

A Roundtable on Jasper M. Trautsch, *The Genesis of America: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Formation of National Identity, 1793-1815*

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and Jasper M. Trautsch

Review of Jasper M. Trautsch, *The Genesis of America: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Formation of National Identity, 1793-1815*

Todd Estes

This is an excellent and important book. It deserves to find a ready audience as much with scholars of early U.S. politics as with diplomatic historians, for it has things of significance to say to each. Jasper Trautsch studies the intersections of foreign policy with domestic politics from the Washington administration to the Madison presidency and finds new things to say about familiar topics by fitting them into a compelling thesis about nationalism, national identity, and the ways that U.S. foreign policy served crucial domestic political ends as well. It is also a work of great achievement. To write a book like this successfully, an author must master two related but distinct bodies of scholarship: on early American politics and on early American diplomacy and foreign policy. Trautsch has accomplished this difficult feat, and his erudite book confidently weaves in and out of the historiography, making important contributions to both subfields.

Trautsch seeks to discover the origins and growth of American nationalism in the early republic. Contrary to other scholars, he argues that national identity was “a process of external demarcation.” To develop a separate identity, “the American nation needed external enemies to create a sense of national particularity.” Moreover, he writes, “early American nationalism called for violent separation from America’s European reference points,” chiefly Great Britain and France (9). This book analyzes the process of disentanglement by which American nationalism emerged “within an international rather than merely a domestic context” and “[c]onsequently . . . identifies foreign policy as a vital instrument of nation building” (10). To explore this process, Trautsch looks at two main sources: newspapers, to examine the published record of debates that shaped understandings and constructions of nationalism and the discourse it created; and diplomatic sources, to understand the motives of policymakers as they charted a course for the new nation in relation to the great powers of Europe and the Atlantic world.

Throughout the book, Trautsch is sensitive to the ways in which the unexpected emergence of political parties and ideological partisanship affected the dynamics in the early republic. While initial divisions formed over domestic policies, specifically the measures of the Hamiltonian program—public credit, the national bank, and

manufacturing, among others—partisan lines hardened and became clarified with the onset of foreign policy conflicts that increased with the unfolding of the French Revolution.

As the Revolution turned more radical, American support for it splintered and broke along party lines. Increasingly, Federalists became critical of revolutionary France, seeing it as a bastion of destabilizing radicalism, and they came to value Great Britain even more. Republicans remained linked to France and identified with their sister republic. Using these European rivals as contrasting reference points, “both parties thereby sought to represent their respective political creed as the only true form of Americanism” (60). But these were more than simply partisan differences. As Trautsch notes, the two parties “defined the U.S. in incompatible ways, the former setting the U.S. apart from France, the latter from Great Britain. As a result of their irreconcilable views on American identity and America’s significant Others, they accused each other of having foreign attachments and hence of being disloyal to the American nation” (69).

From these initial practices of othering by the nascent political parties flows the rest of the history of the early republic—and of this book. If the outlines of this narrative are familiar, then Trautsch’s points about external demarcation and disentangling create important new ways to think about these events. Beginning in 1793, around the time of George Washington’s second term, the United States was drawn nearly continuously into foreign policy issues, beginning with the questions of neutrality and Citizen Genêt and culminating with the 1794 Jay Treaty, the debate over which dominated American politics for the next two years. Trautsch notes insightfully that most historians have dealt with the treaty either as a diplomatic event or as a domestic political controversy. Since the treaty was likely the best that Jay and the United States could have obtained and since it preserved peace, it might have been expected to meet with approbation. The opposite, of course, was the case.

Trautsch suggests that the treaty debate is best understood “within the framework of the struggle between Federalists and Republicans over defining American identity” (87). Furthermore, he argues that Federalists had a three-stage goal in pursuing the treaty: preventing war with the British as a result of Republican efforts at commercial discrimination, efforts that they feared could provoke a social revolution; invalidating the 1778 alliance with France, on which Republicans staked their claims for a renewed U.S.-French alliance; and, in the long run, fortifying Anglo-American cooperation, “thus cementing Federalists’ conservative definition of American identity”

(89). Thus, it makes more sense to comprehend Republican opposition to the treaty by focusing “on its meaning with the political identity debates conducted in the U.S. at the time” (94). All the reasons that drew Federalists to support the treaty and its short-, medium-, and long-term goals were precisely the inverse of the reasons the Republicans opposed it so vehemently.

Two of the most insightful chapters, to my mind, are the ones dealing with the origins of the Quasi-War, which, in the author’s hands, becomes far more than a diplomatic footnote in the John Adams presidency. Here, perhaps most emphatically, Trautsch’s thesis about external demarcation and disentanglement in the service of creating nationalism shines through. “[I]t was Federalists in the Adams Administration and Congress who actively sought a state of belligerency with France in order to promote a Francophobic American nationalism” (109).

They did so deliberately to disentangle the nation from France, to discredit French-inspired definitions of American national identity, and to undermine “the democratic egalitarianism that the French Revolution represented” (126).

The Quasi-War transformed domestic politics in unintended and ironic ways. In fact, Trautsch argues convincingly that it was “not primarily waged for diplomatic aims but rather for domestic objectives: Federalist leaders considered it a suitable means to purge the U.S. of revolutionary principles and politically homogenize the American nation” (131–32). They expected, first, that an undeclared naval war against the French would detach many Republicans from the French and their egalitarian aims. Second, they knew they could use the wartime crisis to question the national loyalty of Republicans who did not, even when they were confronted with developments such as impressment and the XYZ affair, renounce their allegiance to France. The Quasi-War “changed the parameters for the debate on American identity . . . it became increasingly difficult for Republicans to define American by positive reference to France, without appearing un-American, as Federalist newspapers kept reminding them” (135).

But the Federalists’ triumph in the battle for public opinion was not complete. If they proved “successful in dissociating America from France, they failed to unite the nation behind their conservative political ideology” (143). The infamous Alien and Sedition Acts must be understood in this context. Trautsch notes that it was not immigrants per se that Federalists feared but rather foreign ideas, especially democratic egalitarianism, which they considered “dangerously un-American, at least according to their own partisan views. And they did not distinguish those views from national views: although they understood that their views were partisan, they also believed they were national—not just Federalist, but American in a fundamental way.

The transformations brought about by the Quasi-War represent one of Trautsch’s major interpretive contributions in this book. In his view, the Quasi-War even helps to explain why Republicans defeated Federalists in the elections of 1800. “Before the Quasi-War, Federalists had been more convincing in portraying Republicans as attached to a foreign country, as Republicans had linked the future of the American republic to the success of the French Revolution. . . . After they renounced their affection for France, Republicans’ national loyalty was no longer in doubt and Federalists could not convincingly denounce Republicans as ‘French Jacobins’ anymore” (153). Furthermore, “Republicans thus increasingly appeared as champions of American neutrality and hence as promoters of American nationalism,” while “Federalists maneuvered themselves in a pro-British corner that made them lose the ‘high ground’ on the debate over American identity” (155).

In short, a crucial shift in the international context had profound implications for domestic political considerations. Timing and perception were key, and Trautsch is very good at delineating subtle yet profound (and ironic) shifts in the ways Americans thought about the British, the French, and, most significantly, themselves between 1798 and 1801. “A war begun to unite the nation behind [the Federalists’] conservative ideology ended in a peace that raised doubts about many leading Federalists’ republicanism and national loyalty” (163).

“Ironically,” Trautsch writes, “their very success in disentangling America from France undermined Federalists’ political dominance,” as they sought not only a stronger link to the British but also began “to increasingly define America by positive reference to the former mother country, thus raising doubts about their own national allegiance. At the end of the war with France, therefore, Republicans championed the notion of American exceptionalism, which in the early republic primarily meant detachment from Europe. . . . Instead of Federalists’ conservatism, which was intrinsically tied to Great Britain, becoming hegemonic, their opponents’ democratic egalitarianism, which Republicans no longer linked to the French Revolution but hailed as quintessentially American, emerged as the dominant national ideology” (167).

Trautsch uses the next couple of chapters to close the circle and show how Republicans eventually disentangled the nation from Great Britain while simultaneously isolating and marginalizing the Federalists with the War of 1812. Examining the run-up to that conflict, he argues that the movement toward war makes more sense if seen as a political and ideological conflict, since support for the war was partisan rather than sectional: Republicans voted in favor of it even more than southerners and westerners. The reason, he demonstrates, is that Republicans understood British policy in the Jeffersonian years “as being primarily motivated by a desire to harm America” by ending her prosperity and discrediting her republican government, with the ultimate goal being to return the United States to its former colonial status (185–86). They equated British impressment with slavery, inflamed the issue, and made a resolution of the tensions it caused increasingly difficult, all the while making Federalist pleas for negotiation seem treasonous. Believing as they did, Republicans were always inclined—for ideological reasons that reached back into the 1790s—to pursue a hard line with the British. In the aftermath of the 1807 *Chesapeake-Leopard* incident, Jefferson and Madison opted to embark on a policy of “peaceable coercion,” the centerpiece of which was the embargo, which Trautsch rightly notes was “a coercive measure . . . a decisive step towards war rather than a substitute or alternative for it” (198).

Undergirding the Republican approach was a belief that while European nations were naturally warlike, America was naturally a pacific nation. This “republican peace theory” placed the blame for war entirely on Britain’s monarchical form of government. Firm in their belief in America’s fundamental peacefulness, Republicans were convinced that the nation was threatened by Europe’s hostile monarchies “and that America’s wars were hence purely defensive” (210). Thus, Republicans saw their declaration of war against the British in 1812 as the defensive actions of a peaceful nation against an aggressive and hostile adversary.

