”¹⁹⁸ Walpole’s remarks reveal that the “Supplement” did not deceive all of its readers; however, there were portions of the population that did not recognize Franklin’s satire. In America, the article was published by dozens of newspapers during the war, and until the mid-nineteenth century widely accepted as a genuine description of brutality. The “Supplement” especially became popular as indication of Indian barbarity in the early nineteenth century, used as a weapon of justification for the prejudices imposed on the native peoples by the laws and mandates that forced them out of their homes and land.¹⁹⁹

Historians have suggested that Franklin’s “Supplement” was propaganda; however, to imply the “Supplement” was propaganda implies that Franklin wrote the article with biased prejudice intending to influence public opinion on political matters. Though Franklin intended to influence political affairs by publishing the “Supplement” and he falsified his descriptions, there has been no establishment that Franklin purposefully wished to mislead the public on the contents of the “Supplement.” On the contrary, Franklin believed that the “Supplement” underrepresented the atrocities committed by the British. Franklin confessed to John Adams, “I believe the Number of People actually scalp’d in this murdering War by the Indians to exceed

¹⁹⁸ Horace Walpole, *Letters of Horace Walpole: Earl of Orford*, vol. 8, Peter Cunningham, ed. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1906), 286.

¹⁹⁹ Mulford, “Franklin’s Savage Eloquence” 518; Carla Mulford offers an excellent discussion on the history of the “Supplement” beyond the Revolution in her article “Savage Eloquence,” including an appendix listing the newspapers which published the article in some form or another. The “Supplement” became legitimate evidence for historians and writers of the early nineteenth century in discussions on Indian barbarianism and justification for westward expansion. These early writers failed to realize Franklin’s purpose for enumerating the Indian atrocities in that his priority rested on undermining British authority rather than smearing the reputation of the Indian tribes. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the authorship of the “Supplement” was universally revealed and Franklin’s purposed realized.

what is mention'd in the Invoice, and that Muley Istmael (a happy Name for a Prince as obstinate as a Mule) is full as black a Tyrant as he is represented in Paul Jones's pretended Letter . . .”²⁰⁰

Despite Franklin's blatant use of sarcasm, his vexations were not unfounded, though perhaps his descriptions were embellished. On the surface, Franklin's intentions in the first section of the “Supplement” most apparently demonized the Indians; however, Franklin's uneasiness rested not in what he labelled as Indian savagery but British manipulation of her people and allies.

Franklin's letters and essays revealed his dissatisfaction of British policy. His influence over peace negotiations provided him a more effectual avenue for acquiring peace and seeking justice for American losses than the “Supplement” offered. Franklin's position on peace remained fairly consistent with his political expressions in the “Supplement,” and while the precise terms of Franklin's initial peace were not met, his primary concerns were addressed and resolved.

²⁰⁰ Franklin, “Letter to John Adams, 22 April 1782,” *The Papers of John Adams*, 447- 448.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

“The pen is mightier than the sword,” famous words penned by Edward Bulwar-Lytton in his play *Richelieu: Or, the Conspiracy*, summarizes the poignant message: The written word is far more powerful than many weapons or armies.²⁰¹ Benjamin Franklin, perhaps more than any other person of his day, embodied this philosophy. Evident by the sheer volume of letters, essays, and articles he wrote, Franklin believed in the power of the written word, especially when conveying his dissatisfaction with the British Empire. More than he was willing to openly confront Parliament or the king, Franklin was inclined to record his displeasure by pen and publication. His words have persisted as landmarks of the Revolution and models for the protest and censure of tyranny and despotism.

Because of his contributions to the varied fields of literature, science, politics, and philosophy, Benjamin Franklin is one of the most studied figures of American history. The research on Franklin’s social and cultural contributions spans over two centuries. Franklin himself even contributed to his own historical narrative in the form of his autobiography. Many prestigious scholars have examined his donations to American independence and colonial life, offering profound evaluations of his influence. Franklin’s plethora of letters, essays, and commentaries have allowed scholars the opportunity to explore the nuances of his brilliant mind. The ongoing work of Yale scholars such as Jonathan R. Dull, Ellen R. Cohn, and John M. Huffman as well as several other respected historians in the project commissioned by Yale

²⁰¹ Edward Bulwar-Lytton, *Richelieu: Or, the Conspiracy, A Play in Five Acts*, act II, scene II.

University and the American Philosophical Society has provided historians with an exhaustive record of Franklin's publications and writings.

Franklin's opinions on government, cultural customs, and economics often challenged the standards of not only colonial American politics, but also those of the entire western world. As America progressed toward independence and eventually peace with Great Britain following the final battle campaigns of the Revolution, Franklin assumed a critical position in the negotiation process to end the conflict. Franklin had already established himself as an important diplomat and liaison between the British and the French before the Revolution as well as an influencer on public opinion in the turbulent years of the war. His place in arranging the Treaty of Paris and culminating lasting reconciliation proved central to the outcome of America's future.

