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The Declaration of Independence in World Context

David Armitage

Where better to begin internationalizing the history of the United States than at the beginning, with the Declaration of Independence? No document is as familiar to students or so deeply entwined with what it means to be an American. The “self-evident truths” it proclaimed to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” have guaranteed it a sacrosanct place as “American scripture,” a testament to the special qualities of a chosen people. Little wonder, then, that it stands as a cornerstone of Americans’

sense of their own uniqueness. If a document so indelibly American as the Declaration of Independence can be put successfully into a world context, then surely almost any subject in United States history can be internationalized. This can be done for the Declaration by showing that it was the product of a pressing international context in 1776, by examining the host of imitations it spawned and the many analogous documents that have been issued from 1790 to 1988, and by comparing the starkly different histories of its present reception



“There you see the little hot spitfire teapot that has done all of the mischief . . .” in the “Tea-Tax-Tempest, or Old Time with his Magick-Lantern” by W. Humphreys, London, March 12, 1783. (Image courtesy of the Lilly Library, Indiana University Bloomington.)

within and beyond the United States. Accordingly, this essay will deal with the immediate motivations that led to the Declaration in 1776, with the first fifty years of reactions to it, at home and abroad, and with the subsequent history of declaring independence across the world from Venezuela to New Zealand. It will then conclude with some reflections on what the Declaration's afterlife can tell us about the broader modern history of rights, both individual and collective.

To ask just what the Declaration declared is to see that, first and foremost, it announced the entry of the United States into international history. The very term, "United States of America," had not been used publicly before its appearance in the Declaration. As the opening paragraph stated, the representatives of the states were laying before "the opinions of mankind" the reasons "one people" had chosen "to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them." Those "powers of the earth"—meaning other sovereign states—were the immediate international audience for the Declaration. The United States intended to join them on an equal footing "as Free and Independent States" that "have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which independent States may of right do" (1). With that concluding statement, the United States announced that it had left the transnational community of the British Empire to join instead the international community of sovereign states.

The Declaration of Independence was therefore a declaration of interdependence. Its primary intention was to turn a civil war among Britons, and within the British Empire, into a legitimate war between states under the law of nations. In August 1775, George III had already turned the American colonists into rebels by declaring them outside his protection. To transform themselves from outlaws into legitimate belligerents, the colonists needed international recognition for their cause and foreign allies to support it. Thomas Paine's bestselling pamphlet, *Common Sense*, made this motivation clear. In February 1776, Paine argued in the closing pages of the first edition of *Common Sense* that the "custom of nations" demanded a declaration of American independence, if any European power were even to mediate a peace between the Americans and Great Britain. France and Spain in particular could not be expected to aid those they considered rebels against another monarch. Foreign courts needed to have American grievances laid before them persuasively in a "manifesto" which could also reassure them that the Americans would be reliable trading partners. Without a declaration, Paine concluded, "[t]he custom of all courts is against us, and will be so, until, by an independence, we take rank with other nations" (2).

The records of the Continental Congress confirm that the need for a declaration of independence was intimately linked with the de-



Miranda and Bolivar lead their followers in signing of the Declaration of Independence for Venezuela against Spanish rule, July 5, 1811. (Image courtesy of and © copyrighted by the Bettman Archive and Corbis.)

mands of international relations. When on June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee tabled a resolution before the Continental Congress declaring the colonies independent, he also urged Congress to resolve "to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances" and to prepare a plan of confederation for the newly-independent states. Congress formally adopted the resolution on July 2, 1776, but only after creating three overlapping committees to draft the Declaration, a model treaty, and the Articles of Confederation. The Declaration announced the states' entry into the international system; the

model treaty was designed to establish amity and commerce with other states; and the Articles of Confederation, which established "a firm league" among the thirteen free and independent states, constituted an international agreement to set up central institutions for the conduct of vital domestic and foreign affairs. To grasp the original meaning of the Declaration, it should be read alongside the Franco-American treaty of 1778 and the Articles of Confederation as one of a trio of international documents produced in sequence by the Continental Congress.

