

# Romney's Revolutionary War Bungle

**Exclusive:** Mitt Romney tries to impress the Tea Partiers with his love of the Founders, but the ex-Massachusetts governor writes that the Revolution began in April 1775 with the British capturing Boston by sea, rather than the Minutemen driving the Redcoats back to Boston from Lexington and Concord, says Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

You'd think that Republican presidential hopefuls who claim to idolize the American Founders would at least have a rudimentary knowledge about the historic events that led to the Revolution, especially one hopeful who served as governor of Massachusetts.

Yet, Mitt Romney, who presided as Massachusetts governor for four years in the capital city of Boston, wrote in his book, *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*, that the Revolutionary War began in April 1775 when the British attacked Boston by sea.

"In April 1775, British warships laid siege on Boston Harbor and successfully took command of the city," Romney wrote.

However, in the actual history, the British military controlled Boston long before April 1775, garrisoning Redcoats in the rebellious city since 1768. The British clamped down more tightly after the Boston Tea Party on Dec. 16, 1773, imposing the so-called "Intolerable Acts" in 1774, reinforcing the Boston garrison and stopping commerce into Boston Harbor.

The aggressive British actions forced dissident leaders Sam Adams and John Hancock to flee the city and take refuge in Lexington, as colonial militias built up their stocks of arms and ammunition in nearby Concord.

The Revolutionary War began not with British forces seizing Boston in April 1775 as Romney wrote, but when the Redcoats ventured forth from Boston on April 19, 1775, to seize Adams and Hancock in Lexington and then go farther inland to destroy the colonial arms cache in Concord.

The British failed in both endeavors, but touched off the war by killing eight Massachusetts men at Lexington Green. The Redcoats then encountered a larger force of Minutemen near Concord Bridge and were driven back in a daylong retreat to Boston, suffering heavy losses. Thus, the Revolutionary War began with a stunning American victory, not with the American defeat that Romney described.

## Tea Party Favorites

In misreporting the start of the Revolution, Romney joins some of his past rivals for the Republican presidential nomination, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann, in getting basic facts about America's Founding wrong.

Earlier in Campaign 2012, Gov. Perry put the American Revolution in the 1500s and Bachmann put the opening battle in New Hampshire, not Massachusetts.

"The reason that we fought the revolution in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was to get away from that kind of onerous crown if you will," Perry said, missing the actual date for the war for independence by two centuries and even placing it before the first permanent English settlement in the New World, Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, the first decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

While pandering to Tea Party voters in New Hampshire, Bachmann declared, "You're the state where the shot was heard around the world in Lexington and Concord." (She may have gotten confused because there is a Concord, New Hampshire, as well as a Concord, Massachusetts.)

However, one can almost excuse such historical ignorance coming from two public officials who live far away from the historic events. It's harder to comprehend how Romney, who lived in Massachusetts much of his adult life and was governor of the state for four years, could get such a basic historical fact how the Revolutionary War began wrong.

Key events, including Dr. Joseph Warren dispatching Paul Revere and William Dawes to warn the countryside of the British attack, occurred virtually within eye sight of Boston's Beacon Hill where the State House sits. These also are events that are near the heart of every Bay State citizen and are celebrated each April with the Boston Marathon on the Patriots Day holiday.

Yet, Romney committed to writing in a book that he claims to have personally authored an account of the start of the Revolutionary War that is upside down. He has British warships attacking and capturing Boston, a British victory, rather than the Redcoats being bloodied by the Minutemen at Concord and driven back into Boston, an American victory.

One could say that the real "Case for American Greatness" began very differently than Mitt Romney describes.

[For more on how the American Right gets the Founding wrong, see Consortiumnews.com's "America's Founding Pragmatism."]

To read more of Robert Parry's writings, you can now order his last two books, *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, at the discount price of only \$16 for both. For details on the special offer, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](http://neckdeepbook.com). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

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## More on 'Vanity of Perfectionism'

**Exclusive:** Americans are faced with a tough choice this fall: to stick with Barack Obama despite his faults, switch to Mitt Romney who is surrounded by neocons and trickle-down economists, or essentially boycott the process by voting for a third party or staying home. Some are angry because Robert Parry criticized Option Three.