The declaration of war had a second key premise as well. Republicans “sought to disassociate America from the former mother country and to discredit Federalists’ political persuasion,” but they did not see this as a partisan action. Rather, “they believed that democratic egalitarianism was the only true form of Americanism and that hence only the Republican party represented the American nation” (223). The war allowed Republicans to marginalize the

Federalists, who were “no longer able to publicly defend their Anglophilia without casting doubt on their national loyalty” (226).

These premises were reinforced by the violent nature of the British invasion in 1814, which played right into the Republican arguments about British aggression and hostility and further served to discredit Federalists and positive views of the British—despite the fact that a great many Federalists came to support the American war effort, which was now truly a defensive effort to repel invaders. Just as Republicans had wished, “in consequence of the war the majority of Federalists renounced their Anglophilia and instead defined America in opposition to Great Britain” (244). Their strategy of using the war to disentangle the United States from the British and unite the country in opposition had largely worked.

By 1815, American nationalism, which was only rudimentary in 1789, had firmly taken hold. Large numbers of Republicans and Federalists alike now thought of themselves as fully American in terms of national identity. Trautsch’s book amply demonstrates one of his core arguments: that “by arguing over American identity, they had created it and established the assumption that there was an American nation as a common point of departure for their debates. . . . [A]s a result, a consensus emerged by 1815 that America was defined by her otherness from Europe at large” (261). Finally, because of the twinned results of the Quasi-War and the War of 1812, “the notion of American exceptionalism” had become, by the time of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, “a central part of American identity that few Americans would question by defining America in appropriation of Europe” (263).

Beyond these interpretive insights, Trautsch’s book has many other considerable strengths. He writes clearly and straightforwardly, with an engaging style, and his arguments are effectively and persuasively put forth. He does an excellent job of reviewing familiar historical material but presenting it in service of an intriguing new thesis, thus giving the familiar the look of the new. The book’s organization is sound and effective in that it reinforces the thesis, chapter by chapter, tracking the role of successive arguments about foreign policy in shaping the ongoing, work-in-progress nature of creating national identity across more than two decades of early U.S. history. Lastly, this book’s historiography is absolutely up to date, reflecting the most recent scholarship and locating its own argument in the larger context of the current state of the fields of political and diplomatic history.

One of the other great strengths of the book is the frequent appearance of contemporary political cartoons as illustrations. Early American political cartoons can be difficult for today’s reader to navigate, given the busyness of their drawings and the typical prolixity of the dialogue on the page. Trautsch not only selects cogent examples that connect very well to his text, he also does an excellent job of explicating the statements being made by the cartoonists and situating them in the context of the drawings. His skill at reading and interpreting these cartoons adds a great deal to the effectiveness of his overall presentation. Such readings also highlight his cultural approach to early American political history, which is one of the goals of his book (33–34).

Even the best books leave readers and reviewers wanting more, or wishing that the author had explored some additional themes. Two in particular come to mind. First, as Trautsch moves from chapter four to chapter five, he effectively jumps from the Quasi-War to the conflicts that led to the War of 1812—essentially, from 1798 to about 1807. He raises the question of U.S. dealings with the Barbary pirates in the introduction, only to dismiss them as a subject of focus for his book by noting that while “the Barbary

States also represented a foreign-policy problem,” they were “comparatively small and weak: once the U.S had built a sizable navy, it was dispatched to the Mediterranean to protect American ships and attack the Barbary vessels” (17–18).

Fair enough, but it would have been interesting to see an analysis, in a book that argues for understanding the stark partisan differences in foreign policy and identity orientation, of the ways Federalists and Republicans thought about and acted on a foreign policy issue that did *not* involve European powers as a point of comparison. This issue would not have been central to the book’s thesis, but it might have provided an interesting angle on the broader foreign policy visions of both parties outside of the questions of national identity and nationalism.

Secondly, he skips quickly through the Louisiana Purchase and the domestic political controversies it raised in just a few pages. To be fair, he does subsequently back up and trace some of the foreign policy considerations regarding Louisiana and the bitter partisan conflict over its acquisition. But I think there is more that might be said on that matter, given that the Federalist-Republican debate touched very clearly on the crucial question of what kind of nation the United States should be. The acquisition and eventual settlement of Louisiana spoke directly to the interplay of foreign policy and national identity and might have been treated at greater length.

These quibbles aside (and they are nothing more than that), Trautsch has achieved a great deal with this book. His masterful command of the literature and his ability to demonstrate conclusively the foreign policy implications for domestic politics is deeply impressive. Trautsch adds new observations to oft-treated domestic and international events in the early republic. I have to end by paying him a very high compliment: his book will force me to rewrite some of my lectures for my early republic class and rethink the way I approach the era, so powerful and convincing is his evocation of the use of the international context in domestic politics in the early republic. His book has taught me things I did not know and made me rethink things I had long considered settled. I can think of no higher praise for a book than that, and for an author to achieve this with a first book suggests a very promising career ahead.

Identity Politics in the Early Republic

William E. Weeks

Jasper Trautsch had me in his corner as soon as I read in the prologue about his experience in a graduate seminar on the early republic at the John F. Kennedy Institute in Berlin: “While as a student I was initially more interested in the twentieth century U.S., I realized that the revolutionary and early national period was really the most significant era in American history” (ix).

I could not agree more. My own recognition of the era’s importance occurred in the process of researching an undergraduate term paper on the *Chesapeake* Affair. Digging into primary sources on the incident, I became convinced that the dominant American narrative was, at best, only partially correct. It was clear (to me at least) that a complicated international crisis had been reduced to a morality tale of Good vs. Evil in the service of American nationalism, one that nearly plunged the United States into war. As my studies progressed, I came to understand the *Chesapeake* Affair as something of a template for later foreign policy crises that would be viewed through the lens of an evolving American nationalism, with resonances extending down to the present. But the foundation of this nationalism—and the ultimate cause of its foreign policy

manifestations—is to be found in the revolutionary and early national periods. Hence their fundamental importance to the study of American history.

Trautsch's deeply researched and thoughtfully argued text advances this perspective. He displays a commanding knowledge of the rich newspaper culture of the early republic and is effective in showing how that newspaper culture was critical in framing the public's reaction to foreign policy issues. "[E]arly American nationalism," he writes, "was a demarcation process that was mainly carried out through the press and driven by a confrontational foreign policy" (19).

Trautsch argues that a distinctive American nationalism arose in the period 1789–1815, chiefly in opposition to Great Britain and France, the main rivals of the United States. It is not a wholly original thesis; *The Genesis of America* covers a lot of the same ground as Marie-Jeanne Rossignol's now-classic text *Le Fermente Nationaliste: Aux Origines de la Politique Extérieure des États Unis, 1789–1812* (1994). Yet Trautsch's energy and erudition make his book a worthwhile revisiting of this critical moment in U.S. history. The presentation is aided by a splendid collection of ten contemporary engravings that illustrate the political and ideological themes of the text.

Trautsch details how Federalists and Republicans pushed their own versions of American nationalism. But there was considerable overlap between the two. No one "challenged the exclusive power of the central government to conduct external relations, as they acknowledged that a common foreign policy formed the basis of the union" (14). Along the same lines, he notes that since "the desire to allow for a common and effective U.S. foreign policy had been the most important reason for strengthening the union in 1787 and since the new Constitution enabled the U.S. to pursue a robust and coherent diplomacy, foreign policy would become a significant means to promote an American national consciousness" (15). Yes, the basis of forming a union of the states centered on the practical advantages it offered; and the preservation of this union required, in turn, the creation of a durable American nationalism. But Trautsch does not explore this connection between union and nationalism.

Also troubling is what appears to be an overemphasis on the period 1793–1815 in the creation of American nationalism. It is true, as Trautsch observes, that the Revolution failed to produce a national sentiment strong enough to maintain the union after the war. The centrifugal tendencies of the 1780s were headed off only by the ratification of the Constitution and the inauguration of George Washington as the first president, and then only temporarily. Yet it seems wrong not to appreciate the stirrings of American nationalism engendered by the revolutionary struggle. The blood sacrifices of the Revolution watered both the Tree of Liberty as well as the Tree of Nationalism. And before that, there was the anti-tax proto-nationalism of the Sons of Liberty of the 1760s; and before that, the emerging proto-national consciousness stimulated by the French and Indian War. Therefore, to situate the "genesis" of American nationalism during the period 1793–1815 ignores too much that went before.

Trautsch's theoretical claim is that Americans needed to "disentangle" themselves from their dependent relationships with Great Britain and France if they were to establish their own distinct national identity. He argues that "as perceptions of threats are integral to processes of national integration, it is usually the most powerful nations and neighbors that are the most meaningful Others" (17).

The bulk of the text is dedicated to showing how Great Britain and France "were therefore essential foils against which American national identity could be forged. . . . [I]n order to invent themselves as a separate nation Americans had to disentangle themselves from their former mother

country" (17, 18). Trautsch's broader claim is that "the contest over American identity hence became intrinsically intertwined with the struggle over the direction of U.S. foreign policy," particularly as it concerned relations with the two dominant powers of the time (71).

There is a lot of truth in this argument. In the case of Thomas Jefferson, hostility to Great Britain seems to have had a psychological dimension; it seemed to reveal an almost Oedipal need to slay an oppressive father. The lingering uncertainty relating to the alliance with France also posed a challenge to the creation of a distinctive American nationalism. France's revolutionary upheaval, for a time, seemed likely to undermine the relative importance of the American Revolution. But Trautsch acknowledges that by the late 1790s, the violent excesses of the French Revolution, culminating in Napoleonic dictatorship, made it a less threatening rival as a revolutionary state.

