

The Revolutionary settlement worked out by William III and Parliament transformed England and Britain in many ways, and made it a very different country than it would have been had James II remained on the throne and if he had been succeeded on his death in 1701 by James Edward.<sup>2</sup> (James Edward lived on until 1766, and had he been king, his reign would have been longer than Queen Victoria's.) James might have gotten a Parliament that would agree to repeal the Test Acts and the penal laws, and with an adequate revenue, he would not have had to summon another Parliament except in the unlikely event he decided to go to war against France. The funded debt and the Bank of England would not have come into being, at least not in the way they did. Though James had long taken a serious interest in promoting trade and in the North American colonies, he wanted them governed his way, by direct royal authority and, if possible, without representative assemblies.

To be sure, even after William III was installed as King, the success of his Revolution was still contingent. Just as his successful invasion was, in Pocock's words, "far more improbable, and far less foreseeable, than any of the alternative scenarios,"<sup>3</sup> so it was very far from inevitable that the Revolutionary settlement would stay in place. William III was unpopular for most of his reign, and far from secure. The Duke of Berwick organized an assassination plot against him that came near to succeeding in February 1696. William's reaction when told that the assassins had planned to shoot him in his carriage was characteristically cool, and characteristically stated in French: "*Les pauvres glaces de mon carrosse auroient esté bien maltraités*" (the poor windows of my carriage would have been very badly treated).<sup>4</sup> In 1697, after the Peace of Rijswijk, Parliament forced him to reduce his standing army,<sup>5</sup> and in 1701 some of his ministers were, briefly and ineffectively, impeached.<sup>6</sup> His death in March 1702 was not followed by widespread mourning. But he had already persuaded the English to join the alliance against Louis XIV in what became the War of Spanish Succession, a conflict in which Britain's leading diplomat and its most astonishingly successful general was John Churchill, by then Duke of Marlborough.<sup>7</sup>

Even so, Jacobitism—the belief that James and then his son

should be on the throne—had many followers in England for many years thereafter. Linda Colley argues persuasively that Tories had many more supporters than did Whigs in the elections during the reign of Queen Anne,<sup>8</sup> and many Tories schemed in the last years of Anne's life to have her followed by James Edward rather than by George Ludwig of Hanover. The Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, the first led by James Edward and the second by his son, long remembered as Bonnie Prince Charlie, came closer to success than is generally realized. Those rebellions had more supporters than were willing to come forward after their failures. The historian J. C. D. Clark has argued that Samuel Johnson, the literary critic and lexicographer and an obdurate Tory, may have been a supporter of the '45 rebellion and gone into hiding during it; there is no evidence of his whereabouts at the time.<sup>9</sup> The restoration of the Stuarts remained a lively possibility, and one sought by many in Britain, for more than 50 years after the coronation of William III and Mary II.<sup>10</sup>

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BUT THE REVOLUTIONARY settlement did endure. It changed England from a nation in which representative government was threatened to one where it was ingrained, from a nation in which liberties were based on tradition to one where they were based in part on positive law, from a nation where the place of religion was a matter of continued political dispute and even armed struggle to one where it became settled in a way that generally respected individual choice, from a nation that mostly kept apart from the wars of continental Europe to one that saw its duty as maintaining a balance of power there and around the world. These were momentous changes—momentous not just for England and Britain, but for the American colonies and later the United States and the entire world. It was the English and British example of representative government that inspired the Founding Fathers of the United States of America and was copied, with minor variations, in British colonies, many of which have become major nations—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India. This improbable revolution did much to shape the world in which we live today.

First, and most visibly, the Revolution of 1688–89 perpetuated

and strengthened representative government in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and in the North American colonies as well. By the 1680s representative assemblies seemed to be relics of a feudal past in most of Europe, set aside by absolutist monarchs, allowed sometimes to maintain a formal existence without the capacity to exert power like the Roman Senate after Augustus. That trend, toward absolutism and away from representative assemblies, seemed to be operating in England and the colonies through most of the 1680s as well.<sup>11</sup> The repeated dissolution of Parliament by Charles II and James II was just part of a program of absolutism. James “did attempt to make royal authority in England absolute,” W. A. Speck writes, through “the growth of the army, the rigging of the judiciary, the professionalization of the major institutions of the state, and the attack on local autonomy”—processes begun during Charles II’s reign and carried on during most of James’s.<sup>12</sup> William’s *Declaration* was a pledge to reverse this process, and its principal demand was for a “free parliament,” one in which the members of the House of Commons were chosen without the guiding hand of the king. William was taking a resolute stand against the trend to downgrade representative assemblies in England and throughout Europe.