The Declaration's primary meaning in 1776 was to affirm before world opinion the rights of a group of states to enter the international realm as equals with other such states. John Adams, writing in 1781, called the Declaration of Independence "that memorable Act, by which [the United States] assumed an equal Station among the Nations." John C. Calhoun concurred a generation later: "The act was, in fact, but a formal and solemn announcement to the world, that the colonies had ceased to be dependent communities, and had become free and independent States." For almost fifty years after 1776, the Declaration's meaning for Americans lay in its opening and closing paragraphs, not in the self-evident truths that "all men are created equal" with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Even Abraham Lincoln saw those truths as strictly surplus to requirements in 1776: "The assertion that 'all men are created equal' was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration, not for that, but for future use" (3). The history of the responses to the Declaration, and the imitations of it, proves that Lincoln's point held good not just in the American context but in a world context, too.

The rapid transmission and translation of the Declaration around the Atlantic World and across Europe indicated the systems of communication and the common arguments that bound together the late eighteenth-century international community. It appeared in London newspapers in mid-August 1776, had reached Florence and Warsaw by mid-September, and a German translation appeared in Switzerland by October. The Spanish-American authorities actively banned its distribution but other obstacles—not least the fact that it was written in English—stood in the way of its circulation. The first copy



of the Declaration sent to France—the most likely and sought-after ally for the new United States—went astray; a second copy arrived only in November 1776, when American independence was already old news throughout Europe. By that time, too, the British government of Lord North had commissioned an anonymous rebuttal of the Declaration by a young conservative pamphleteer and lawyer, John Lind, and his friend, the even younger philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. Bentham's blistering attack on the "contemptible and extravagant" "opinions of the Americans on Government" in his "Short Review of the Declaration" foreshadowed his later criticisms of the "nonsense upon stilts" he found in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (4). The Declaration thereby became a primary document in a larger international debate over the origins, the scope and the limits of rights, both collective and individual.

The Franco-American Treaty was signed only in February 1778 but it helped to ensure ultimate American victory over British forces. If, however, the United States had been soundly defeated at the battle of Saratoga or Yorktown, the American rebellion might be only as famous today as the other failed independence movements of the late eighteenth century, in Corsica, Montenegro, Greece, or the Crimea, for example (5). The Declaration of Independence might then be just another historical curiosity, known only to scholars and to a dwindling band of hard-core nationalists keeping the flame of independence alive.

The recognition by Britain of the colonies' independence by the Peace of Paris in 1783 indisputably confirmed what the Declaration had contentiously affirmed: that the colonies were free and independent states not just *de facto* but *de jure*, too. Its immediate purpose having been served, the opening and closing paragraphs of the Declaration fell into oblivion in the United States, except when they were recalled by Southern proponents of states' rights like Calhoun. The second paragraph did not immediately rise to prominence in the first generation after American independence. Its claims to natural rights and a right of revolution sounded suspiciously like the "jacobinical" tenets of the French Revolution and were tainted with Jeffersonian Republicanism in an age of partisan strife.

Only in the aftermath of the War of 1812, once all suspicion had been removed that the Declaration was anti-British, pro-French, and an incitement to insurrection, could the second paragraph of the Declaration begin its progress towards becoming the presumed heart of the Declaration's true meaning in the United States (6).

Yet if the assertion that the united colonies were "free and independent States" was not long remembered in the United States, it would frequently be recalled as the inspiration for other anti-imperial and anticolonial secession movements over the next two centuries. There have been three major periods of declaring independence: the years from 1776 to the Revolutions of 1848 in Eu-