So yes, relations with Great Britain and France during this time are worthy of close examination as sources of American nationalism. But that does not mean that they were the sole backdrop against which American nationalist identity was created. Trautsch minimizes the role of other international antagonists such as Spain or the Barbary States in fueling American nationalism. That the Barbary States were defeated relatively easily does not mean that they were insignificant foes in the popular mind. The quick reconstitution of the Navy in the 1790s and its effective projection of force in the Mediterranean should not be underestimated as nationalist triumphs. Relations with Spain, too, played a key role in the development of American nationalism. Spain's declining status as a hemispheric power made it an ideal counterpoint rhetorically and ideologically to the image of a rising United States.

Basically, any and all international rivals of the United States were potentially worthy grist for the nationalist mill. To suggest that these states were not important to the creation of that discourse because they "did not pose an immediate danger strong enough to create a sense of national solidarity" is to misunderstand the Self vs. Other nature of nationalist discourse (17). Both Spain and the Barbary States, in their way, posed perceived threats to American sovereignty and therefore served as fodder for American nationalism.

Similarly, I question Trautsch's treatment of Native American relations as an "internal" affair. Native Americans were the first and most resilient external foe of white Americans, especially prior to 1815; and the wars waged against them were a prolific source of national heroes, Andrew Jackson first and foremost. Trautsch characterizes U.S. policy toward Native Americans as motivated by racism, and there is ample evidence for this view. Yet to attribute it all to racial prejudice seems too simple.

American nationalism was built on the assumption that American civilization was a superior form of social and political organization, one with a godly, ordained destiny to sweep away all that stood in its way. The various reasons advanced to legitimate Native American removal—i.e., theories of racial and cultural superiority, biblical injunctions regarding the "destined use of the soil," avoiding Native American "extinction" at the hands of settlers—were all subsidiary to an overarching assumption that "Divine Providence" intended America to grow and expand.

Theories of race as a motivation for removal (as opposed to an excuse) would be more compelling to me had the United States not so ferociously resisted Great Britain, the nation it most resembled racially and culturally. At the heart of American nationalist ideology in the Early Republic (and by extension, American foreign relations of the time) was a messianic conviction regarding its righteousness, a sense that American ideas and values were the measure of all things, be they racial, political, economic, or cultural.

This conviction lent a powerful internal logic to American nationalist ideology, a logic made stronger by the outcome of the War of 1812, which seemed to confirm that America's "destiny" was indeed apparent.

Trautsch seems to minimize the messianic dimension of American nationalism, which leads him to underestimate the degree to which the War of 1812 greatly strengthened American nationalism, notwithstanding the haphazard way in which it was begun and prosecuted. The conflict dramatized that war was the ultimate cultural bonding agent of early American nationalism. In common struggle are the strongest nationalist bonds formed. By 1815, the British were taught a second lesson in American independence, the French were humbled as a revolutionary rival, the Barbary States were chastised and effectively subdued, and the determined Native American resistance in the Southeast was finally broken. Victory in war was the ultimate confirmation of divine favor, or so it seemed to many.

Trautsch repeats the point that the Treaty of Ghent offered little more than restoration of the prewar status quo and that the war, therefore, was at best a draw. But this conclusion misses the subjective popular experience of the last months of the war, as represented by America's newspapers, most of which celebrated the battles of Lake Champlain, Baltimore, and (especially) New Orleans as decisive defeats of British invasion forces (which they were). Small wonder that the brief period of national unity spawned by the war's perceived victorious outcome was known as "the Era of Good Feelings."

Notwithstanding these criticisms, *The Genesis of America* is a valuable contribution to the ongoing rediscovery of the critical relationship between nationalism and foreign relations in the early republic. It should be required reading for American foreign relations scholars of all eras.

Review of Jasper M. Trautsch, *The Genesis of America*

Walter L. Hixson

Jasper Trautsch argues that contentious debate over alliances and foreign relationships with Great Britain and France forged American national identity during the period from the American Revolution through the War of 1812. "Americans," he explains, "having no shared history or unique culture, not to speak of a common ancestry, were in need of external enemies and foreign threats to invent America as a separate nation and to forget what set them apart from each other" (10).

My capsule evaluation of this book is that it is well-researched, especially in colonial-era newspaper debate and disputation but also in relevant diplomatic historiography, and well-crafted. The book reads well, is speckled with complementary illustrations from the era, and is handsomely produced by Cambridge University Press. It is also informational and well worth reading.

At the same time, much of this history is familiar. Moreover, I find the thesis less than compelling. This is a Eurocentric book by a European author who argues that American identity sprang from contentious debate on the part of a people who were not yet a nation until their interactions with Europeans made them one. There is certainly a lot of truth to this argument, but it is not especially original. The battle between Anglophobia and Anglophilia, or alternatively, between Francophobia and Francophilia, which is the pivot of the book, has long been recognized as central to the history of the early republic.

Through his exploitation of a wide range of colonial press accounts, however, Trautsch offers a rich contextualization of these issues and the intense debate they generated in the first generation of American national history. He argues that the colonial press offers the "best reflection of public

opinion", an argument he supports with an abundance of engaging and revealing evidence (31). His tireless research in the colonial press is the great strength of this book.

My chief problem with the book is the argument noted in the subtitle, that the formation of American national identity occurred from 1793 to 1815 and that it occurred as a result of contentious debate over whether to marry the American future to Britain or France. As is well known, this period saw the emergence of the first American political party system, which I would argue operated within a framework of an already existing albeit perpetually evolving national identity rather than functioning, as Trautsch would have it, to create one for the first time. I will offer some further reflections on this point below, but first, an overview of some of the author's arguments.

In the body of the book Trautsch offers a re-reading of the events of the early national period and attempts to mold them to support his argument for national identity formation. He thus analyzes the Jay Treaty and its "meaning within the political identity debates" of the 1790s in the context of his newspaper evidence (94). The Republicans "were opposed to any treaty with Great Britain irrespective of its particular provisions" because the treaty was oppositional to the relationship they coveted with the "sister republic" of revolutionary France. The Federalists gained ground here, as they were able to depict the Republicans as warmongers who risked a conflict with Britain and its Indian allies rather than support a treaty in the national interest.

Turning to the Quasi-War, Trautsch makes the case that it has been understudied and that it was a real war that the Federalists—now the warmongers—wanted in order "to disentangle America from France, undermine Francophile definitions of American identity, and thereby discredit the democratic egalitarianism that the French Revolution represented." Thus, they moved to "fabricate a war crisis" by dramatically exaggerating the XYZ Affair (126). "Whereas the Quasi-War encouraged Republicans to renounce their attachment to France and to endorse the notion of American exceptionalism," he writes, "it prompted Federalists, by contrast, to increasingly define America by positive reference to Great Britain" (146).

In the end the Federalists were too successful for their own good. The rise of the Napoleonic dictatorship and the renunciation of the French alliance in the Convention of Mortefontaine in October 1800 ended the Republican love affair with France, now reactionary rather than revolutionary. "Ironically, their very success in disentangling America from France undermined Federalists' political dominance," Trautsch writes, as a Republican-backed French radical threat to America no longer existed. This transformation enabled the Republicans to champion "democratic egalitarianism" as "quintessentially American," whereas "Federalists' conservatism" was "inextricably tied to Great Britain" (167). The Federalists also paid a political price for the Quasi-War assaults on immigration and civil liberties, which lent credence to Republican charges that Federalists were warmed-over British monarchists.

As the British attempted to regulate American shipping and engaged in the odious practice of impressment, the Republicans built political support by emphasizing Great Britain's "malignant designs" (183). Jefferson instituted the Embargo in the wake of the infamous attack on the USS *Chesapeake* in 1807, but the diplomacy of "peaceable coercion" failed to make the desired impression on Great Britain. Therefore, Madison eventually asked the Congress to declare war (197).

At first opposed to the war, which they perceived as part of a broader Republican conspiracy "to convert our mild republic into a furious democracy," Federalists over time had little alternative but to embrace the wartime patriotic fervor (219). With the British and Indian allies

attacking Americans, "Federalists came to view the war as defensive and the U.S. in imminent danger" (238). Federalists were forced to give up their Anglophilia, and in the end American nationalism was defined in opposition to Great Britain. Americans subsequently turned inward and went down the road to disunion.

All of this is sharply analyzed by Trautsch but constitutes a familiar history of political parties rather than national identity formation. The formation of national identity argument rests on the premise that no national identity existed prior to the period under study, which at a minimum requires qualification and contextualization. No less an authority than John Adams famously pointed out that "the Revolution was effected before the war commenced" and was already in "the minds and hearts of the people."

A process of "Americanization" had been going on for quite a long time before the Revolution of 1776. Part of the reason those of us who have long taught the first half of the U.S. survey course spend about a third of it on the pre-Revolutionary period is to track down the germination of an American identity.

As I have argued elsewhere, an imperial settler state emerged over centuries of borderland conflict and ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population, a process that was replete with all manner of ambivalence and ambiguity but nonetheless went a long way toward establishing, if not a fully formed "American" identity, at least the foundation for one.¹ As a field, diplomatic history has made some but not nearly enough progress in taking Indians seriously when analyzing the history of foreign policy. In the traditional colonialist mindset, these foreign peoples and nations are treated as if they were somehow intrinsically part of "America" rather than being a legitimate external Other. Indians play a distinctly minor role in Trautsch's Eurocentric account, even though considerable evidence can be marshaled to support the argument that relations with indigenous people did far more to forge an enduring American national identity than relations with the British and French.

If, as Trautsch argues, the "American nation needed external enemies to create a sense of national particularity" and separation from Europeans, Indians, or the combination of Indians and African-Americans arguably represented the Other required for identity formation better than fellow "white" European allies and adversaries (9). Trautsch tries to get around this problem by categorizing Indians and blacks as the "internal Other," although he does acknowledge that "this is not to say that processes of external and internal demarcation were not intertwined" (21).

