Book reviews -- Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an ...
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marriage. The remainder of his life was a desperate struggle to secure an income sufficient to sustain his social status and to provide for his ten children.

For years Thomas Posey sought a government appointment, preferably military, but when he was named as brigadier general in Anthony Wayne's western army, he resigned within a year, for reasons unknown. He sought election to Congress in 1797 for the seat vacated by James Madison and was badly beaten. Like most Virginia gentlemen of his generation, Posey had interests in western lands, and he moved with his family to Kentucky in 1802. Presumably because of his military reputation, he was soon elected state senator and then lieutenant governor, but he failed dismally in his campaign for governor. Although accused of Federalist leanings, Posey always claimed that he had no allegiance to any political party.

Failing in Kentucky, Posey moved to Louisiana and in 1812 was appointed to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate. After he had been in Washington for two months, the legislature rejected him for the remainder of the term, and he was rescued by President Madison, who appointed him governor of the Indiana Territory. His chief responsibility was to rally the militia and protect the Ohio Valley settlements against Indian attacks while the army was engaged far to the north. Although he privately doubted that residents of the territory were ready for the responsibilities and costs of statehood, Posey was too wise to oppose the inevitable. When Indiana became a state in 1816, the sixty-six-year-old Posey campaigned actively to be elected governor but lost. He died two years later, serving in still another federal appointment, as Indian Agent for the Lower Wabash region.

John Thornton Posey offers a straightforward life of Thomas Posey, a model Revolutionary War veteran: ambitious but never truly successful, achieving military rank and political office, but only briefly. He was indeed "a living political anachronism," but his story provides an authentic account of life on the American frontier among those who won independence and sought their fortunes in the West.

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Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1814. Peter Onuf and Nicholas Onuf. (Madison: Madison House, 1993. viii, 224 pp. $27.95, ISBN 0-945612-34-6.)

This book is an excellent interdisciplinary collaboration between Nicholas Onuf, an international politics specialist, and his brother Peter, the leading early national historian of his generation. The Onufs study the evolution of international law—often illusory, yet ever-present—in the formative years of the young American republic.

They begin with Emmerich De Vattel's 1758 treatise on the law of nations. Vattel described a stable and lawful pre–French Revolution world founded upon the balance of power and treaties among monarchs in which the growing commercial and cultural exchange among nations was leading the international system toward greater order, civility, and rationality. The unifying theme of this book is the collapse of the Vattelian model and the struggle to find a new basis for international law.

Part 1 provides a textual analysis of the Aristotelian international law origins of the Founders' revolutionary and constitutional rhetoric. Particularly enlightening is chapter 2, which traces the development of the ideas of a compound republic, corporation, and confederation as they relate to the question of sovereignty. The Founders erected a government based on the Aristotelian assumption that "wholes are compounded from parts which are themselves wholes." The Constitution preserved the sovereignty of the units of composition while creating a confederation above them. This duality allowed the United States to act as a unit in economic and diplomatic affairs while circumventing the unrepublican size of the confederation.

Parts 2 and 3 examine the death and rebirth of an American conception of international law from the Revolution to the War of 1812. The United States was initially a loose Vattelian confederation and sought to rejoin the Vattelian community of states. The new nation embraced international treaties as the foundation of the law of nations. But the voluntary basis of the confederation exacerbated tensions between the states that formed the union,

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thus undermining American diplomacy. These frustrations propelled the Founders to create a government capable of formulating a coherent foreign policy. But just as Americans were ready to export their improved Vattelian model, their efforts to rejoin Europe were frustrated by the collapse of the Vattelian order. The wars of the French Revolution destroyed the twin foundations of that order: the balance of power and the treaties among nations. Neutrals such as the United States, which did not wish to be drawn "into the vortex of European politics and perpetual war," concluded they must cut all ties with the rotten European treaty system. The belligerents' tactic of raiding neutral shipping, however, made the retreat into isolationism impossible. In this context James Madison proposed a new international system founded on universal respect for the sovereignty of all nations—a principle that became the cornerstone of nineteenth-century international law.

I part with the authors on two issues. Vattel and other progressive internationalists believed that Europe had become a single great republic that "affirmed the moral and legal equality of nations no less of people, whether small or large." But this order was a figment of their imagination. European nations in this era of supposed stability were involved in an almost ceaseless series of continental and colonial wars. And American revolutionary rhetoric was rich in denunciations of the order that mandated the suppression of Corsica and the divisions of Poland. The progressive international republic, then, existed neither in reality nor in the perception of American revolutionaries. Second, the authors do not challenge the Jeffersonian anti-British construction of the collapse of international law. For example, Britain established courts that awarded monetary compensations for confiscated goods while France seized, confiscated, and did not compensate. Madison nevertheless declared that England was the only power that did not respect "the right of neutrals to trade freely with every part of the countries at war," even though he knew France matched Britain's disregard for the commercial rights of neutrals.

These disagreements aside, Peter and Nicholas Onuf have written an exciting book. Their thesis is innovative, the discussion judicious, and the argument sophisticated. Their informed analysis elegantly moves between theory and policy. I look to this book to rejuvenate scholarly exchange in a field that has been in the doldrums for nearly three decades.

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Publishing and Readership in Revolutionary France and America: A Symposium at the Library of Congress, Sponsored by the Center for the Book and the European Division. Ed. by Carol Armbruster. (Westport: Greenwood, 1993. xviii, 215 pp. $45.00, ISBN 0-313-28793-7.)

The dozen essays of *Publishing and Readership in Revolutionary France and America* vary from reflective overviews to detailed treatments of particular topics. In addition to contributions by Daniel Roche, Larzer Ziff, Carla Hesse, Lynn Hunt, Michael Warner, and Henri-Jean Martin, well worth reading, six other essays break new ground. Three offer expansive views of important topics; three others detail new research on understudied topics.

In a most innovative essay, "The Politics of Writing and Reading in Eighteenth Century America," David Hall reinvigorates an earlier perspective on America's cultural terrain. He contends that a more "democratic world of print," rooted in cultural practices spawned by the Reformation, emerged considerably before the Revolution. Amid this "fundamental transformation," a struggle occurred between "two different systems of cultural production." One system, disenchanted with worlds of wonder and fascinated with science, embodied literacy as "learnedness," stemming from a cosmopolitan genteel culture of humanism and rationalism. Writing not for the marketplace, but rather for a self-defined network of gentlemen versed in the classics, the learned founded magazines and social libraries, shared manuscript texts, and contributed to a long-standing British-based republic of letters. Opponents such as Isaac Backus adhered to the supernatural and excoriated the "corrupt principles of 'rank' Arminianism." Valuing spiritual knowledge articulated through the "'humble language' God used in speaking to his children," evangelicals favored "one essential plot," a rein-

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