By Robert Parry

My recent article, "[The Vanity of Perfectionism](#)," has stirred up some anger, in part, because of my choice of the word "vanity" to describe some behavior that I have witnessed on the American Left in people who sit out presidential elections or cast ballots for third-party candidates who have no chance of winning.

So, let me explain what I was driving at. The central point of the article was that Americans, especially on the Left, need to get realistic about elections and stop using them as opportunities to express disappointment, anger or even personal morality. Through elections, Americans are the only ones who can select our national leaders, albeit in a limited fashion.

The rest of the world's people have no say in who's going to run the most powerful nation on earth. Only we can, at least to the extent permitted in the age of *Citizens United*. The main thing we can still do is stop the more dangerous major-party candidate from gaining control of the executive powers of the United States, including the commander-in-chief authority and the nuclear codes, not small things.

So, when we treat elections as if they are our moment to express ourselves, rather than to mitigate the damage that a U.S. president might inflict on the

world, we are behaving selfishly, in my view. That's why I used the word "vanity." U.S. elections should not be primarily about us.

U.S. elections should really be about others those people who are likely to feel the brunt of American power Iraqis and Iranians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans, Vietnamese and Cambodians, Palestinians and Syrians, etc., etc. Elections also should be about future generations and the environment.

Whether we like it or not, the choice this year looks to be between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. People were free to run in the primaries to challenge these guys and, indeed, Romney faced a fairly large field of Republicans whom he defeated. Progressives could have challenged Obama but basically chose not to.

I believe it is now the duty of American voters to assess these two candidates and decide which one is likely to inflict less harm on the planet and its people. One of them might even do some good. We can hope.

If you do your research and decide that Romney is that guy, then vote for him. If it's Obama, vote for him. (Before you make your decision, I would recommend that you read Romney's book, *No Apology*, a full-throated neocon manifesto, which he claims that he wrote himself.)

In my view, everything else that Americans do – throwing away their votes on third parties or sitting out the election are acts of vanity. Maybe it's moralistic vanity or intellectual vanity or some other kind of vanity, but it is vanity. It has no realistic effect other than to make the person feel good.

I've known people who say they have always voted for Ralph Nader or some other third-party candidate. Thus, they say, they are not responsible for whatever the United States does to other countries. But that attitude, too, is vanity.

Instead of doing something practical to mitigate the harm that the U.S. does in the world by voting for the person who might be less likely to overuse the U.S. military or who might restrain the emission of greenhouse gases these folks sit on the sidelines basking in their perfection. They won't make a call.

The hard decision is to support the imperfect candidate who has a real chance to win and who surely will do some rotten things but likely fewer rotten things than the other guy and might even make some improvements.

I know that doesn't "feel" as satisfying. One has to enter a morally ambiguous world. But that it is the world where many innocent people can be saved from horrible deaths (though not all) and where possibly actions can be taken to ensure that future generations are left a planet that is still habitable or at least with the worst effects of global warming avoided.

## Has That Technique Ever Worked?

Though the choice of the word “vanity” may have been the most controversial part of my article, the bulk of it addressed another issue. Has the Left’s recurring practice of rejecting flawed Democratic candidates actually done any good? Was it preferable for Richard Nixon to defeat Hubert Humphrey; Ronald Reagan to beat Jimmy Carter; and George W. Bush to elbow past Al Gore to the White House?

If the Left’s tendency to punish these imperfect Democrats for their transgressions had led to some positive result, then the argument could be made that more than vanity was involved here, that the effect of causing some Democrats to lose was to make later Democrats more progressive and thus more favorable to the Left. Or maybe that the Left is on its way to building a viable third party that can win nationally.

But any examination of those three case studies Elections 1968, 1980 and 2000 would lead to a conclusion that whatever practical goals that some on the Left had in mind were not advanced by the Democratic defeat. The Democrats did not become more progressive, rather they shifted more to the center.

All three Republican presidents Nixon, Reagan and Bush-43 extended or started wars that their Democratic rivals might have ended or avoided. Those elections plus congressional outcomes in 1980, 1994 and 2010 also bolstered the Right and helped consolidate anti-progressive attitudes on domestic and foreign policies.