Near the end of his account, Trautsch notes that the Federalists gradually came to support the War of 1812, in part because of linkages made between the British and "the blacks and Indians who took up arms against white Americans." This point suggests that an existing set of racial Others had already gone a long way toward establishing whiteness as a core element of American national identity (231). Trautsch does not spend much time exploring other factors contributing to American identity, either, such as religion and gender, although the uniquely American style of religiosity, expressed in the pre-Revolutionary Great Awakening (and still very much with us today), had also gone some distance toward defining a unique national identity. In sum, attributing American national identity to contention over Britain and France is far too narrow a frame.

In the end, we are left with a well-constructed history of political party formation in a foreign relations context with a great deal of revealing research into popular contention and debate. What we do not have is a convincing argument about the nature of American national identity or how and when it emerged.

In order to offer a convincing argument on identity formation, Trautsch would have had to present a more dedicated engagement with intellectual history and theorization, involving nations, nationalism, national identity, and the role of the external Other. He has some of this knowledge and cites a few relevant works, but what he ultimately offers here is a book especially well-grounded in traditional diplomatic history and well-seasoned with the discursive debate that raged in the colonial press. The ambitious effort to locate the moments when a distinctive American national identity emerged and was cemented into place and to frame those moments in a strictly Eurocentric context does not in the end convince.

Note:

1. Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (Basingstoke, UK, 2013).

Review of Jasper M. Trautsch, *The Genesis of America: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Formation of National Identity, 1793–1815*

David C. Hendrickson

The *Genesis of America* is a formidable piece of scholarship. The author has conducted indefatigable research into the primary and secondary sources of the early republic. It takes a certain bravery to enter the lists of this historiography, contending with such works as Elkins and McKittrick's *The Age of Federalism* and Gordon Wood's *Empire of Liberty*, to name only two of the outstanding works concerned with this period.¹ Given that party rivalry has been the touchstone of this era's historiographical controversy for some two hundred years, it is also very difficult to say anything new. Trautsch does manage that feat, though perhaps at the expense of a convincing interpretation.

Although novel in argument, Trautsch's book stands out for the old-fashioned character of its methodological approach. The focus is on the relations of the United States with the two major European powers, Great Britain and France. There is little material on the relations with the Indian nations of the trans-Appalachian West or on relations with Spain. Instead, the emphasis is on the succession of crises with Britain and France that roiled America after the new government came into operation in 1789. The Genêt Affair and the struggles over neutrality in 1793, the Jay Treaty, the Quasi-War with France, the Louisiana Purchase, the Embargo, and the War of 1812 remain here, as before, the familiar landmarks. Scholars will find Trautsch's deep dive into the historiography very useful and will admire his wide knowledge of the primary sources. Particularly enlightening are his expositions of the meaning of various etchings and engravings—the forerunners of today's editorial cartoons—that satirized the misdeeds of various men and nations.

Trautsch's argument is that foreign policy and military conflict were crucial to the formation of America's national identity. America lacked a national identity in 1789, he argues, but had firmly acquired one by 1815. Why did this take place? In the 1790s, he writes, America came to be divided by a pro-British party (the Federalists) and a pro-French party (the Republicans). Neither side, he argues, wished for U.S. neutrality in the burgeoning conflict between Britain and France, which began in 1793 and stretched, with one brief interruption, to 1815. Instead, their fondest wish was to join in the European war. In 1794, the Republicans pushed for war with Britain; similarly, in 1798, the Federalists "deliberately instigated a foreign war and deceptively blamed France for it" (172). Though the Republicans successfully detached themselves from their pro-French bias after 1798, the Federalists remained stoutly

pro-British until the end and paid a heavy price for doing so. Throughout, Trautsch argues, the rival chieftains and their newspaper allies saw the promotion of foreign conflict as a means to smite domestic enemies.

It is a shrewd insight, and a useful point of departure, to see the arguments over foreign policy simultaneously as arguments over national identity. "Both parties," he writes perceptively, "sought to represent their respective political creed as the only true form of Americanism" (60). Trautsch's depiction of this struggle, however, strikes me as wrong on major points. Most uncharitably, he basically accepts the malicious interpretations of each party's motives by the other as the correct ones. His argument that the Republicans were agitating for war in 1794 and 1795, for instance, adduces a number of voices, including James Monroe's, to support his thesis, but downplays the stated Republican strategy of peaceable coercion in response to British depredations. James Madison, the leader of the Republicans in Congress, saw his commercial measures as a means to register America's superior power position—Britain, he thought, would have no choice but to consult its interests and concede essential U.S. demands were it faced with U.S. economic sanctions.

It was the Federalists who charged that Madison's strategy would lead inevitably to war, a charge the Republicans in Congress were very much concerned to deflect. Such an outcome, they reasoned, was certainly possible if Britain continued its domineering ways, but was unlikely and could not in any case be avoided through appeasement.

The Federalists made a strong case that Madison was deluded in his estimate of the relative power of the United States in a commercial war of privation with Great Britain, but the most persuasive conclusion from the evidence is that Madison was wrong in his projections, not insincere in his professions. Belief in the power of peaceable coercion, substituting interest for force, had been a hallmark of Republican thinking since independence, and Jefferson and Madison repeatedly attested to its importance. The grip this "ideology" had on them was just as far-reaching as any theory of the peaceableness of republics (to which Trautsch later attaches great importance as a major cause of the War of 1812).

Trautsch misunderstands the relationship of the Republicans and Federalists to the two great European belligerents. He writes repeatedly that it rests on a basic sympathy and admiration for these powers. The Federalists admired what monarchs and aristocrats had accomplished in England and wished to duplicate it America; Republicans pined for the Reign of Terror and a Jacobin future. But these were the wild insinuations of their respective enemies, invariably intended to wound and usually repudiated with fury.

We better understand the Republicans as anti-British rather than pro-French, and the Federalists as anti-French rather than pro-British. The Federalists saw Britain, the Republicans France, as useful bulwarks to ward off the unbearable oppression threatened by the power they feared most. Alexander Hamilton's language in 1798 was characteristic: Britain, he wrote in *The Stand*, "has repeatedly upheld the balance of power [in Europe], in opposition to the grasping ambition of France. She has no doubt occasionally employed the pretense of danger as the instrument of her own ambition; but it is not the less true, that she has been more than once an effectual shield against real danger."²

The views of Senator George Cabot of Massachusetts on the European conflict reflected a similar sensibility. "It is a humiliating thought," he told Rufus King, "but I reluctantly avow it, that our fate depends essentially upon the issue of the struggle between Britain & France."³ Why should this arch Federalist "reluctantly avow" such a conviction? Why

was it a humiliating thought? Because Britain had been the archenemy for a generation, the very model of an obnoxious despotism. To be thrown into dependence on Britain could not but induce discomfort. That Federalists wished for Britain's success in the war against France does not show that they wanted a king, lords, and commons in America. Hamilton had professed his admiration for the British constitution in his notorious speech at the Philadelphia convention, but the Federalists defended their policies by appealing to the Federal Constitution, which departed from the British constitution in vital respects.

Such sympathy with foreign powers undoubtedly existed at certain times for partisans of both parties, especially at the outset of the European war, but a sort of loathing—of "Anglophobia" and "Antigallomania," as Jefferson put it—was the mainspring, respectively, of both parties, and to it both counterposed the one true Americanism (69). As the French diplomat Louis-Guillaume Otto observed, French agents had long seen only a French party and an English party in the United States, whereas the "American party, which loves its country above all and for whom prejudices either for France or for England are only accessory and often passing affections," was far more numerous.⁴

Trautsch argues that neither party "favored a policy of neutrality or saw the re-establishment of a balance of power in the life-and-death struggle between France and Great Britain as a primary objective" (71). Both those judgments seem mistaken to me. It would be more reasonable to say that both parties appealed to a "true" or "fair" or "honest" neutrality and charged their domestic adversaries with un-neutral attitudes and policies. Washington's Farewell Address, sanctifying neutrality in the European war, was not just an entry in the party wars, as Trautsch argues; it expressed a general American feeling, one that Jefferson shared. Trautsch quotes one Federalist, William Loughton Smith, as counterposing America's policy of "liberty, peace, order" with French "despotism, anarchy, wars," but Republican leaders like Jefferson could be quoted to the same effect, differing only in charging Britain as the repository of such odious tendencies (62).

The puzzle with a policy of neutrality is that its purpose was to stay out of Europe's wars, but as a scheme of rights and duties it also entailed a willingness to fight when the rights of the neutral were violated by one of the belligerents. Paradoxically, a nation had to threaten to get in if it wanted to stay out. The principal leaders in both parties maintained a commitment to staying out in theory, but each had "breaking points" where the assault on national dignity, usually delivered on the high seas, was seen to justify and perhaps require a forceful response. Jefferson had a conception of neutrality in 1793 that would keep America out of the war but be favorable to France, which Citizen Genêt did not appreciate. Trautsch writes that Jefferson encouraged Genêt's outfitting of French privateers in American ports (75–76), whereas Jefferson in fact strongly objected to the Frenchman's violations of America's neutrality.⁵ He winked at Genêt's Louisiana enterprise, but reproved him for just about everything else. Genêt actually caused Jefferson no end of embarrassment and contributed significantly to his defeat in the epic contest with Hamilton for influence over President Washington.