rope; the immediate aftermath of the First World War and the breakup of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires; and the decades from 1945 to 1979, when seventy newly independent states emerged from the wreckage of the European colonial empires. During the first great age of declaring independence, other declarations generally alluded to the opening and closing paragraphs of the American Declaration, as did the earliest known imitation which came from Flanders in 1790, when rebels in the Austrian Netherlands declared that their province "EST & a droit d' ÊTRE un *Etat libre & indépendant*" ("is, and of right ought to be, a free and independent state") in words taken directly from the American Declaration (7). Two decades later, that great admirer of the American Revolution, Francisco de Miranda, proclaimed on July 5, 1811—having just missed the anniversary of the American Declaration—that the "United Provinces" of Venezuela now stood "among the sovereign nations of the earth the rank which the Supreme Being and nature has assigned us" as "Free, Sovereign and Independent States" (8). Likewise, the Texas Declaration of Independence (1836) affirmed the necessity of "severing our political connection with the Mexican people, and assuming an independent attitude among the peoples of the earth" (9). In this early period, the Liberian Declaration of Independence (1847), composed by the Virginia-born African American Hilary Teague, alone enshrined the recognition of "certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the right to acquire, possess, enjoy, and defend property;" it, too, began with a declaration that the Republic of Liberia was "a free, sovereign, and independent state" (10).

It was only in the mid-twentieth century that the second paragraph of the Declaration would be used in other declarations of independence. Two such examples, each of which heralded one of the later heydays of declaring independence, were the Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation (1918) and the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence (1945). The Czechoslovak Declaration was drafted in Washington, DC, by, among others, Gutzon Borglum (the sculptor of Mount Rushmore). It placed the American Declaration within a lineage stretching from the proto-Protestantism of Jan Hus

in the fifteenth century all the way to the Wilsonian promise of self-determination in the early twentieth (11). Likewise, Ho Chi Minh's Declaration opened with quotations from the second paragraph of the American Declaration and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Ho Chi Minh, long an admirer of George Washington, thereby placed the Vietnamese revolution into a longer revolutionary tradition while also making a shrewd, albeit unsuccessful, bid for American support for Vietnamese independence (12). Even these examples, however, were not typical in their respect for the Declaration's "self-evident truths." More characteristic of the century before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was British foreign



Rhodesia Declares Independence. Ian Smith, Rhodesian Premier, signs declaration of independence (top photo from files), as Rhodesian officials watch, November 11, 1965. (Image courtesy of and © copyrighted by the Bettman Archive and Corbis.)

secretary Arthur Balfour's response at the Versailles conference in 1919 to a proposal that the covenant of the League of Nations include a racial equality clause "commencing with the proposition taken from the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal. Mr. Balfour said that was an eighteenth century proposition which he did not believe was true. He believed it was true in a certain sense that all men of a particular nation were created equal, but not that a man in Central Africa was created equal to a European" (13).

Active resistance of the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness helped to turn the Declaration of Independence into a blueprint for white settler revolt. Thus, the South Carolina Declaration of Secession (December 20, 1860) asserted that "South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State; with full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all the other acts and things which independent States may of right do" (14). Even more closely modeled on the form, and even the purpose, of the American Declaration was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence issued by the embattled white

minority government of Southern Rhodesia (November 11, 1965). In conscious imitation of the 1776 Declaration, it opened with the words, "Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may become necessary for a people to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them with another people and to assume among other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled . . ." Two years earlier, in 1963, the British government had prepared military contingency plans against the possibility of just such a unilateral declaration: the ominous title of the secret file containing them was "Boston Tea Party" (15).

The great majority of the unilateral declarations of independence issued after 1776 made no direct reference to the American Declaration. For example, the Haitian declaration of January 1, 1804, the first declaration of independence in the western hemisphere after 1776, ignored the American Declaration altogether, and with good reason in light of Thomas Jefferson's policy not to recognize the legitimacy of the Haitian Revolution. "To draw up the act of independence," wrote Louis Boisrond Tonnerre, the author of the Haitian declaration, "we

