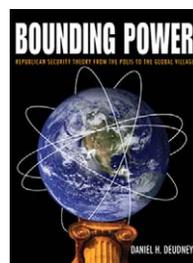
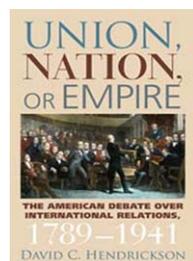

Review Essay

Toward an Old New Paradigm in American International Relations by Karl Walling

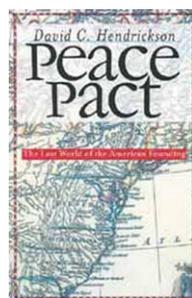
Karl Walling is a professor in the Strategy and Policy Department at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI. He is also a FPRI Senior Scholar. Daniel H. Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton: University Press, 2007).



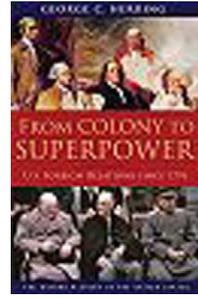
David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789–1941* (Kansas: University Press, 2009).



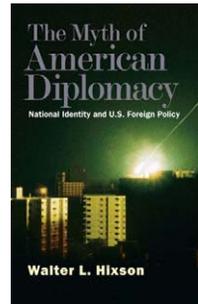
David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Kansas: University Press, 2003).



George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (Oxford: University Press, 2008).



Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).



How Americans study the history of their foreign relations is changing almost as rapidly as the international environment. In this review, we see Walter L. Hixson applying intellectually fashionable critical theory to American diplomacy and George C. Herring inviting a host of non-state actors on to the diplomatic stage. Together, David C. Hendrickson and Daniel H. Deudney come close to (re)inventing a discipline by treating American foreign policy as a particular species of a much larger and older intellectual tradition dating back at least as far as ancient Greece. Perhaps for this reason, Deudney's book was awarded the prize for the best book of the decade by the International Studies Association. Applying that new, old discipline to such problems of international cooperation as nuclear proliferation may prove invaluable for the rest of the century.

While George C. Herring and Walter L. Hixson examine such tried and true themes as American exceptionalism, national identity, ideology, and pragmatism in the American approach to foreign affairs, Daniel H. Deudney and David C. Hendrickson are pioneering something new both in form and substance, based paradoxically on the recovery of a lost tradition of international relations. Deudney calls this tradition republican security theory and Hendrickson names it the unionist paradigm in the continuing American debate over how to provide for security while remaining free at the same time. The result is a synergistic genus-species relationship, with Deudney establishing the theoretical genus in which the American experiment as portrayed by Hendrickson is the most famous, successful, and problematic

species. The result is also both descriptive and prescriptive: republics tend to form unions to provide for their security. If they are wise, they ought to do so, though they are not always wise.

Hixson's contribution to the vast literature on American foreign relations is to employ critical theories in linguistics, psychoanalysis, and post-modernism. He draws on authors such as Foucault, Gramsci, Lacan, and others to deconstruct what he calls the myth of American diplomacy. Says Hixson, American "national identity drives U.S. foreign policy and reinforces domestic hierarchies. Foreign policy flows from cultural hegemony affirming 'America' as a manly, racially superior, and providentially destined 'beacon of liberty,' a country which has a special right to exert power in the world." (p. 1) These three characteristics (excessive notions of manliness, racism, and special rights as a chosen people) drive America into endless wars, and endless wars reinforce the identity, a vicious cycle that winds up confirming their notion of exceptional virtue to Americans (though not necessarily to foreigners), when in fact the result is a pathologically violent nation, or what Hixson calls a "warfare state." (p. 14) It would be difficult to find a nation more deluded about itself.