Neither is it true to say that American leaders were generally indifferent to the balance of power in Europe. The leaders of both parties in fact saw that as very significant, but they differed in where they thought the threat to the balance lay. Republicans saw France as essential to the maintenance of the balance, Federalists saw Britain in the same light, but neither side was indifferent to the prospect that one or the other European power should achieve a decisive victory over its adversary. Thus, Madison in the Federal Convention had argued that to the rivalry between

France and Britain “we owe perhaps our liberty,” and Jefferson often voiced similar sentiments.⁶ After Britain’s naval victory at Trafalgar and France’s victory at Austerlitz, he had recognized that a Britain dominant at sea and a France dominant in continental Europe would mutually check one another’s ambitions, to the benefit of the United States. There were, to be sure, many European quarrels that were products of what Washington in his Farewell Address called “European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice,” viewed by American leaders as having no ability to affect the destiny of the United States, but the conflict between these two European titans—and the implications of a complete victory by one or the other—was throughout the period a subject of anxious anticipation and foreboding.

The maintenance of neutrality was an extremely challenging task. If the United States reached an accommodation with Britain, as it did with the Jay Treaty, it earned the enmity of France; if it were complaisant to France, it earned the enmity of Britain. Sometimes the belligerent measures were rather extreme, as when Britain swooped down on unsuspecting U.S. merchant vessels in late 1793; or when France, responding to the Jay Treaty, attacked U.S. shipping and decreed that Americans impressed onto British warships would be treated as pirates (i.e., subject to summary execution); or when the British insisted on continuing their practice of impressment, often seen in America, as Trautsch observes, as equivalent in odium to the slave trade. If it were the obligation of the federal government to protect American citizens from depredations by the warring belligerents, there was plenty over two decades to become indignant about.

Trautsch minimizes these transgressions and treats sympathetically both British and French claims against the United States. He chastises U.S. envoys John Marshall and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney for their departure from France when asked for a handsome bribe and other humiliating concessions, in what became known as the XYZ affair. The bribe requested, preliminary to the discussion of an unequal treaty, was about fifty thousand pounds sterling, a sum nearly equivalent to the annual yield from America that the British hoped to get (but did not get) from their tax measures before the Revolution. If Marshall and Pinckney were sincerely desirous of peace, Trautsch argues, they should have stayed. In his hands, the episode supports the contention that the Federalists had an intense desire for war.

The brusque departure of the envoys, however, did show that the United States would not submit to insulting treatment. It did not preclude future negotiations, which as it happened were successful in composing the quarrel.

Trautsch also treats sympathetically the commanding necessities that led Britain to continue its practice of impressment and notes a memo by Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin estimating that half of the seamen on America’s merchant vessels were British subjects (194–95). That undoubtedly points to a real weakness in the U.S. position in the years before “The Second War of Independence,” but it does not show that Americans were being inordinately aggressive in objecting to impressment or in feeling indignation over its continuance.

Trautsch’s sympathetic portrayal of both belligerents is certainly unusual in the historiography of the period, as is his unsympathetic portrayal of both Republicans and Federalists as being seized with an aggressive impulse. Most American diplomatic historians over the last century have had unkind words about the conduct of Britain and France, and usually both. At the same time, historians generally divided into warring camps, as they were either pro-Hamilton and anti-Jefferson, or anti-Hamilton and pro-Jefferson. John Adams was the odd man out in these appropriations, and the Adams revival of the last two decades has made the historiographical picture more

complicated.

Trautsch stands outside these controversies, and not only for his exculpating treatment of the European powers. He has unfavorable characterizations of all the principal American leaders—Jefferson is at the outset a pro-French fanatic, and throughout a lying dissembler, especially on issues of war and peace; Hamilton is the American Bonaparte, aiming at civil war and military dictatorship. Adams is driven by passion, not reason, his peace mission to France owing to a deep-seated Anglophobia. Forgive me the speculation, but it seems we have a German historian concerned with making light of British and French transgressions, and keen to find fault with the United States. In this reviewer’s opinion, that would be a better take for the early twenty-first century than for the early nineteenth century.⁷

Trautsch notes the anomaly that in the prequel to the War of 1812, the commercial section of the country (the Eastern states) was set against the war, whereas the non-seafaring and agricultural sections provided the votes in favor. The best way to explain the anomaly is to give weight to considerations of honor as opposed to interest in prompting the decision for war. “What are we required to do by those who wish to engage our feelings and wishes” in Britain’s behalf? asked Henry Clay in late 1811: “To bear the actual cuffs of her arrogance, that we may escape a chimerical French subjugation! We are invited, conjured to drink the potion of British poison actually presented to our lips, that we may avoid the imperial dose prepared by perturbed imaginations. We are called upon to submit to debasement, dishonor, and disgrace—to bow the neck to royal insolence, as a course of preparation for manly resistance to Gallic invasion!” In a similar vein, John Calhoun rebuked John Randolph’s arguments for conciliation toward Britain, which Randolph thought necessary to forestall the greater danger posed by Napoleonic France, and called conciliation a species of “calculating avarice” that was “only fit for shops and counting houses, and ought not to disgrace the seat of sovereignty by its squalid and vile appearance.” A nation, he averred, “is never safe but under the shield of honor.”⁸

Frontier resentment against Indian attacks—the war on the frontier began sooner than the war at sea—and the felt dishonor of submission to Britain were more important than material interests in prompting the congressional declaration of war in 1812. New England had no desire to conquer the French Catholics of Canada, or admit them into the union, and it was directly contrary to the interest of Virginia to do so, as Randolph trenchantly observed. Trautsch sees Republican peace theory—the doctrine that republics were naturally peaceful, monarchies naturally aggressive—as a major cause of the War of 1812, but that seems much less significant than the challenges to national honor that British actions entailed. Republican peace theory doubtless reinforced a sense of American innocence, but it did not engineer the provocations.

Considerations of honor, linked to national independence, were also crucial to Republican perspectives in 1794 and Federalist perspectives in 1798. A preponderance of leaders felt that it was in America’s interest to remain separate from the European system; our interest is in commerce, they said, not war. But such self-interest could not entirely govern the case if the United States were treated contemptuously by a European power. Jefferson’s language in 1794 reflects this sensibility: “We are alarmed here with the apprehensions of war: and sincerely anxious that it might be avoided; but not at the expence either of our faith or honor.”⁹ Hamilton would take the same ground. Even in their rabid disagreement, American leaders appealed to a common normative framework in their foreign policy, an important point in considering the formation of a national identity. Jefferson recalled these principles transcending party when he wrote, in his First Inaugural, “We have

called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans: we are all federalists.”

In keeping with his larger portrait of American belligerence, Trautsch sees Jefferson as explicitly threatening Napoleon with war in 1802–3, and he argues that the Embargo of 1807–9 was “a decisive step towards war rather than a substitute or alternative to it” (198). But it is doubtful that Jefferson’s threats in 1802 were actually communicated to Napoleon, and they were almost certainly not the reason behind the French leader’s decision to sell Louisiana to the United States. Jefferson saw the French possession of New Orleans as inevitably producing conflicts that would end in war—it would be a formula for eternal conflict, he wanted Napoleon to understand—but he did not threaten war to block France from taking possession of New Orleans from Spain. Nor, given Jefferson’s antipathy to England, were his threats to “marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation” likely to be especially convincing, as neither Jefferson nor Secretary of State Madison was likely to accept any terms of alliance that Britain might find agreeable.¹⁰

So, too, the Embargo of 1807 cannot be adequately seen as simply a step toward war. As Trautsch insists, it did have a tendency to “foreclose the diplomatic options” with Great Britain, but the meaning Jefferson imputed to it actually shifted dramatically over time.¹¹ It had multiple significations. That no one at the time could be exactly sure of what it meant—that Jefferson himself was not sure—was one of its most distinctive features. Only occasionally did Jefferson see its purpose as potentially preparatory for war. In the course of 1808 he increasingly justified it as an instrument of peaceable coercion; he recurred in crisis not to war, but to his long-held faith in economic sanctions. Initially furious after the British attack on the *Chesapeake*, and thinking war inevitable, he came to see the embargo, adopted in December 1807, as a valiant attempt at finding an instrument other than war for the resolution of national differences. Jefferson did occasionally rouse himself to the necessity of war with England, briefly in 1807 and then again in 1812. But he was also extremely leery of the dangers war might pose, and this more often informed his outlook and actions. “Our constitution is a peace establishment—it is not calculated for war,” he observed in 1806. “War would endanger its existence.”¹² Jefferson was anxious that same year that he not be seen by the belligerents as proceeding from “Quaker principles,” but he had a very considerable attraction to those principles.

Trautsch’s crucial argument is that war was indispensable in the formation of national identity. He maintains that there was little sense of national identity in 1789; this was built only in the subsequent years of foreign war. The War of 1812, however, stirred national feeling in essentially the same way the War of Independence did. As Albert Gallatin observed, the second war with Britain “renewed and reinstated the national feelings and character which the Revolution had given, and which were daily lessened.”¹³ From the throes of the War of Independence, in the icy furnace of Valley Forge, rose the conviction that America most needed a “national character” in opposition to the European powers, but the existence of this sentiment did not really solve the problem of national identity. It certainly did not ensure a durable union or coexistence among states and sections with multiple loyalties and oft-conflicting interests. America’s weakness, if divided, showed dramatically that they needed to cooperate with one another, but it did not show a sure path to such cooperation. Depending on the circumstances, observers understood, foreign war might foster unity or disunity.

Trautsch’s own evidence shows how dangerous it would be to launch a foreign war for the purpose of pursuing a civil conflict, as he alleges both parties sought to do. He finds in the record considerable bravado from some Federalists in 1798, and some Republicans in 1812, about how war would

afford an opportunity to crush domestic enemies. “As for internal enemies,” wrote one anonymous barker in 1798, “I am prepared in my own mind, as it respects internal enemies, to make it a war of extermination” (136). “He who is not for us,” wrote *The National Intelligencer* in 1812, “must be considered as against us and treated accordingly” (225).