William’s detractors past and present may scoff that he did so only to get England to fight France. But the important facts are that he did so and that his successors felt obliged to follow his example. His experience in the Netherlands taught him that to achieve his goals he must be seen to comply with national and local custom and precedent, and with the various representative assemblies of the Dutch Republic. Just as he waited in the Netherlands to be offered the offices of captain-general and stadholder, so in England he carefully and ostentatiously abstained from influencing the elections for the Convention Parliament. He let the Commons and the Lords deliberate—until, in a meeting so private that its date remains uncertain, he jogged them into reaching the decision he desired. He understood that he could not lead England into war except by governing through Parliament, as distasteful and frustrating as he found that to be. His invasion and his acceptance by the English made war with France inevitable, even welcome, to the English. But his need for revenue to wage that war forced

him and his successors to rely on annual parliaments.<sup>13</sup> Parliament has met every year since 1689.

And so the Revolution of 1688–89 was a giant step forward for representative government. William not only depended on Parliament to provide revenue; he also accepted and on occasion welcomed its investigations into the administration of government. He accepted grudgingly the Triennial Act, which required parliamentary elections every three years; it was replaced by the Septennial Act in 1716, requiring elections only every seven years. Neither William nor any of his successors as monarch attempted to influence elections to the House of Commons quite as directly as Charles II and James II did. By the time of Queen Victoria, it had been established that a government must fall, even against the monarch’s wishes, if it could not command a majority in the House of Commons. Thus, Britain’s representative government, greatly strengthened by the Revolution of 1688–89, eventually became a representative democracy.

Our founding fathers’ deliberate creation of a representative government, which quickly became a representative democracy, also owes much to the Revolution of 1688–89. That Revolution reversed James II’s policy of eliminating many independent representative assemblies and subjecting them to royal control.<sup>14</sup> In New England and New York and New Jersey he imposed a Dominion of New England that eliminated the colonial representative assemblies, and in the colonies farther south—Maryland, Virginia, Carolina—he sought to strengthen royal control. After the Revolution of 1688–89 most colonies still had royal governors, but they all had independent representative assemblies. The Revolutionary settlement established the cockpit of colonial politics, of royal governors in tension with or opposition to representative assemblies—the institutional setting from which the American Revolution would arise. In contrast, the Spanish colonies in Latin America never had representative assemblies—one reason, historian J. H. Elliott argues, that they were slow to gain independence and had difficulty setting stable and workable governments afterward.<sup>15</sup>

The Revolutionary settlement also provided a template for the colonial rebels. Its guarantees of representative government and individual

rights to Englishmen were taken by the colonials as promises to them — promises that they came to believe had been broken. “The executive branches of government,” writes the historian Bernard Bailyn, describing the pamphlet literature in the years that led to the American Revolution, “held, and used, powers that in England had been stripped from the crown in the settlement that had followed the Glorious Revolution.”<sup>16</sup> The Revolutionary settlement was seen as guaranteeing parliamentary sovereignty, which is to say representative government.<sup>17</sup> Thus the Massachusetts lawyer James Otis wrote that the Glorious Revolution created “that happy establishment which Great Britain has since enjoyed.”<sup>18</sup> Boston minister Jonathan Mayhew charged that George III’s ministers, “not improbably in the interests of the houses of Bourbon and the Pretender [Charles Edward],” was trying to reverse the consequences of the Revolution.<sup>19</sup> Challenged by a parishioner, Mayhew defended a sermon as being “composed in a high strain of liberty, tho’ I humbly conceive not higher than is warranted by the principles of the Glorious Revolution.”<sup>20</sup> Pennsylvanians howled when the Crown vetoed a law passed by their assembly establishing life tenure for judges, established in England by the final law of the Revolutionary settlement, the Act of Settlement of 1701.<sup>21</sup> “Most of the ideas and beliefs that shaped the American Revolutionary mind,” Bailyn concludes, “can be found in the voluminous writings of the Exclusion Crisis and in the literature of the Glorious Revolution that in effect brought that upheaval to a peaceful conclusion.”<sup>22</sup>

Americans were thus not rebelling against the Revolutionary settlement. They were seeking to preserve in their own states what they believed the Revolution of 1688–89 had established.

