

## Benjamin Franklin in Paris



“There is little reason to think that the success of British espionage or the tiffs between the paranoiac [Arthur] Lee and his two sane colleagues affected the course of diplomacy. France was an absolutist state, and the individuals whom the Americans needed to influence numbered only a few: the comte de Vergennes, the foreign minister; his master, the young King Louis; and a few other ministers and aides whose counsel would be taken in any decision about how far France could go in aiding the rebellious colonies or risking war with Britain. The allure of recounting the complicated details of revolutionary diplomacy in a Parisian setting may explain why so many popular writers have been drawn to this seemingly prosaic subject, just as the titles of their works almost tell the story itself: *A Great Improvisation* by *The Virgin Diplomats* that led to *Triumph in Paris*. But the critical fact about American diplomacy in Paris was that the key decisions were taken by a few men who needed to consult no one but one another.”

--Jack Rakove, *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), 250.