In essence, Hixson's deconstruction project is a continuation of the progressive scholarship of Charles Beard (*An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, 1913) and William Appleby Williams (*The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 1957), with their semi-Marxist attempts to unmask exploitation at home and abroad. Perhaps because of Hixson's debts to Gramsci, however, he rejects Marx's turn against Hegel. Ideas, which Marx treated as superstructure and epiphenomenal, are determinative for Hixson, if only because they inform how we perceive ourselves and others and enable us to define what we mean by our interests. Interests are therefore socially and culturally constructed, and there can be no realistic account of foreign policy that fails to take that into account (p. 5).

Just as Beard used a version of economic determinism to explain the origins of the American Constitution and Williams used it to explain sources of American imperialism, Hixson uses critical theoretical methods to reveal the "dark side of the force" of American national identity as he construes it. And he has much dark to talk about: Cherokee removal and wars of extermination against Native Americans, westward expansion justified to defend and promote black slavery, a coup in Hawaii to support expansion across the Pacific, interventions justified for humanitarian purposes but often in service of privileged business elites, and any number of things that prove beyond a doubt that American foreign policy is no exception to the usual vices, follies, and evils of other nations.

Hixson's account is unashamedly one-sided, with little attempt to enter fairly, dispassionately, or humanely into the great debates over the War for Independence (in which "manly firmness" was considered essential to resist tyranny); neutrality in the Washington administration (with Alexander

Hamilton especially arguing against the crusader spirit in foreign policy); the War of 1812 (with John Randolph decrying schemes to build an empire by conquering Canada); the Mexican War (with Abraham Lincoln accusing President Polk of falsifying the grounds for the war); the Civil War (with Lincoln again appealing to something in the American identity finding racism incompatible with national principles), and subsequent conflicts in American history. There may not be a single page devoted to understanding any of these statesmen as they understood themselves, which reveals a prosecutorial spirit, or perhaps more accurately, hanging-judge mentality, that must embarrass Hixson's readers, if not Hixson himself. We do not hear John Jay arguing that a government strong enough to restrain the states or their citizens from perpetrating injustices against Native Americans or foreign powers would be essential to national honor. We do not get to listen to Alexander Hamilton suggesting that black American slaves were equal to whites and ought to be given their freedom with their muskets, so they could join the cause of American independence. John Quincy Adams gets a bit part to protest against the crusader spirit and the slave interest in westward expansion, but is immediately dismissed as not serious because of his "enemy-othering" (p. 62). We hear nothing from William Graham Sumner about the moral conquest of the United States by Spain as the Americans acquired a colonial empire of their own. Instead, he is treated as mere confirmation of Hixson's view that the distinctive approach of Americans to enemy-others is to "exterminate" them. (p. 105)

Somehow, one suspects, these voices, even when they were on the losing side of the debate, were at least as important for understanding and constituting national identity as the endless parade of bigots, xenophobes, crusaders, and others in Hixson's account. In truth, Hixson's vague sense of what the national identity ought to be, as distinct from what he claims it really is, probably owes a great deal to these voices. They are stuck in what Lincoln called our "mystic chords of memory." They constitute the "better angels of our nature," but we do not get to know them or much of anything about the nuances of the struggles in which they were engaged, perhaps because they would undermine Hixson's case for a "hegemonic" national identity, and reveal a far more pluralistic one that allows for and even encourages debates about motives and conduct in both domestic and foreign affairs. The result of such an account, which makes the facts and people fit the paradigm rather than the other way around, cannot help being a caricature of the subjects it purports to investigate. All caricatures have some resemblance to actual characters, but Hixson begs the question by assuming what he is trying to prove, that the particular hegemonic national identity he has constructed was so powerful that even the most thoughtful and conscientious American leaders were inescapably under its thrall. It would be far better to hate the sin but love the sinners, who were just human beings, full of the usual vices to be sure, but also struggling, often conscientiously, to define the nation's identity in genuine

debates about the meaning and application of their nation's fundamental principles in foreign affairs. The inhumanity of Hixson's defense of humanity is insufferable.