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THE REVOLUTION OF 1688–89 turned out to be a bold step forward also for guaranteed liberties. The right to bear arms asserted in the Bill of Rights was very different from the obligation to bear arms asserted earlier in the seventeenth century. The obligation to bear arms was part of a duty of the subject to support the king and his government. The right to bear arms was a way for the freeman to protect his property and his liberty. The wording of the Bill of Rights was carried over

almost exactly by George Mason in his Declaration of Rights in Virginia in 1776 and was the inspiration for the wording of the Second Amendment, adopted by the First Congress and ratified by the states in 1790.<sup>23</sup>

Other provisions of the 1689 Bill of Rights were inspirations for the 1791 American Bill of Rights: the Third Amendment provision banning the quartering of troops, the Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable searches and seizures, the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination, the Sixth Amendment right to jury trial and its guarantee that indictments could only issue from grand juries (remember that a grand jury had famously refused to indict the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1682), the Eighth Amendment prohibition of cruel and unusual punishments.<sup>24</sup> The 1689 Bill of Rights was from our point of view a limited and grudging document: nothing about freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of the press. It did not prohibit the king from appointing judges or removing them at pleasure, as Charles II and James II had done; but the Act of Succession of 1701 did prohibit monarchs after 1714 from doing so, and William and Anne never did.<sup>25</sup> Yet as an affirmative statement of individual rights, however limited, the Bill of Rights broke new ground, ground that would be extended in the New World.

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The Revolutionary settlement was also a step forward for religious liberty. To our eyes the Toleration Act seems a very limited advance. Old laws against Catholics remained in force, and public office was limited to members of the Church of England. Dissenting worship, by believers in the Trinity, was allowed but disfavored. The extent of legal religious toleration in William III’s kingdom of England was less than in stadholder William III’s United Provinces of the Netherlands. But the Toleration Act, combined with the rejection of comprehension by the divines of the Church of England (allowing a wider range of beliefs in the established Church), encouraged widespread Protestant worship in many forms. In other words, by not letting Presbyterians and Dissenters in the Church, but tolerating their worship outside the Church, the result was several Protestant denominations.

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Anglicanism, rather than achieving the religious monopoly its leaders had sought through most of the seventeenth century, found itself open to competition in a spiritual marketplace. Membership in Dissenting churches no longer carried civil penalties, and public office was even left open to Dissenters who took the trouble to qualify by the simple means of occasional conformity. Enthusiasts for the Church of England responded by passing the occasional conformity law during Anne's reign, which gave the Established Church a tighter grip on the population and a more preferred place in public life; it was repealed three years into the reign of her successor George I.<sup>26</sup>

The effect of the Toleration Act, writes Diarmaid MacCulloch, the preeminent chronicler of the Reformation in our time, was a step toward allowing Christians of different denominations to live together in the same nation and a rejection of the idea that the Church of England should have a monopoly of worship in the land. This was very different from the Calvinist domination of Protestantism in the Netherlands or the monopoly the established Lutheran churches held in Scandinavia. The result was that "several different faces of British Protestantism were each destined to give rise to worldwide families of Churches. Moreover, the centre of gravity in these bodies other than Anglicanism was destined to move from the Atlantic Isles to the western seaboard of the ocean, to the new English-speaking colonies of America."<sup>27</sup>

Religious competition and pluralism flowered most in the North American colonies, where Dissenting churches were established in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Anglicanism was established only weakly in New York, Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina (though in Virginia the established Anglican church was able to enforce some measure of uniformity) and a melange of churches and sects thrived in colonies with no religious establishments—Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Methodism, a new evangelical movement that arose within the Established Church in England, became a separate denomination, and the fastest growing one in the young American republic.<sup>28</sup> In practice, toleration reigned.<sup>29</sup> All this stood in stark contrast to the enforced religious uniformity of France and most of the German states—and very much closer to the regime of tolerance in William of Orange's Netherlands.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1688–89 also had profound economic reverberations. In 1650, Amsterdam was the world's leading center of finance and trade, but a century later London was, in the words of P. G. M. Dickson, "the leading world centre of foreign trade, dealings in jewels and gold, provision of insurance cover, and the flotation of public loans."<sup>30</sup> The Revolution—or, rather, the financial innovations that followed the Revolution—accounted for much of the change.

It is true that some factors were already in play before 1688; London was already a strong rival of Amsterdam. And it was not part of William of Orange's purpose in invading to displace Amsterdam in favor of London. Still, William might have been ambivalent on that point. Amsterdam had long been the chief source of opposition to his plans in the Dutch Republic, and was only enlisted in support of his expedition to England at the last minute—and was only disposed to help because of French protectionism and threats of war. The merchants of London, in contrast, tended to welcome his invasion.