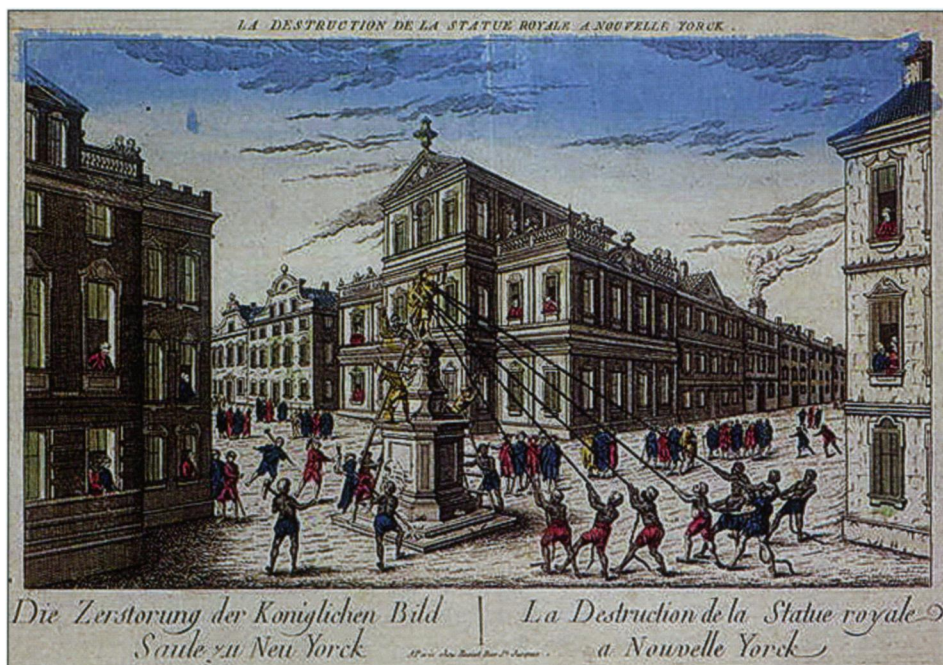
need the skin of a white man for parchment, his skull for an inkwell, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen!" (16). His declaration was brief and matter-of-fact rather than bloodthirsty, an acknowledgment of a victory achieved rather than a statement of high ideals to be pursued. Such pragmatism would distinguish many later declarations even as others, like the declaration issued by the Palestinian National Council in November 1988 (17), catalogued unresolved grievances and unfulfilled aspirations to statehood.

The global history of the Declaration of Independence since 1776 does not confirm Gordon Wood's recent judgment that it "set forth a

philosophy of human rights that could be applied not only to Americans, but also to peoples everywhere. It was essential in giving the American Revolution a universal appeal" (18). Rather, it is more the story of the rights of states than of individuals or groups. Indeed, the history of the Declaration of Independence in world context is above all an account of how our world of states emerged from an earlier world of multinational empires. The transition from one to the other did not necessarily benefit equally all those who had been the subjects of empires. Thus, the declarations of independence by indigenous peoples are

rare. The most notable example—the "Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand" (1835)—is in fact a counterexample because it preceded the imposition of colonial authority, and in fact made such authority possible by constituting the Maori chiefs as a sovereign body with whom the British could then conclude the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (19). Successful examples of declarations of independence by ethnic minorities within independent nation-states are just as rare: it seems to be a historical rule that once states have established their right to external self-determination they become resistant to further internal challenges of their autonomy or integrity.

The Declaration of Independence possessed meanings as varied for international audiences as it did for different American publics: however, its status as a charter of individual rights has never been as prominent on the world stage as it has been within the United States. To examine the Declaration's reception in world history since 1776 is to discover just how relatively recent and persistently fragile is the prominence of talk about the rights of nonstate groups and individuals in international affairs. Perhaps only the self-evident lesson to be learned from this global history of the Declaration of Independence is



La Destruction de la Statue royale a Nouvelle York/Die Zerstörung der Königlichen Bild Saule zu New York. By Andre Basset. Paris: Chez Basset, 177-. Hand-colored engraving. (Image from the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.)



that protection of those rights demands constant vigilance against the powers of the earth, not the least because the individual rights to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" have not always been easily reconciled with "all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do." 🌐