Trautsch suggests that America’s leaders looked upon such a prospect with glee. I think most leaders looked upon it with alarm, as it could easily be seen as a formula for civil war. During the War of 1812, Madison did not pursue his domestic foes; he acquiesced in the effectively neutral posture of the eastern states, which during the war were connected to the other states “as dead to living bodies.” The war did not exactly produce a secession crisis—the Hartford Convention chose nullification, not secession—but it came close to doing so. In 1815, after the War of 1812 had drawn to a close, Jefferson observed to Gallatin that “the war, had it proceeded, would have upset our government, and a new one, whenever tried, will do it.”¹⁴

The fear that war would equal disunion had been of crucial significance for two decades in reinforcing Washington’s counsel against permanent alliances and departures from neutrality, a quest made far more problematic by the vitriol spewing from the press. Jefferson saw the point in the paroxysm of 1798, counselling “that nothing will secure us internally but a divorce from both nations.” If Americans engaged in a war that excited such divided passions, “our Union runs the great risk of not coming out of that war in the shape in which it enters it.”¹⁵ John Adams believed that devoutly in 1799. Trautsch attributes his renewed peace mission to France as owing to his Anglophobia; in fact, Adams was traumatized by the thought that foreign war with France would produce civil war in America, leading probably to military dictatorship, and he bravely stepped into the breach. He wanted his decision to send the peace mission on his tombstone as the most patriotic thing he ever did. There is no question that the War of 1812 served to heighten the sense of a national consciousness, and in that sense Trautsch’s basic point is unexceptionable. However, the decision for war or peace was recognizably momentous and always carried not only the possibility of greater unity but also the risk of dissolution.

Trautsch highlights the schism within the Republican Party. In contrast with the Federalists, styled here as the bearers of European conservatism, the Republicans were composed of an alliance between southern aristocratic slaveholders and the yeomanry and middling sort in the northern states, especially Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. The democratic egalitarianism of the latter, he argues, displaced the classical republicanism of the former (58). But this is a misleading way of putting the matter. What happened was that democratic egalitarians appropriated the language of the classical republicans. If, as “Democrat-Republicans” maintained, a democracy and a republic were the same thing, that appropriation was an entirely natural deduction from republican principles. America witnessed in these years the beginnings of a great broadening of the white political class, culminating in the democratic ethos of the 1830s; in the process, republicanism was transformed, but not displaced.

It is only fair to add as well that the northern Federalists, seen here as the party of order as opposed to liberty, often wailed about the insensate hypocrisy of southern slaveholders. Timothy Pickering, depicted here as an imperious aristocrat, was withering on that point for twenty years. Interestingly, Trautsch draws that characterization—the Republicans the party of liberty, the Federalists the party of order—from John Quincy Adams’s memorial to James Madison and James Monroe in 1836. Adams, a determined opponent of the Slave Power, was just being politic for the occasion. He well knew that this

depiction had its fictional elements.

While denunciations of the aristocratic ways of the Federalists were frequently advanced, the Federalists themselves generally rejected the aspersion. Trautsch gives a misleading depiction of what John Adams was saying in his *Discourses on Davila*. He notes Adams's pungent observations on social and political inequality, but he fails to note that this was simply Adams's premise. His argument was that political institutions need to recognize that fact and deal with it, lest the aristocrats push their natural advantages too far. Adam's depictions of inequality did get him in trouble with budding democrats, but his main pitch in that book, as elsewhere, is that the aristocrats are the big problem and that some way must be found to cage them.¹⁶ In our time of oligarchy, his view has a continuing relevance.

It is also a straitened interpretation of the Federalists to see their position as fatally wounded in 1800. That controverted election was very close. They did suffer a bad comeuppance, but Trautsch greatly exaggerates the effect that the Alien Act—and associated ideas of an exclusivist nativist ideology—had on their position. As a symbol of Federalist overreach, the Sedition Act was probably more important. The doctor who really cured the war fever, as Jefferson put it, was the tax gatherer. Trautsch notes that the Federalists cheered Britain's victory in the Battle of the Nile in 1798, but that great British victory proved their undoing. It showed that they had greatly exaggerated the danger of a French descent upon American coasts, rendering questionable and potentially sinister their call for a vastly enlarged army.

One of the best aspects of Trautsch's study is his exploration of the newspapers of the early republic, which has yielded many arresting quotations. His tendency, however, is to favor the more frenzied expressions over the more measured. These speak to the extraordinarily vitriolic political climate that followed the inauguration of the new government in 1789, but they are not necessarily representative of popular opinion or the views of party leaders. Hamilton is not Peter Porcupine (William Cobbett); Jefferson is not William Duane or James Callender. When Cobbett argued for an Anglo-American reunion, for example, and boasted that he "would not exchange the title of subject of King George, for all the citizenships in the Universe," he did not express the outlook of Federalist leaders. Just when Republican firebrands were agitating for involvement in the war on behalf of France, Jefferson was advising the need for a divorce from both nations. The partisans often saw their opponents as "dupes of the French nation" or "dupes of the British nation," but none of the leaders saw themselves that way, and they were invariably roused to anger by such accusations.

Notes:

1. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York, 1993); Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York, 2009).
2. "The Stand No. 4" (April 12, 1798), in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke (New York, 1961–1987), 21: 412–13.
3. Cabot to King, March 21, 1798, cited in Trautsch, 56.
4. Cited in Elkins and McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 564.
5. Jefferson to Edmond Charles Genêt, ca. July 16, 1793, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-26-02-0454>.
6. See Madison's speech of June 28, 1787, in the Federal Convention.
7. For my critique of America's domineering ways in the last two decades, see David C. Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril: American Empire and the Liberal Tradition* (New York, 2018).
8. Henry Clay (December 31, 1811), and John Calhoun (December 12, 1811), cited in David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations* (Lawrence, KS,

2009), 58–59.

9. Jefferson to Tench Coxe, May 1, 1794, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-28-02-0064>.

10. See analysis in Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1990), 108–24.

11. Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979).

12. Trautsch quotes Jefferson as writing that "America 'is a peace establishment'" (278), but it was the constitution to which Jefferson was referring. A truer rendition of his sentiment would be that the constitution was the indispensable element in the preservation of America's peace. Without a federal tie, as he expressed the American consensus, the separate states "would be eternally at war with each other, & would become at length the mere partisans & satellites of the leading powers of Europe." "Thomas Jefferson's Explanations of the Three Volumes Bound in Marbled Paper (the so-called 'Anas')," 4 February 1818, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-12-02-0343-0002>.

13. Gallatin to Lyon, May 7, 1816, cited by Trautsch, 261.

14. "Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 16 October 1815," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-09-02-0072>.

15. Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, June 21, 1797, *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-29-02-0351>.

16. See Richard Alan Ryerson, *John Adams's Republic: The One, the Few, and the Many* (Baltimore, MD, 2016).

Author's Response

Jasper M. Trautsch

I am grateful that Andrew L. Johns selected *The Genesis of America* as the subject for a roundtable discussion for *Passport*, and I appreciate that my argument about the emergence of American nationalism in the early republic and the role that U.S. foreign policy played in the process has hereby been given the chance to become more widely known among historians of American foreign relations. Moreover, I am honored that four distinguished professors whose work has had a formative influence on my research on the topic have agreed to review my book, thoughtfully discussing the claims I am making in it. I will respond to the reviews one by one.

Todd Estes' praise for *The Genesis of America* means a lot to me, since I began my research on American nationalism and early U.S. foreign relations by writing my M.A. thesis at Tulane University in 2005 on the national identity dimensions of the Jay Treaty, and Estes' several articles on the debate that the treaty sparked (which he subsequently expanded on in his book *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture*) shaped my thinking on this subject at the time. Therefore, I am happy that my book in turn has made a strong impression on him.

As for his argument that America's relations to the Barbary pirates could have figured a bit more prominently in my monograph, I agree that the capturing of U.S. merchantmen by North African corsairs also triggered intense debates about the nature of American identity in the early republic, which in turn influenced how U.S. foreign policy makers reacted to this issue. In this regard, one could also mention the Haitian Revolution. Both topics have already received excellent scholarly analyses.¹ I focused instead on Anglo-American and Franco-American relations, finding that Great Britain and France were the major foreign Others in the construction of American national identity. Not only were they the most powerful states that posed actual threats to the U.S. in its early years of existence; during the French Revolutionary Wars, they also served as the principal foreign templates for Federalists and Republicans, as they debated the political

character of the American republic. In the end, I found that this focus on Great Britain and France ensured maximum coherence for my larger argument, even if it came at the expense of completeness. I also think that Estes is correct when noting that my treatment of the Louisiana Purchase is relatively brief and that more could be said on the subject. Unfortunately, space limitations prevented me from providing a more comprehensive interpretation of the role that this territorial acquisition played in the identity debates between Federalists and Republicans.

William Earl Weeks' review shares many features of Estes'. While he recommends the book and finds kind things to say about it, he also notes that, by focusing on Anglo-American and Franco-American relations, it neglects the importance of America's relations to Spain and the Barbary states for negotiations about American identity. Again, I do not deny that nations other than Great Britain and France also became the object of external Othering processes in the early republic. However, I maintain that these two countries were the most essential foils against which American identity was constructed.

As for any other colony, detachment from the mother country, which continued to exert a strong cultural influence on the new republic, was most crucial for the "invention" of an independent American nation, which, after all, was predominantly inhabited by people of British descent. Moreover, coming to terms with the French Revolution was also essential for any attempts to construct an American identity, as it determined how Americans assessed their own revolutionary heritage. Was the American Revolution defined by its differentness from the French Revolution or did they both form part of the same movement? The answer to this question largely defined the identity of the U.S. Spain and the Barbary states just did not have the same ideological significance for Americans, and no one suggested them as a model. Federalists and Republicans might have pursued different policies towards them, but these disagreements did not constitute grounds for high-pitched partisan polarization.