And it was the merchants of London, working with members of Parliament, who devised the financial expedients needed to finance William's war with France. The creation of the national debt in 1693, regularized later by the sinking fund, and of the Bank of England in 1694 gave London and England financial institutions that closely resembled those of Amsterdam and the Dutch Republic. Those institutions had enabled the Dutch to punch above their weight in war and diplomacy in the seventeenth century, and the Bank of England did the same for England and Britain in the eighteenth.<sup>31</sup> As J. H. Plumb writes, "The Recoinage [of 1696], the foundation of the Bank, and above all the establishment of the Sinking Fund, gave a strength to England's financial system unmatched by any other European country except Holland—a fact rapidly appreciated by the Dutch who invested heavily in both the Bank and the Funds."<sup>32</sup> Or, as P. G. M. Dickson writes, "The newly aggressive and dynamic English monarchy became, in effect, an eighteenth-century version of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with its powerful fleet, numerous army, extended credit, and sophisticated indirect taxation."<sup>33</sup>

The financial arrangements put in place after the Revolution increased the political leverage of London's financial community, which in turn helped to create something like a religious balance of power. If Parliament was made up primarily of landed nobles and gentry, almost all members of the Church of England, the financial community of London was made up of merchants and tradesmen, a large percentage of them Dissenting Protestants; by one account, Dissenters made up 36 percent of colonial merchants, 43 percent of Bank of England directors, 30 percent of United East India Company directors, and between 11 and 18 percent of subscribers to new financial and trading companies in the 1690s.<sup>34</sup> And it was merchants and businessmen more than rural gentry who invested in the national debt. The landed and Anglican interests may have had a monopoly of formal political power in Westminster, but in order to finance the state they had to pay heed — and certainly could not afford to oppress — the mercantile and Dissenting interests so busy two or three miles down the Thames in the City of London.

The national debt gave Englishmen a readily liquid financial security in which they could invest and disinvest, and accumulate capital that could be and was put to other uses — to the creation of insurance offices, partnership banks, trading companies, and, in time, agricultural improvements and industrial factories.<sup>35</sup> "Delay in the emergence of the City as a financial centre," writes Dickson, "would, like failure to hold existing overseas markets and win new ones, have put back England's industrialization, and thus changed the course of European history."<sup>36</sup> "The great British Empire, the most flourishing and opulent country in the world," exulted Daniel Defoe in the early eighteenth century: "no clothes can be made to fit a growing child."<sup>37</sup>

Nowhere in the English-speaking world was the growth more exuberant than in the North American colonies, whose population quintupled between 1675 and 1740.<sup>38</sup> James II had long been interested in the North American and Caribbean colonies. Had he remained king after 1688, he undoubtedly would have encouraged the economic development and exploitation of the colonies, and they might have developed economically as they did in the eighteenth century, but certainly not politically. James had been abolishing representative assem-

blies and consolidating the northern colonies, with a view toward making them impervious to French conquest. Also, the Stuart regime most likely would not have waged continuous wars with France in North America, as the English governments after 1689 did. They would probably have left France solidly in possession of Quebec and with a network of fur traders and Indian agents in the Great Lakes basin and the Mississippi Valley. The North American colonies might not have been threatened by war, but they would have had no trans-Appalachian hinterland in which to expand, nor might they have been allowed to trade as widely in the Caribbean and Europe as they did. By the 1740s, some historians argue, the North American colonies were the home of the most affluent people, on average, in the world. That affluence increased after the success of the American Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution. The new United States of America became a prosperous and innovative commercial republic in large part because Alexander Hamilton consciously followed the example of William III's Parliament and got Congress to establish a funded national debt and the first Bank of the United States.<sup>39</sup>

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THE FINAL AND most momentous reverberations of the Revolution of 1688–89 were in foreign policy. William came to England determined to yoke the three island kingdoms to *la cause commune*, opposing the hegemonic and tyrannical power of Louis XIV's France. The success of the Revolution of 1688–89 enabled him to do just that. This was an entirely new foreign policy for England. From the end of the Wars of the Roses in the 1470s until 1688, English monarchs concentrated on extending their power in Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, by administrative absorption, conquest, and dynastic liaisons, and remained aloof from Continental conflicts. They were "less active in European wars, less important certainly in the calculations of continental rulers, for the most part reacting to, and on the defensive about, events abroad."<sup>40</sup>

The English acceptance of William as king unavoidably plunged the kingdom into war with France. For William, in his position as stadholder of the Netherlands, opposition to a hegemonic European

power, especially France, came naturally. Louis's attack on the Netherlands in 1672 was clearly a threat not just to the interests of the Dutch Republic, but to its existence. William of Orange came to power that year at age 21, fully aware of that threat, and defeating France remained his central purpose for the rest of his life. He worked unflinchingly to enlist in that cause the merchants of Amsterdam, the princes of Germany, the rulers of Spain, and the kingdom of England.