Endnotes

1. "The Declaration of Independence as Adopted by Congress" (July 4, 1776), in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: I, 1760-1776* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 429, 432.
2. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (January 14, 1776), in Eric Foner, ed., *Paine: Collected Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), 45-6.
3. John Adams, *A Collection of State-Papers, Relative to the Acknowledgement of the Sovereignty [sic] of the United States of America* (The Hague, 1782), 4; John C. Calhoun, *A Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States*, in Ross M. Lence, ed., *Union and Liberty: The Political Philosophy of John C. Calhoun* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992), 90; Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Springfield, Illinois" (June 26, 1857), in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 9 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), II:406.
4. Jeremy Bentham, "Short Review of the Declaration," in John Lind and Jeremy Bentham, *An Answer to the Declaration of the American Congress* (London: T. Cadell, J. Walter and T. Sewell, 1776), 119-32.
5. Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768-1776: The First Crisis*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
6. Philip F. Detweiler, "The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 19 (1962): 557-74.
7. J. F. Rohaert, *Manifeste de la Province de Flandre* (Paris: L. Potier de Lille, 1790), 27-8.
8. "Acta Solemne de Independencia" (July 5, 1811), in Albert P. Blaustein, Jay Sigler, and Benjamin R. Breede, eds., *Independence Documents of the World*, 2 vols. (New York: Oceana Publications, 1977), II:751.
9. "The Unanimous Declaration of Independence Made by the Delegates of the People of Texas" (March 2, 1836), in John H. Jenkins, gen. ed., *The Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, 9 vols. (Austin, TX: Presidial Press, 1973), IV:493-7.
10. "A Declaration of Independence by the Representatives of the People of the Commonwealth of Liberia in Convention Assembled" (July 26, 1847), in Alfonso K. Dormu, *The Constitution of the Republic of Liberia and the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970), 37-42.
11. T. G. Masaryk, et al., "The Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation" (October 26, 1918), in George J. Kovtun, *The Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence: A History of the Document* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1985), 46-8.
12. Ho Chi Minh, "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (September 2, 1945), in Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works*, 4 vols. (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973), III:17-21.
13. David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1928), I: 183-4.
14. "Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union" (December 20, 1860), in *Journal of the Convention of the People of South Carolina, Held in 1860, 1861 and 1862* (Columbia, SC: R. W. Gibbes, 1862), 461, 466.
15. Government of Rhodesia, "Proclamation" (November 11, 1965), in Blaustein, Sigler and Breede, eds., *Independence Documents of the World*, II:587; National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom), Public Record Office, DO 183/253.
16. Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti* (1847-48), 8 vols. (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1989-91), III, 145.
17. Palestine National Council, "Declaration of Independence" (November 15, 1988), in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 5th edition (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1995), 542-6.
18. Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 57.
19. "He W[h]akaputanga o te Rangitiratanga o Nu Tirene" (Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand) (October 28, 1835), in *Fac-Similes of the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington, NZ: George Didsbury, 1877), 4.

Sources

The international and global context for the American Revolution, and hence for the Declaration of Independence, has been variously chronicled in R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959-64), Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776-1789*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) and, most recently and most expansively, in C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), ch. 3, "Converging Revolutions, 1780-1820."

The various drafts of the American Declaration of Independence, along with Richard Henry Lee's resolution, are handsomely reproduced in Julian P. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text*, revised edition (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1999). Some of the documents can also be found online in the Library of Congress exhibition, "Declaring Independence: Drafting the Documents": <<http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/declara>> and in the National Archives' exhibition of "The Charters of Freedom": <http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters.html>.

The debate around the drafting of the Declaration can be followed in Thomas Jefferson's "Notes of Proceedings in the Continental Congress" (June 7 - August 1, 1776), printed in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, I: 1760-1776* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 309-29. The best recent discussion of the drafting is Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

There are many easily available paperback editions of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, most recently one edited by Gordon S. Wood (New York: The Modern Library, 2003). The best scholarly edition is Eric Foner, ed., *Paine: Collected Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1995), which prints a wide range of Paine's writings during the American Revolution and after.

Many of the "local" declarations of independence, issued by towns, states and other groups can be found in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives: Fourth Series*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC, 1837-53). For discussion and an indispensable finding-list see "The 'Other' Declarations of Independence" and "Appendix A," in Maier, *American Scripture*, 47-96, 217-23.