Weeks also claims that American nationalism began to emerge before 1793, i.e. during the bloody struggle for independence. I do not deny this. Nationalism is a complex, multifaceted, dynamic, open-ended, and contested process, for which it is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint a specific start and end date, particularly on the collective level. Certainly, the shared experience of fighting the British Army during the War of Independence created a sense of national self among some members of the Continental army. It was also a nationalizing experience for certain men serving in the Continental Congress or as America's representatives abroad.

In fact, a major premise of *The Genesis of America* is that most federal office holders after 1789 were nationalists who had come to identify with the union during the revolution and afterwards were eager to use the powers that the Constitution had conferred upon the federal government to increase other Americans' attachment to the union (15-17). Washington, Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, Madison among others could all be considered American nationalists whose career, fame, indeed identity was predicated on the continued existence of the United States.

However, nationalism was not yet a mass phenomenon in 1789. At that point in time it might better be described as an elite affair. The story that *The Genesis of America* tells is that of how, after the American Revolution, this elite took advantage of the French Revolutionary Wars, raging, with brief interruptions, from 1793 to 1815, to arouse nationalist sentiment across the population by pursuing a confrontational foreign policy towards the major belligerents in order to ensure the survival of the fragile union, and how, in response to these foreign crises, the early American press helped foster a national discourse on

American identity.

Finally, Weeks questions my characterization of Native Americans as internal Others, arguing that they were rather a palpable external threat to white Americans before 1815. I admit that the question of whether Native Americans constituted external or internal actors is complicated and defies a clear answer. On the one hand, the federal government concluded peace treaties with Native American tribes, indicating that they regarded them as at least partially independent nations. On the other hand, it was the Department of War rather than the Department of State that managed Indian relations, and it was federal courts rather than international tribunals that resolved disputes between the federal government and Indian tribes, suggesting that Indian relations were regarded a domestic concern.

As my book is concerned with U.S. foreign policy makers rather than with the U.S. Army and War Department commissioners, I decided to regard the federal government's handling of relations with Native Americans as an internal issue, but I willingly acknowledge that a different line of research would have justified treating them as subjects of foreign policy. In any case, Weeks' remark made me realize that I should probably have moved this discussion of the nature of Indian affairs from the introduction's lengthy footnote 67 into the main text.

Walter Hixson's criticism is twofold. First, he disagrees with the timeframe, claiming that American national identity formed in the colonial period rather than during the early republic. The second point follows logically from the first: Hixson questions whether Americans' relations to European powers were really as central to the formation of U.S. national identity as I argue, instead suggesting that conflicts with Native Americans provided the real foundation for "American" identity. Putting his critique in a nutshell, Hixson calls *The Genesis of America* "a Eurocentric book by a European author."

On the one hand, of course, Hixson is right: the book has indeed been written by a European author, and I see no reason to deny that as a European I might have a particular perspective on the subject. On the other hand, I do not share his belief that having a European outlook is illegitimate. So let me clarify in how far my approach might be considered European and why this is not necessarily a bad thing.

When surveying the literature on American nationalism, one quickly comes to the conclusion that most scholars today concur that its emergence did not occur prior to the American Revolution, but in its wake.² More importantly still, scholars of the colonial and revolutionary periods such as Jack P. Greene, Timothy Breen, and John M. Murrin showed that the American colonists' identification with the mother country was never stronger than on the eve of the American Revolution. They mostly took pride in being members of the powerful British Empire, boasted about their British liberties, sent their children to British schools and universities, and mimicked the British way of life, British tastes, and British fashions. Only during the American Revolution did an increasing number of colonists start to reconsider this loyalty to the British Empire.

Given American colonists' profound attachment to Great Britain in the colonial period, the question of how to set America apart from her former mother country therefore became a pivotal challenge in the post-revolutionary period. Americans and Britons looked alike, spoke alike, and shared the same culture and history. Moreover, while America's republican system might have made her politically unique before 1789, the outbreak of the French Revolution, which provided the U.S. with a new sister republic, also complicated political definitions of America as the exceptional "land of liberty." But what then distinguished Americans from Great Britain and France if they were ethnically, culturally, historically, and politically

so similar to their European reference points?

This question might very well be of a particular fascination for a European interested to find out how European settlers could re-imagine themselves as “un-European” if not “anti-European.” But analyzing the formation of American nationalism within a transatlantic rather than a purely continental context is not “Euro-centric.” Hixson is being polemical and using the wrong term here, as it implies an illegitimate assertion of European superiority.

Moreover, inquiring into how white Americans constructed and negotiated their differences from white Europeans on the other side of the ocean is not tantamount to denying the importance of racial Othering within North America. To the contrary, as I state clearly in the introduction, “a basis for the feeling of community among the disparate white peoples of various ethnic origins was their shared perception that they all had more in common with each other than with the Native Americans and African Americans and that the former posed a direct and the latter at least a latent threat to them” (19). I even quote Hixson approvingly to argue that race was the easiest way of transcending the ethnic differences between European settlers (20).

As Hixson points out in his review, this process of racial Othering had already started in the colonial period. Nonetheless, the emergence of white solidarity within the colonies did not fully settle the issue of what constituted American identity once the separation to the mother country occurred, as race actually bound Americans to their former brethren (as Weeks insists in his review, race cannot explain why Americans “so ferociously resisted Great Britain,” as she was the nation that the U.S. “most resembled racially and culturally”). I go on to say, therefore, that “after attaining independence, it now seemed paramount for Euro-Americans to, *additionally* [italics added], develop a consciousness of being different to their white brethren on the other side of the Atlantic in order to invent a separate American nationality” (20-21).

In the end, I do not find it particularly fruitful to treat these processes of internal and external Othering in a competitive way and as mutually exclusive, as if only one group could have been selected as a template against which to define the United States as a nation. Nationalists seeking to construct an American national identity were concerned both with finding (or inventing) and emphasizing differences from those inside the territory of the United States who were excluded from citizenship on racial grounds, such as Native and African Americans, and from those who shared the same ethnicity and culture but resided outside the territory of the United States such as Britons and Frenchmen.

Important work on how a racial identity among European settlers developed in the colonial and revolutionary period has been done by, inter alia, Peter Silver, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Robert G. Parkinson. What I hoped to accomplish with *The Genesis of America* was not to challenge their research, but, like Sam Haynes and Kariann Akemi Yokota, to complement it by analyzing the painful evolution of a post-colonial identity during the early republic. For this purpose, I reinterpreted the familiar story of how American parties developed not simply as a struggle over economic interests and political principles, but as fundamental negotiations about the very identity of the emerging nation, and reinterpreted the tensions and actual wars between the United States and Great Britain and France not merely as diplomatic quarrels, but as the very battlefields on which the “anti-European” identity of the United States would be determined.

Thus emphasizing Americans’ need to disentangle themselves from Great Britain and France after the American Revolution does not mean that definitions of

America in opposition to Native and African Americans lost importance. Nor does it mean that post-colonial and racial identity formations were completely separate processes. To the contrary, as I demonstrate in the chapters on the War of 1812, Republicans used race very effectively to arouse nationalistic rage against Great Britain by likening the issue of the British impressment of white American sailors to the institution of black slavery (188-192). Moreover, one of the two main reasons why Republicans were successful in making Federalists give up their Anglophilia during the War of 1812 was their public association of the British with Native American enemies, a rhetorical strategy encapsulated in the term “white savages” (231-236). In short: even though it might appear on the surface as if Hixson’s *American Settler Colonialism* and my *The Genesis of America* make conflicting claims, I think that both books actually work well together to offer a “full picture,” as they shed light on two equally significant aspects of early American national identity formation.

While Hixson’s review is mostly concerned with my argument about American nationalism, David C. Hendrickson focuses on my claims about early U.S. foreign policy. I have to admit that I was initially surprised that he takes such a critical view of my book, since my interpretation of early Anglo- and Franco-American relations has been strongly influenced by his works (even though we have never met in person). His *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* shaped my view on the Constitution and the fragility of American nationalism at the end of the 1780s, as I note in my book’s introduction. Moreover, his *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (co-authored with Robert W. Tucker) has informed my analysis of Jefferson’s foreign policy as president, as might become apparent in my chapter on the origins of the War of 1812.

What are Hendrickson’s criticisms then? He addresses three issues in particular. For one, he argues that I should have distinguished more clearly between what reckless newspaper editors wrote and what responsible political leaders said. Moreover, he charges me with taking at face value what politicians said about each other in a polarized public sphere (as when Federalists accused Republicans of being French-loving radicals and Republicans alleged that Federalists were pro-British monarchists) while at the same time not accepting as truth what they said about themselves (primarily that they were all neutral in the French Revolutionary Wars and unattached to either Great Britain and France from the beginning). Finally, he takes exception to the fact that I criticize American leaders for pursuing confrontational policies, while I allegedly exonerate the British and French governments.

I completely concur with Hendrickson that there was a difference both in style and substance between what Republican editors and Republican leaders wrote. While some Republican newspapers clamored for war in 1794, neither Madison nor Jefferson advocated a call to arms at that time (even though they were aware—and willing to take the risk—that the policy of peaceable coercion they recommended might lead to military conflict). When many newspapers demanded a declaration of war in 1807, Jefferson as president refrained from such a step. Finally, while Republican newspapers initiated an outright campaign for a declaration of war in 1810 and 1811, Madison stalled and only very reluctantly agreed to engage in armed hostilities in 1812. As I actually analyze in much detail at the beginning of chapter 5, Jefferson and Madison were firm believers in the theory of republican peace, fearing that warfare posed the greatest threat to the survival of republics (176-182). Many Republican leaders therefore agreed on war in 1812 only with the greatest reluctance—in contrast to Republican newspapers, which largely celebrated news of the war’s outbreak.