But the English and the Dutch were not in the same position. England, with 5 million people, was not as heavily outnumbered, and its island position off the coast of Europe left it more protected against French attacks—though Ireland, with its smaller population and Catholic majority, was more vulnerable. Charles II and James II had not regarded France as a threat.

But other Englishmen did. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and the prosecution of the *guerre de commerce* in the late 1680s caused many more Englishmen to see France as a threat whose power needed to be restrained. In 1689, English pamphleteers wrote of the need to maintain a balance of power in Europe. A pamphlet titled *A View of the True Interests of the Several States since the Accession of their Present Majesties to the Imperial Crown of Great Britain* stated a theme that eventually became a commonplace: "It is a Maxim of True Policy that whensoever any Prince is exalted too high, and becomes formidable to his Neighbours, the other Princes ought to enter into a League together, to pull him down, or at least hinder him from growing greater."<sup>41</sup> As the historian John Rule writes, "Thus 1688 is not only momentous in the personal life of William of Orange and in the national life of England, but in the international life of Europe, for it marks the birth of a theory and practice of a power balance that has lasted until today."<sup>42</sup>

Maintaining that balance of power and opposing hegemonic tyrants on the continent of Europe became the dominant foreign policy of England and Britain and, in time, of the United States to the present day. The tradition was firmly established in the two decades immediately after the Revolution, through the rule of King William III and, under his successor Queen Anne, by the Duke of Marlborough, John Churchill.

William initially relied primarily on Dutch generals to prosecute his war against France and, after a series of naval and land reverses, won a decisive military victory at Namur in 1695 and negotiated the Treaty of Ryswick with Louis in 1697. That proved only a pause in a long struggle. King Charles I of Spain, long expected to die, finally did so in November 1700, and Louis XIV promptly claimed the Kingdom of Spain, with its extensive holdings in Italy and the Netherlands, the Americas and the Philippines, for his grandson Philip, Duke of Anjou. There followed the War of Spanish Succession (1702–13), undertaken by William and, after his death in 1702, carried on by Queen Anne. William in his last years had shown his favor to Marlborough, and Anne entrusted to him the direction of her armies in Germany and the Netherlands and the conduct of diplomatic and financial negotiations with her European allies. Marlborough won a series of dazzling victories and was only relieved of command in 1711 after the explosive breakup of the long and intimate relationship between his wife and the queen.<sup>43</sup> But the pattern had been set. Despite opposition from some members of Parliament, who wanted Britain to rely on its navy for safety and to avoid wars on the Continent, the belief that Britain must maintain a balance of power against a hegemonic and tyrannical power in Europe became deeply ingrained.

So Britain continued to follow, with some gaps and exceptions, an anti-hegemonic foreign policy in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. There were wars against monarchical France in 1739–48, 1754–63, and 1775–83, and against revolutionary and Napoleonic France in 1793–1802 and 1803–15. These were worldwide struggles, with fighting in Europe and on the oceans, in North America and the Caribbean and India. The war of 1754–63 started with the rout of General Braddock's army in western Pennsylvania, with the retreat to safety led by a young Virginia colonel named George Washington. The organizer of victory in London was William Pitt, who urged a strategy of attack on all fronts and solid support of the beleaguered King of Prussia Frederick II. The result was a rousing British victory and the surrender of French Canada.<sup>44</sup> But postwar British policies led to protests and then to revolution in the North American colonies: British defeat, and the emergence of another

## **Bill of Rights**

### **I - Freedom of Speech, Press, Religion, Assembly, and Petition**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### **II - Right to keep and bear arms**

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

### **III - Conditions for quarters of soldiers**

No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

### **IV - Right of search and seizure regulated**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

### **V - Provisions concerning prosecution**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

### **VI - Right to a speedy trial, witnesses, etc.**

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

## **VII - Right to a trial by jury**

In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

## **VIII - Excessive bail, cruel punishment**

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

## **IX - Rule of construction of Constitution**

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

## **X - Rights of the States under Constitution**

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.