The Declaration of Independence was the culmination of a series of public documents—petitions, addresses, declarations and speeches—issued by the Continental Congress. Many of these documents—for example, the "Declaration . . . Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms" (July 6, 1775) or "A Speech to the Six Confederate Nations . . . From the Twelve United Colonies" (August 26-28, 1775), addressed to the Iroquois Confederacy—make illuminating comparisons with the form and argument of the Declaration of Independence. They are all collected in James H. Hutson, ed., *A Decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind: Congressional State Papers, 1774-1776* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1975). Mary A. Giunta and J. Dane Hartgrove, eds., *Documents of the Emerging Nation: U.S. Foreign Relations, 1775-1789* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly



Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of VietNam, September 2, 1945

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: “All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.”

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice

Resources, Inc., 1998), provides a generous selection of sources concerning the United States’ entry into international affairs.

The international context of the Declaration and the subsequent responses to it are discussed in David Armitage, “The Declaration of Independence and International Law,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 59 (January 2002): 39-64. Jeremy Bentham’s attack on the Declaration has only been reprinted once since the eighteenth century, in Robert Ginsberg, ed., *A Casebook on The Declaration of Independence* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), 9-17, though it is there attributed to John Lind. The only other extended contemporary reply to the Declaration, Thomas Hutchinson’s *Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia* (1776), has recently been reprinted as an appendix to Hans L. Eicholz, *Harmoniz-*

ing Sentiments: The Declaration of Independence and the Jeffersonian Idea of Self-Government (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 177-99.

Most of the later successful declarations of independence—among them, those referred to here from Czechoslovakia, Haiti, Liberia, Rhodesia, Venezuela, and Vietnam—can be found in Albert P. Blaustein, Jay Sigler, and Benjamin R. Breede, eds., *Independence Documents of the World*, 2 vols. (New York: Oceana Publications, 1977). However, this collection does not include the Texas Declaration of Independence, which can be found online at <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/texdec.htm>>, the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, which is printed in Jamal R. Nassar, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: From Armed Struggle to the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 222-26, and is also available online at <<http://www.palestine-net.com/politics/indep.html>>, or the New Zealand Declaration of Independence, which can be found online at <www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1835waitangi.html>.

A wide range of documents relating to contemporary movements for independence, separation and secession can be found online at <http://www.constitution.org/cs_separ.htm>.

Other declarations of independence produced in the United States have been collected in Philip S. Foner, ed., *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman’s Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829-1975* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). The volume does not include the white Nativist “Declaration of Principles . . . of the Native American Convention” (July 4, 1845), extracts from which can be found in Stanley Feldstein and Lawrence Costello, eds., *The Ordeal of Assimilation: A Documentary History of the White Working Class* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974), 147-53.

Translations of the Declaration of Independence into languages from French and Spanish to Hebrew and Malay can be found in the online roundtable, “Interpreting the Declaration of Independence by Translation,” <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/declaration>>, along with a set of illuminating interpretive essays also available in the *Journal of American History*, 85, 4 (March 1999): 1280-1460. For a useful overview of the findings of those essays see David Thelen, “Reception of the Declaration of Independence,” in Scott Douglas Gerber, ed., *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002), 191-212. An informative set of perspectives on the German reception can be found (in English) online at <http://www.dhm.de/magazine/unabhaengig/decl_index.htm>.

A fuller account of the Declaration of Independence in world context will appear in David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (forthcoming, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). This will also include Bentham’s “Short Review of the Declaration,” a translation of the Flanders *Manifesto* (1790), and other later declarations of independence.

David Armitage is associate professor of history at Columbia University. He is the author of The Ideological Origins of the British Empire (2000), which won the 2001 Longman/History Today Book of the Year Award, the editor of Bolingbroke: Political Writings (1997) and Theories of Empire, 1450-1800 (1998), and the co-editor of Milton and Republicanism (1995) and The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800 (2002). He is currently working on a study of international thought in the Age of Revolutions, a global history of the American Declaration of Independence, and an edition of John Locke’s colonial writings.