Says Hixson: "Deconstruction of what purports to be real is thus the necessary first step in the creation of a new post-modern social formation." (p. 318) Setting aside whether Hixson has given us a fair portrait of the national identity, one wonders what he means by a "new post-modern social formation". To quote John Lennon, that insightful pop-cultural critic of fashionable revolutionaries everywhere, "We'd all love to see the plan." One also wonders whether Hixson's commitment to that social formation has determined how he tells his story, that is, whether this is real scholarship, or ideology masquerading as such. Hixson is both vague and platitudinous about his preferred New World Order and America's role within it. He is also morbidly indignant if not even frenetically joyful in the negative part of his self-imposed task. One also cannot help wondering whether the result of his approach can be anything more than nihilism and endless self-flagellation, making it difficult to assert ourselves even in the most worthy of causes.

In contrast, Herring's encyclopedic tome (1035 pages) is fastidiously within the mainstream of American diplomatic history. Every generation needs some standard frame of reference for its history, like Thomas A. Bailey's *Diplomatic History of the American People* (1946) or Robert H. Ferrell's *American Diplomacy* (1987). Those who write them must be saluted for their courage, since every reference will need some sort of shorthand to distinguish the continuously important themes from the unique circumstances of any significant moment in foreign affairs, but the shorthand will inevitably become subject of attack for its simplifications. Herring simplifies by focusing on the consolidation of American independence in the Founding era, subsequent westward expansion, America's rise to great power after the Civil War, and the nation's world-historical role as hegemon after the Second World War. He accepts much of Hixson's critique of American exceptionalism. Instead of framing the source of the problem in terms of national identity, however, he does so with a critique of ideologues (only one of many voices in the American debate over foreign affairs) who believe in a providential mission to spread liberty far and wide, by violence if necessary, with more than a little arrogance and racism fueling recurring bouts of national self-righteousness. As Herring presents the matter, contemporary neo-conservatism may be just the latest reincarnation of an enduring side of American Puritanism. (p. 945)

Unlike Hixson, Herring also sees strengths in the American experience. Herring has his favorite diplomatic leaders, representing what he terms "practical idealism", like Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who understood the art of compromise and generally conformed "to the nation's professed principles while vigorously pursuing important interests." (p. 5) Herring suggests those principles, as well as American institutions, have often checked American hubris, saved the nation

from disgrace, and restored the practical idealism necessary to keep ambitions proportioned to means. The slow and painful withdrawal from South Vietnam serves as perhaps his most persuasive example. While such statesmen have erred numerous times, Herring argues that their successes need to be taken seriously. "Popular notions to the contrary, the United States has been spectacularly successful in its foreign policy...It has sustained an overall record of achievement with little precedent in history." (p. 9) Within the space of two hundred years, its union expanded across a continent, it helped win two world wars, it prevailed in the conflict with the Soviet Union without engaging in a third world war, and it expanded its influence, military might, popular culture, and soft power throughout most of the world.

Such balance is the distinctive characteristic of Herring's account, but he also introduces far more actors on the diplomatic stage than were common in standard references a generation ago. If war is too important to be left to the generals, perhaps diplomacy too is too important to be left exclusively to professional diplomats. This may be especially true in a pluralistic democracy, with multiple points of access for those who want to play a part. So in addition to American statesmen, numerous adventurers and explorers, titans of industry and labor organizers, missionaries and humanitarians, entrepreneurs and con artists, publicists and conscientious dissenters parade across Herring's stage. This broadens our view of the sources and conduct of American foreign affairs in a manner substantially superior to previous standard reference works. If nothing else, this may disabuse professional diplomats of the notion that they can control events. Cabinet diplomacy has become progressively more difficult to practice in an ever more democratic (in the sense of inclusive) age, if only because diplomats cannot deal simply with other diplomats. Perhaps the most diplomats can hope for is a preponderance of influence to help guide what is bound to be an increasingly anarchic, though not necessarily chaotic circus, in which they may not always be the main ring attraction.