On the eve of preliminary peace between America and Britain and over a year before the signing of the official Treaty of Paris in 1783, Franklin produced one of his most intriguing publications, the "Supplement" to the *Boston Independent Chronicle*. The "Supplement" was a sarcastic jab at the hypocrisy of the British Empire, but it was also a summary of Franklin's most sacred justifications of liberty. While several historians have examined the value of the "Supplement" as one of Franklin's most brilliant published satires, there lacks concentrated analysis on its historical significance in respect to Franklin's political position. Historians of the nineteenth century such as Jared Sparks have offered cursory evaluations of the "Supplement"; and Luther Samuel Livingston in the early twentieth century, Carl Berger in the 1960s, several literary historians, and a few recent historians such as Gregory Evans Dowd in his work on deceptions of early America have presented concise, yet informative appraisals of Franklin's brilliant deception. Carla Mulford remains one of the few scholars to examine the "Supplement" in depth by analyzing Franklin's reasons for publishing the article as well as the implications of

his satirical messages. In her work *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* and her article “Benjamin Franklin’s Savage Eloquence: Hoaxes from the Press at Pass, 1782,” Mulford offers a fresh perspective on Franklin’s “Supplement” and the meaning behind its political implications. Still, there persists a need for a deeper exploration of Franklin’s motives and suggestions presented in the “Supplement” as well as an evaluation of how Franklin’s “Supplement” related to his early political opinions.

For Franklin, the “Supplement” offered an outlet, as did most of his writings, for an expression of his irritation with British imperial dominance and most importantly, British treatment of the American colonies. His “Supplement” was not the first enumeration of the exasperation over British policy or even the only written listing of British offenses; the Declaration of Independence had offered just that. However, the “Supplement” was unique in its blatant use of satire and sarcasm so convincingly cloaked in the suggestion of legitimate atrocity and brutality that it deceived readers for decades, and those who refused to believe its accounts still remained aware of British brutality.²⁰²

Franklin wrote his “Supplement” as an effort to publicize British misconduct and openly reveal the hypocrisy he believed initially caused the war. He trusted his efforts had the potential to sway British opinion on settling peace with the United States. Despite these elevated intentions, Franklin must have known that some of those citizens reading the “Supplement” would have taken its claims seriously to the point of believing that such disturbing details were true, especially those readers in England who did not have firsthand experience of the

²⁰² See Mulford’s discussion of the “Supplement’s” life beyond the Revolution in her article “Savage Eloquence,” which details the use of the “Supplement” as authentic evidence of British and Indian misconduct, 518-520.

Revolution. There is no clear expression from Franklin that he intended to mislead; Franklin was not ignorant to the effects of propaganda although he believed he did not exaggerate the amount of scalplings which took place throughout the Revolution.²⁰³

This research has sought to describe the issues and situations which prompted Franklin to write the “Supplement,” including Indian attacks led by the British on American soldiers and civilians as well as the circumstances involving John Paul Jones and the *Bonhomme Richard* which were the basis for Franklin’s article. This research has also attempted to understand the principles which fueled Franklin’s desire to write his satirical exposé as well as analyze his motives and values regarding the British Empire. Franklin’s first letter was perhaps his most vicious. The graphic portrayal of Indian violence as well as the blatant mockery of British indifference to the suffering of American colonists revealed Franklin’s disgust with British policy. His descriptions were not meant to highlight Indian aggression but to condemn the use of Indian force against America as well as British inability to constrain these forces. Franklin’s second letter emphasized the hypocrisy of the British political system and the corruption of its politicians. He included insults that underscored the most important points of contention throughout the war. Collectively, the letters of the “Supplement” revealed Franklin’s frustration with Parliament and the Crown on their management of the American colonies, his primary focus in peace negotiations. Through his own persistence, Franklin achieved a favorable outcome for America in the peace process.

Franklin’s complaints were limited by his own perceptions of British conduct. The primary arguments of the “Supplement” depended on British injustices. Franklin did not include

²⁰³ See Franklin’s letter to John Adams, April 22, 1782.

objective points in his articles on the conduct of American forces or her allies. Though the “Supplement” was limited to the censure of British behavior in the war, no side remained innocent of misconduct. American and British forces, as well as French, Indian, and Hessian troops were all guilty of some level of inhumane behavior. This research has not attempted to discuss all atrocities committed by all groups. The examples of British and Indian atrocities presented are meant to give context to the references Franklin made within his “Supplement.” Several Indian tribes and nations were involved with the American War for Independence in addition to the Iroquois nations discussed in this analysis. For this research, however, there has only been focus given to the Iroquois’ involvement, due to Franklin’s singular reference to the Iroquois tribes in his first letter of the “Supplement.”²⁰⁴

The American Indians suffered many atrocities at the hands of both the British and American soldiers and civilians. Their hardship and affliction was overlooked for a time in historical scholarship, but great strides to express their suffering have been made in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The foundation of this research has primarily rested on the brutality committed against American civilians and soldiers during the Revolution or at least Franklin’s perception of it based on his claims in the “Supplement”; however, this has not been expressed in an effort to disregard any violence committed on behalf of American civilians and soldiers. To name and describe the total number of atrocities committed by all parties involved in the Revolution would take far more pages than presented in this research. The scope of this examination has been limited to the points discussed in Franklin’s article.

²⁰⁴ For an expansive look at the Native American role and experience in the American Revolution see Colin Calloway’s work *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) or Ethan Schmidt’s more recent work *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated, and Transformed the Early American Indian World* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014).

The “Supplement” has only recently come under the examination of scholars and historians as an important piece of political expression. Even still, the “Supplement” remains confined to discussions on propaganda and Franklin’s literary genius. Franklin’s writings offer historians a unique and comprehensive look into revolutionary America from the perspective of someone who was not only well-informed, but also well-versed, well-read, and well-traveled. These characteristics give historians the opportunity to chart the progression of the political ideals and cultural conceptions of one man for half a century. Franklin did not merely sequester his ideas for private application; however, Franklin published and promoted his ideas for public consumption. The “Supplement” did not fall short of Franklin’s usual standards. Despite its obscurity, the “Supplement” remains an articulate expression of Franklin’s most precious convictions, and it is worthy of greater examination and review in the historical narrative of Franklin’s life and the American Revolution.

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