More than four decades after 1968 and a dozen years after 2000, there is still no left-wing third party that can do more than play the role of spoiler.

Yet, if there has been no positive practical result from these electoral tactics in the past and there is no reasonable expectation for the future then what’s the point of repeating them? There’s the old saying that one definition of madness is to do the same thing over and over expecting a different result.

Nor, by the way, is there a popular movement that can significantly alter government policies strictly through civil disobedience or via protests in the streets with all due respect to Occupy Wall Street. So, what’s up here?

The only explanation that I can come up with for throwing away a vote on a third-party candidate or not voting for “the lesser evil” is that such a choice represents a personal expression of anger or disappointment. And I don’t mean to disparage anyone’s right to feel those emotions. Given the recent history, it’s hard not to.

But when some lives can be saved, when some wars can be averted and when the planet can possibly be spared from ecological destruction the true moral

imperative, in my view, is to engage in the imperfect process of voting for the major-party candidate who seems more likely than the other one to do those things.

To ignore that imperative, I'm sorry to say, is an act of vanity.

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## Iran Rebuffed on Regional Stability

Toeing the neocon line, Mitt Romney denounced Iran as the world's "most destabilizing nation" despite polls in the Middle East putting Israel and the United States at the top of that list, as Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett note at [www.RaceForIran.com](http://www.RaceForIran.com).

By Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett

Standing reality on its head, at least in the eyes of most Middle Easterners, presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney declared during his recent visit to Israel that the Islamic Republic is "the most destabilizing nation in the world."

In fact, reputable surveys conducted by international and regional polling groups, see [here](#) and [here](#), show that, by orders of magnitude, largely Sunni Arab populations see Israel and the United States as much bigger threats to their security and interests than Iran.

*Al Jazeera* asked our colleague, Seyed Mohammad Marandi of the University of Tehran, to comment on Gov. Romney's remark. [To see the segment, [click here.](#)]

Mohammad's observations that, given the record of American policy in the Middle East (and all the death and destruction it has caused), the United States is hardly in a position to "complain very much about Iran" and that, from an

Iranian perspective, there is not a lot of difference between Romney and President Obama are well presented.

His explanation why the “soft war” that the Obama Administration is currently conducting against the Islamic Republic is not that different from a “hot war” is especially eloquent. We, though, want to pick up on Mohammad’s response to the interviewer’s suggestion that it is Iranian intransigence which is blocking progress in the nuclear talks and prompting tougher sanctions:

“The Iranians have been talking. The Iranians are basically saying that ‘we are willing to negotiate.’ But the Western position is ‘you give up everything and then we’ll start talking.’ The Iranian right to enriching uranium is a right that all sovereign countries have. And the Iranian Revolution itself was partially about dignity and independence.

“The Iranians are not going to accept being a second-rate country. This is not the Saudi regime or the Jordanian regime. This is a country that is fiercely independent. So the Iranians will continue to enrich uranium within the framework of the NPT and international law.

“The United States cannot stop Iran from doing so. If the United States was reasonable and rational, if the Europeans were rational, then the Iranians would be willing to give further assurances to ease tensions. But the United States isn’t really after that, in the eyes of Iranians.”

We think that is an important statement, both of the Iranian position and of reality. We have long argued that, if Washington accepted the principle and reality of internationally safeguarded enrichment in Iran, it would become eminently possible, not to say relatively easy, to negotiate a satisfactory resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

But the United States, even under the Obama Administration, does not want to do that, for recognizing Iran’s right to enrich implies recognizing the Islamic Republic as a legitimate political entity representing legitimate national interests. We think that is unlikely to change after the U.S. presidential election in November, regardless of whether Romney or Obama wins.

America’s unwillingness to recognize the Islamic Republic as a legitimate actor with legitimate interests is thwarting diplomatic prospects on other fronts. Last week, the Iran’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mohammad Khazaee, made a statement during a Security Council discussion on the “Situation in the Middle East.” [See [here](#).]

Khazaee’s statement offered a substantive analysis of regional dynamics in the Middle East: “The Middle East region is witnessing a widespread transformational

thunderstorm that has hit across this region.