Herring's mainstream practical idealism, which trims untheoretically between the conventional paradigms of realism and idealism, is not without its problems or critics, however. In the fashionable argot of our time, one of those problems may be the terms of discourse themselves because of their distorting influence on the narratives we tell. Daniel Deudney argues that the dominant paradigms of realism and idealism in international relations are actually fragments and truncated versions of older and richer discourses that began with the fundamental problem, both in theory and in practice, of the ancient Greek *polis*. To avoid the extremes of anarchy in which the realist self-help system is rooted and hierarchical tyranny against which much of modern idealism is directed, the Greeks were probably not the first to invent, but certainly the first to describe, a method that combined the strength of many while preserving as much independence as possible for the constituent parts. Long before Ben Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence, Athens, Sparta, and the less well known cities of the Greek world understood that they

had to hang together, or surely, they would hang separately. To preserve their independence both against Persia and against each other, they understood that they would have to form not mere coalitions for ad hoc purposes but permanent leagues, or confederations, or what we today call federations. These were new orders for their age combining the fierce commitment to freedom of the ancient *polis* with the strength of mighty empires.

That these new orders failed time and again, either because they could not defend the freedom of some of the parts against the others or because they were not sufficiently cohesive to protect themselves against new empires, provides almost unlimited food for thought. Why did the Delian League succumb to Athenian imperialism? Why did the Greek cities, despite Demosthenes' warnings, fail to unite sufficiently against Philip and the Macedonians? Why did Rome's effort to combine republican government with imperial strength ultimately fail? If the causes were specific to each of these experiments, could they be removed in subsequent ones? Was a certain kind of improvement possible in which at least some free governments became gradually better at the original objective of federations, to avoid the extremes of anarchy among the parts and tyranny at the top of the international system?

As Deudney reveals, such questions were at the heart of a new science politics, initiated most famously by Machiavelli, with important contributions from the likes of Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant. (pp. 6–7, 10–11) That even Machiavelli and Kant can be seen as partners (with considerable disagreements) in the same republican security project vindicates Deudney's claim that our conventional categories of realism and idealism are fragments of this older tradition. When that science is applied to international relations, Deudney calls it republican security theory, even though not all of its advocates were democrats in the modern sense and many practicing members were not republics themselves. The states that joined the Westphalian system or even the Vienna system can be considered part of an initially European-wide republic in which the members would cooperate most of the time, if only to regulate how they fought wars against each other, and unite to defeat hegemonic threats such as Napoleon or Germany in World War One (p. 139). In theory, such a system might be capable of almost infinite expansion by voluntary association, like the federation in the iconic television program, *Star Trek*, especially if the federation respected the prime directive of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of others as it boldly went where none had gone before. As evidenced by debates over the expansion of NATO and the European Union, though, much of the debate within republican security theory concerns when, whether, and how such expansion should occur.

Deudney directly engages prominent international relations theorists such as Kenneth Waltz. Such theorists, he suggests, invented a distorted history of their discipline, then called it a tradition, and now use the authority of that tradition to portray challengers against their hegemonic discourse within the

discipline as utopians (p. 8). As the double entendre in the title of Deudney's book reveals, power (the major theme of neo-realism) tends to grow by leaps and bounds unless checked by some other power doing much the same thing. From the very beginning, the proper goal of republican security theory has been to restrain and set bounds to power, not merely against external but also against internal challengers. Because few actors can provide such restraints on their own, and none for very long, the international system cannot be merely a self-help system; self-interest drives independent states into cooperative relations with others when the job is just too big to handle by themselves. The increased size and strength arising from such cooperation often gives the members a tremendous advantage over external competition (p. 23).

Just as Machiavelli and his many disciples, with all their misgivings about the sage Florentine, led to a renaissance, or rebirth (and significant transformation), of republican security theory in the Old World, so too, in Deudney's view, did the American Founders lead a rebirth of such theory and practice in the New World. This is Hendrickson's point of departure in *Peace Pact*, the first of two books on the debate over what he calls the "unionist paradigm" in the American approach to international relations. After covering much of the same historical and theoretical ground as Deudney, he focuses on what he calls the lost world of the American Founding, the one that has been forgotten most by scholars of international relations today.