However, this aversion to war does not mean, as

Hendrickson implies, that Republican leaders were not influenced by the discourse conducted in newspapers and that diplomatic historians can therefore discard as irrelevant what editors had to say. To the contrary, at a time when neither public opinion polls nor other daily media existed, newspapers were the best barometers that foreign policy makers had to assess what “people” thought, particularly since the editorial process was not yet professionalized and newspapers regularly printed letters to the editors, “private” letters between citizens that they got hold of, other (mostly anonymous) contributions from readers, and reprints from public speeches and toasts given at public festivities. Indeed, demonstrating how the public discourse influenced what foreign policy makers considered politically feasible during the early republic is one of the major historiographical contributions that *The Genesis of America* seeks to make. In particular, I argue that Republican newspapers waged an Anglophobic campaign to push the nation into a war against Great Britain in 1812 and that it was the public surge in pro-war sentiment that ultimately made Madison, who had argued throughout his career that the government ought to follow public opinion, ask Congress for a declaration of war.

Hendrickson is correct in noting that the kind of vitriol and invectives one reads in the newspapers of the time cannot usually be found to the same extent in the writings of leaders such as Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison. Nonetheless, it is problematic to dissociate public policy and public discourse, not only because public opinion influenced political decisions, as with the 1812 declaration of war, but also because foreign policy triggered public debates. After all, it was the Federalist leaders’ decision to bring matters with France to a head in 1798 that helped escalate the anti-French diatribes in Federalist newspapers, and it was Jefferson’s and Madison’s confrontational policy towards Great Britain that fueled the Anglophobic nationalism expressed by Republican newspapers. Juxtaposing “enlightened” statesmen and “demagogic” editors, as Hendrickson does, can therefore be misleading.

I agree with Hendrickson that the accusations that Republicans and Federalists raised against each other should not be accepted at face value. Therefore, I in fact devote considerable space in the first chapter to outlining their ideological profiles, arguing that Federalists should not be understood as monarchists, as Republicans called them, but as conservatives, and that Republicans should not be viewed as anarchists, as Federalists described them, but as democratic egalitarians (40-51).

In addition, I make clear that both Republican and Federalist leaders were nationalists whose goal was to increase Americans’ identification with the union. In fact, that is the major premise of the book, as I pointed out above. Federalists were not anti-French because they allegedly admired the British monarchy, and Republicans were not anti-British because they allegedly favored the French democracy over the American republic. Rather, Great Britain and France had become external symbols for the competing ideologies over which Federalists and Republicans were arguing at home, and by choosing different foreign Others in opposition to which they constructed American identity, Federalists and Republicans tried to represent their respective creed not as a partisan outlook, but as the only true form of Americanism. They were nationalists, but they defined America in partisan ways: If America was the opposite of revolutionary France, then the established order would be legitimate. If America was the opposite of Great Britain, a further democratization of American society was warranted.

Not only should we refrain from simply reiterating what political opponents said about each other in the past, but, I would like to add, it is equally important for us to also be cautious about accepting as truth what they

said about themselves. Both Federalist and Republican leaders repeatedly claimed that they were neutral in the European conflict. While partisan newspapers were more outspoken about taking a side in the French Revolutionary Wars, Hendrickson is right in emphasizing that leaders usually presented themselves as apostles of neutrality. Yet, it does not follow that, as Hendrickson argues, the foreign policies that they suggested were in fact such. Jefferson and Madison criticized Washington’s Neutrality Proclamation, fearing that it was actually partial towards Great Britain. Hamilton in turn alleged that Republicans’ commercial policies, which they represented as balanced, would really favor France. If they all agreed that the United States should stay neutral in the European conflict, why would they attack each other so viciously and accuse each other of British or French attachments? Why would parties, which the Constitution did not foresee and which most Founding Fathers rejected as a threat to republicanism, form in response to foreign policy if there was widespread agreement that the United States should remain aloof from the European war?

While they might have claimed to follow a course of neutrality, Federalists in fact pursued an anti-French foreign policy—seeking to renounce the 1778 Treaty of Alliance and binding the United States closer to Great Britain—and Republicans pursued an anti-British foreign policy—enacting economic sanctions against the former mother country, while seeking to expand trade with France. What’s more, in 1797 and 1798, the Federalist leadership saw a distinct advantage in escalating tensions with France. Republicans in turn enacted an embargo, which they knew was more damaging to Great Britain than to France in 1807, and actively declared war against Great Britain in 1812.

How can the official commitment to American neutrality be reconciled with the actual un-neutral policies Federalists and Republicans pursued? My argument is that public professions of neutrality should be interpreted as part of the debate on American identity and not necessarily as the expression of a sincere desire to be as impartial as possible towards the European belligerents. Federalist leaders put great effort into publicly championing a position of neutrality between 1793 and 1798, as it allowed them to present themselves as “true” Americans and to accuse their pro-French Republican opponents of having mixed loyalties (126-128). Once Federalists became more overtly pro-British during the Quasi-War, Republicans in turn took up the mantle of neutrality and accused Federalists of having mixed loyalties (153-155). By thus analyzing the debate on foreign policy as one about American identity, I try to lay bare the domestic functions of public policy pronouncements such as Washington’s Farewell Address and to refrain from treating them as disinterested diplomatic wisdoms, as Hendrickson does.³

This brings me to the last point. Hendrickson is correct when pointing out that my portrayal of Anglo- and Franco-American relations in the early republic is unorthodox. It is commonly taken for granted that French depredations on U.S. trade and French attempts to secure a financial bribe from American diplomats caused the Quasi-War and that the British practice of impressment and interferences with American foreign trade caused the War of 1812. In each case, the American government seemed to have reacted to outside events, and what pro-Hamiltonian and pro-Jeffersonian historians, as Hendrickson calls them, argued about was whether the American response to these external provocations was clever or unwise. My interpretation indeed differs from such accounts, as I trace the interests that Federalist and Republican leaders had in both conflicts and how they tried to use them to bolster their domestic agenda.

However, in the end, the purpose of *The Genesis of America* is not to assign exclusive blame for the Quasi-War

and the War of 1812 to the U.S. and to “exculpate,” to use Hendrickson’s term, Great Britain and France. The French agents’ behavior during the XYZ Affair was haughty and “clumsy” (122) and “part of the blame for the outbreak of hostilities [in 1812] rests on policy makers in London” (213), as I state clearly. My goal was rather to show that American foreign policy makers played an active role in the onset of these conflicts. They were not merely reacting to aggressions by the European powers, even though both Federalist and Republican statesmen alike spent a great deal of time in depicting themselves as innocent republicans standing up to defend America’s honor against Europe’s corrupt and tyrannical despots to justify their conduct to the American public, as Hendrickson in fact nicely shows with quotes from Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Jefferson.

There can be a difference between the message a writer wishes to share and the message that a reader receives, and in Hendrickson’s case this is clearly the case. I take part of the blame. Possibly, *The Genesis of America* can be read as a “sympathetic portrayal of both belligerents” and an “unsympathetic portrayal of both Republicans and Federalists,” as Hendrickson puts it, simply because it is more concerned with the motives and actions of U.S. foreign policy makers than those of the British and French governments. In that case, I could have emphasized the latter’s war guilt more clearly to avoid the impression of being one-sided. However, Hendrickson is also misreading my book when he accuses me of depicting Jefferson as a “lying dissembler,” Hamilton as an “American Bonaparte, aiming at civil war and military dictatorship,” and Adams as “driven by passion.” Nowhere in the book do I characterize these leaders in such a way and when re-reading it I still cannot find any passage that would lend itself to such an interpretation. I do not know exactly how Hendrickson came to deduce such a message from *The Genesis of America*, but he gives a hint in his review when he speculates that as “a German historian” I would be “keen to find fault with the United States” and make “light of British and French transgressions.” I do not see why my German nationality would matter, but it seems that Hendrickson’s interpretation of *The Genesis of America* has been influenced by the assumption that it does.

I would like to conclude my response by thanking all reviewers for their meticulous reading of my book and for engaging with its arguments so thoroughly. Whether the reviews were very positive like Estes’ and generally sympathetic like Weeks’ or more critical like Hixson’s and scathing like Hendrickson’s, they all raise important questions, identify issues that need further exploring, and reveal constructive scholarly disagreements about such contested and relevant matters as the origins and nature of American nationalism, the domestic functions of foreign policy, and the role of public opinion in the policy-making process. I very much appreciate the opportunity this roundtable afforded me to clarify my arguments and hope that readers will have learned not only more about the book itself, but also about some of the issues that historians of early American foreign relations grapple with today.

Notes:

1. For the national identity implications of these foreign policy issues see, above all, Lawrence Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
2. For a comprehensive survey on the literature on early American nationalism see Jasper M. Trautsch, “The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism,” in: *National Identities*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2016), 289-312. For recent works emphasizing that American nationalism was a post- rather than pre-revolutionary phenomenon see David L. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Lloyd S. Kramer, *Nationalism in Europe & America: Politics, Culture, and Identities since 1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Carol Berkin, *A Sovereign People: The Crises of the 1790s and the Birth of American Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).
3. As to my argument that neither Federalists nor Republicans were primarily moved by balance-of-power considerations, this statement is made in the context of my discussion of the early French Revolutionary War and applies, at the beginning of chapter 2, to the years 1793 and 1794. The sources that Hendrickson quotes to argue that Jefferson and Madison did indeed champion the European balance of power are from 1787 and thus long before American parties developed and the ideologically charged war between Great Britain and France broke out.