“The region is witnessing dramatic changes and people are aspiring for democracy and opposing dictators supported by some powers in the West. At the same time the situation in the Middle East region is getting ever more complex. There are more and more threats from terrorism, extremism and foreign interventions which are all impediments to growth, development and stability in the region.

“In this situation, any miscalculations, making wrong decisions and fuelling the fire will affect the whole region and harm many people, as well as all stakeholders. This becomes too risky when in a given situation there is a deliberate attempt to change the realities on the ground through force and armed conflict and creating a fait accompli.”

On the basis of this analysis, Khazaei argued that there needs to be a

“resetting or a revision of approaches towards the developments in the region. The West must revise its approach about the Middle East.

“There seems to be only one approach ahead of us that could bring peace, stability and prosperity and that is cooperation rather than confrontation, genuine response to the desires of the people rather than forcing them to accept what seems to be an artificial and superficial solution.”

Turning specifically to Syria, Khazaei noted that, in the Islamic Republic’s view,

“the current crisis should only be resolved through national dialogue and in a peaceful manner. There are numerous efforts by certain states to further complicate the situation in Syria by providing financial aid and arms to armed groups. Sabotage and terror as well as violence against innocent people must be brought to an end.

“The regional countries should cooperate with one another to resolve the Syrian crisis so that the final result would be to the benefit of Syrian people, the region and the international community.”

Of course, there is nothing really new in this statement of Iranian policy; we discussed Tehran’s perspective on Syrian developments in our last post. [See [here](#).] It is striking, though, that even some American foreign policy elites are now beginning to argue that Washington should be engaging Tehran over Syria.

These include Vali Nasr, the new dean of the Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies who previously advised the late Richard



Holbrooke, President Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

[See [here](#).]

Of course, Iran's view of the possibilities for regional cooperation is not limited to Syria. For some time, we have pointed out that the Islamic Republic has emerged, over the last decade or so, as an indispensable actor in virtually all of the major political and strategic dramas unfolding across the region, including post-conflict stabilization in Afghanistan, creating a more stable and secure Persian Gulf, and fighting *jihadi* extremism, precisely as American standing and influence have been declining.

The Arab Spring has only accelerated and intensified these trends. As we have repeatedly argued, the United States cannot achieve any of its stated, high-priority goals in the region absent better relations with the Islamic Republic.

But hegemonic ambition dressed up as do-gooder liberalism makes it difficult for the United States to assess accurately its strategic situation. The Obama Administration's approach to the Middle East provides a striking demonstration of this point.

In his *Al Jazeera* appearance, Seyed Mohammad Marandi offers a clear overview of the American policies, including the policies of the Obama Administration, that have eviscerated the United States' standing among the vast majority of Middle Easterners.

But American commentators willfully overlook the fact that, according to reputable international polls, regional publics hold U.S. policy in even deeper contempt today than they did when President George W. Bush left office.

Indeed, the dominant assessment in Washington foreign policy circles, and in the Obama Administration, holds that the United States isn't doing that badly at navigating the Arab Spring; moreover, the "mainstream" view posits that the Islamic Republic is the biggest "loser" from the Arab Spring.

One does not have to be a neoconservative to believe these things; this has become the new conventional wisdom in Washington, espoused by people who would strenuously and sincerely reject any effort to lump them in with neocons. [See, for example, [here](#) and [here](#).]

On the basis of this (utterly mistaken, in our view) assessment, the United States, whether under a reelected Obama Administration or a new Romney Administration, will almost certainly continue its current, failing, and ultimately corrosive attempt to reassert hegemony in the Middle East.

**Flynt Leverett served as a Middle East expert on George W. Bush's National**

Security Council staff until the Iraq War and worked previously at the State Department and at the Central Intelligence Agency. Hillary Mann Leverett was the NSC expert on Iran and from 2001 to 2003 was one of only a few U.S. diplomats authorized to negotiate with the Iranians over Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and Iraq. [This article was originally published at RaceforIran.com. For direct link, click <http://www.raceforiran.com/is-iran-%e2%80%9cthe-most-destabilizing-nation-in-the-world%e2%80%9d-or-an-essential-partner-for-building-stability-in-the-middle-east.>]

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