At this he succeeds because he sees the Founders as engaged in two different international relations projects simultaneously. The first was *e pluribus Unum*. It sought to unite the strength of many states so that Americans could win and preserve their independence in the rough and tumble of the late eighteenth century wars of empire without sacrificing the domestic freedom of the states or the fundamental rights of their citizens.

The second project is much less addressed among scholars of international relations. It is Hendrickson's lost continent of Atlantis in which Americans did not isolate themselves from European competitions so much as establish a cooperative international system of their own (p. 24). Between 1776 and 1787, a mere eleven but deeply formative years, without the devastation that prompted European integration after World War Two, Americans tried to establish what scholars today call a "security community." In large measure this arose by removing the "security dilemmas" that might lead the states to become rivals of each other, form separate alliances within or against the Union, engage in arms races, impoverish their peoples, call in the aid of foreign powers, concentrate power in their executives, and ultimately succumb to the very centralized tyranny against which they had first fought in 1776. International anarchy within the union thus risked that Americans would be drawn, bit by bit, toward establishing some form of despotism to save themselves, thus defeating the purposes of their revolution and their union. The cooperative international system among the states established in the Constitution of 1787 for settling disputes about trade and territory, not to

mention the states' almost complete disarmament against each other, was their best hope of escaping this Hobbesean nightmare.

In light of that nightmare, the great quarrel between Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debate, which is often seen as a merely domestic dispute, takes on an entirely new significance as a discussion of the future of a distinct international system among the newly independent states. (pp. 249–256) The Federalists feared that anarchy was the first step toward despotism, so overcoming anarchy through a very firm union and a more centralized government than most Americans would have accepted in 1776 became their first strategic priority. Although the Anti-Federalists understood that anarchy could lead to tyranny indirectly, they usually focused on the direct threat posed by power concentrated in any hands, with the Bill of Rights (designed by James Madison) serving to appease them and thereby consolidate support for the new Union. Unintentionally, perhaps, Hendrickson's approach to the Founders confirms Deudney's claim that what we call realism and idealism today are in fact fragments of republican security theory. The overwhelming majority of Federalists and Anti-Federalists were hard-nosed realists, constantly thinking about power, and Enlightenment liberals, determined to secure American rights by republican means. Where they differed most was in their assessments of the most likely threats to their common objectives and how to defeat them.

Hendrickson's second volume, *Union, Nation, or Empire*, explains the eventual collapse of this new international system under the increasing pressures of world war in the age of Napoleon, sectionalism, territorial expansion, and above all, slavery. As Hendrickson notes, his method is borrowed from Thucydides. (p. x) It is dialectical, based on pitting the most insightful arguments of each side about the origins, nature, and future of the American Union against each other. His work is less a political than an intellectual history of an idea, the "unionist paradigm," that was both the object of passionate love and the source of great partisan enmity among those who subscribed to it. Every ten years or so, these lover's quarrels, or more aptly, marital problems (p. 212) would produce an international crisis within the Union's "raging state system" (p. 221). Those crises prompted Thomas Jefferson to threaten "revolution and blood" in the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, high Federalists to make their own arguments for secession in 1812, and Calhoun to modify Jefferson's principles of 1798 into the doctrine of nullification, which in turn evolved into the Confederate justification for secession in 1861. Again and again, elder statesmen came to the rescue in the nick of time. As James Madison observed, however, enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm, and even the most enlightened may have been subject to forces beyond their control. As the peculiar institution of slavery became not merely the foundation of the southern economy but also a way of life to be protected through a balance of power among the states, which demanded that ever more slave states be admitted into the Union, these extraordinary acts of

statesmanship and compromise proved eventually incapable of putting off the Civil War.

Hendrickson is most lyrical and poetically moving in describing what the death of the old Union during and after the Civil War meant to leaders in both the North and the South. What could replace it in such a way that it would serve its original purpose of uniting strength to preserve liberty? Would the defeat of the South mean it would have to submit to a tyrannous northern empire? Would unwillingness to submit result in the anarchy seen in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade, with southerners biding their time until Reconstruction ended to reestablish, at least de facto, their cherished peculiar institutions? When it ended, would America really be a nation able to recover from its self-inflicted wounds? Would northern victory fuel a new kind of expansionism across the Pacific and into the Caribbean and Central America that at times might make the United States appear in a new old role on the world stage, that of Spain, England, and France in their conquest and exploitation of the Americas? If so, would the victory of the North prove Pyrrhic, as the imperial temptation led the United States to become its own moral enemy, with colonies of its own that it would need to suppress, as the British had sought to suppress them in 1776?

As American leaders wrestled with these questions, Hendrickson reveals that their old marriage with the old Union still had power to rule their heart and provoke their minds, but in different international forums under changing circumstances, most notably those arising from the end of the first and the beginning of the second world wars. Hendrickson reframes the American debate over international order after World War One by, among other things, suggesting it had little to do with what we call realism and idealism. Rather, it concerned the *kind* of international order preferred by leaders at the time. Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and others favored a particularistic trans-Atlantic Union, a proto-NATO, so to speak, of English-speaking and other freedom-loving peoples to contain Germany. Woodrow Wilson, in contrast, favored a much more universal or inclusive organization, the League of Nations, to unite the strength of all for the national independence of each member in theaters outside of Europe and America where war might arise again. (p. 326) His account is of enduring significance because of continuing debates about the kinds of multi- and international organizations best suited to deal with threats to international security and other transnational problems. Had there been a proto-NATO in the 1920s, would there have been the same kind of international lawlessness in the 1930s? Would the United States have risen to the challenge of leading this security community? Would there have been a Second World War? By making us ask these questions, he makes us pause when considering unilateral actions, either in asserting our strength or withdrawing from the international system. They might free us of tedious “jaw-jaw” with allies, but without the jaw-jaw it is hard to see how we can have allies when we need them most.

Hendrickson closes his account with a chapter on the debate over how to deal with aggression by the fascist powers in the 1930s. While some feared intervention abroad would compel the United States to become a garrison state, others warned that if the empire builders in Germany, Japan, and Italy had their way, Americans might need a garrison state to defeat them any way. Thus, one far-sighted argument for intervention was to prevent the United States from becoming a militaristic state by denying the fascists the chance to accumulate so much power that the United States would have to become like them (p. 368). How to do it, though? The answer, once again, was union, which would combine the strength of the allied powers while allowing them to preserve their ways of life as much as the necessities of this cataclysmic war would permit. At the beginning of that war, Hendrickson concludes, no nation was better prepared establish a new world order based on the old unionist paradigm than the United States. It had been practicing for over a hundred and fifty years.

According to Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, one of the greatest dangers to freedom in modern democracies is individualism, understood as a quiet disposition to withdraw from public affairs into those of our families and the private life. The corrective was not a utopian transcendence of self-interest, but self-interest, rightly understood in terms of the dependence of our own welfare on the general welfare of our communities. That is republican security theory applied to domestic politics, but one might also say that republican security theory is Tocquevillian self-interest applied to international politics. For such a Tocquevillian understanding of more recent times, we wait anxiously for someone to pick up where Hendrickson left off. We need an account of the origins, nature, and development of the unionist paradigm, this time applied to the world through international and regional organizations as the Second World War came to an end and the Cold War began. As we wait, we might take cognizance of the dark side of our identity as revealed by Hixson while balancing our misgivings with the practical idealism and encyclopedic work of Herring. This may prepare us to explore the possibilities for republican security theory and practice in the future in such urgent matters as controlling nuclear proliferation in the work of Deudney, whose book deserves being read by scholars and students alike.

