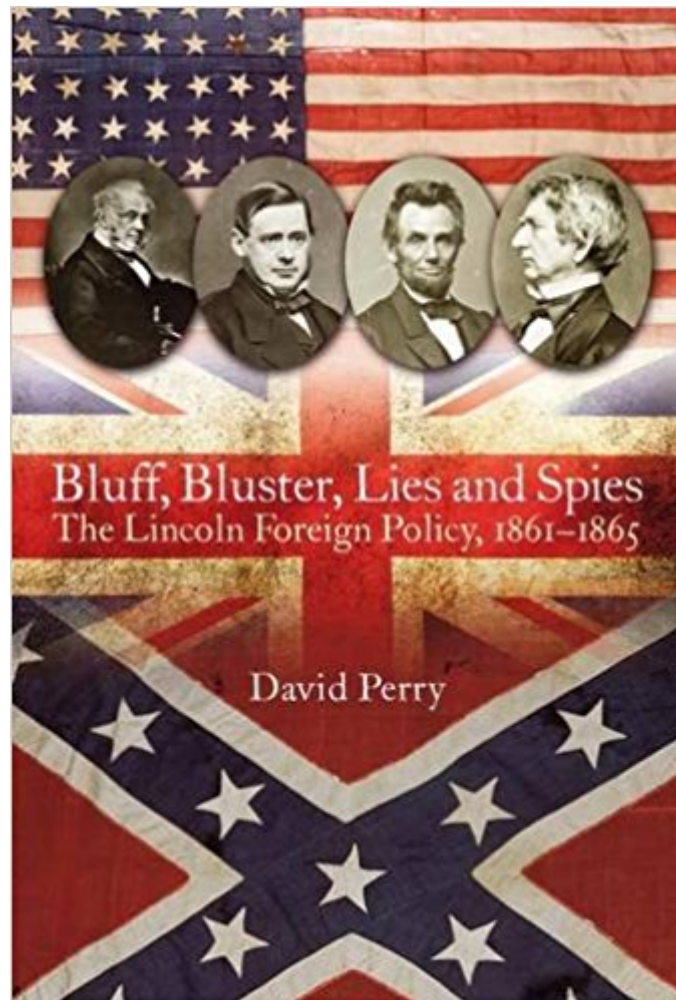




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# Bluff, Bluster, Lies And Spies: The Lincoln Foreign Policy, 1861-1865



## Synopsis

In the first years of the Civil War, Southern arms won spectacular victories on the battlefield; however, cooler heads in the Confederacy recognized the demographic and industrial weight pitted against them, and counted on British intervention to even those scales in order to deny the United States victory. *Bluff, Bluster Lies and Spies* is a wild ride through the mismanaged State Department of William Henry Seward in Washington, DC, to the more skillful work of Lords Palmerston, Russell and Lyons in the British Foreign Office. Fearful that Great Britain would recognize the Confederacy and provide the help that might have defeated the Union, the Lincoln administration was careful not to upset the greatest naval power on earth. At the same time, however, Great Britain needed to retain influence on American foreign policy, because her very safety and existence as an empire depended upon it. In face of the growth of the Union navy—particularly its new ironclad ships—she turned out to be a paper tiger who relied on bluff and bluster to preserve the illusion of international strength. Britain had its own continental rivals with whom to vie, and the question of whether a truncated United States or a reunited stronger one was most advantageous was a vital question. Ultimately Prime Minister Palmerston decided that Great Britain would be no match for a Union armada that could have seized British possessions throughout the Western Hemisphere, including Canada, and he frustrated any ambitions to break Lincoln's blockade of the Confederacy with Britannia. In addition to the naval arms race between Britain and France, Europe was covered with the spies, arms dealers, detectives and publicists who struggled to buy guns and to influence European opinion about the validity of either the Union or Confederate cause. This book describes in full how the Civil War in the New World was ultimately left to Southern battlefield prowess alone to determine, as the powers of the Old World declined to overtly intervene in the American question.

Nominated for the Gilder Lehrman Prize

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## Customer Reviews

Your book will be a most excellent and provide a very meaningful thesis on Lincoln's foreign relations. Congratulations! I look forward to reading [your book] and am willing to state to any publisher that it is a masterpiece. (Wayne C. Temple, Chief Deputy Director, Illinois State Archives, Springfield, Illinois.) gives a useful general overview of the developing relationship between the president and Seward, who early on at times acted as the de facto president but grew to be on the same page for the most part. Perry also explores other aspects of the U.S.-Great Britain interactions, as well as including information on Lincoln's and Seward's diplomatic relations with other world powers such as France, as well as some of the smaller entities that had an interest in American foreign policy. (York Daily Register) relates many stories of the naval arms race between Britain and France. Europe was filled with arms dealers, spies and detectives who were tasked with purchasing armaments and influencing European public opinion. But in the end, as he demonstrates, it was left to Confederate defeats or victories to determine the relationship between the old world and the new. Ultimately, the old world declined to intervene overtly in the American Civil War. This book is highly recommended for those interested in Civil War diplomacy or possible European intervention. (Civil War News) The writing is crisp, the personalities explained and the agendas understandable giving the reader an excellent understandable look at the subject. (James Durney, Author)

David Perry has been a professor of American History at the University of New Haven (now retired). In addition to several publications in Civil War journals and magazines, he was selected by National Public Radio in 2009 to do an interview on Abraham Lincoln in honor of the 200th anniversary of the President's birth. This was followed up in 2010 by a national broadcast from New York comparing the State Department work of William Henry Seward with that of Hillary Rodham Clinton. He has also shared mutual assistance with Pulitzer Prize winner David Herbert Donald, whose Lincoln biography has become a standard.

History's focus during war is on battles and leaders with domestic politics being a distant

second. During the Civil War, with few exceptions, international politics is not considered. However, international politics occupied much of the Lincoln administration's time causing more than a few sleepless nights. In 1860, America is an emerging nation, slowly building a manufacturing economy but dependent on exporting raw materials. Militarily, America's small army and navy is not something established nations worry about. Great Britain is the world power. The largest manufacturing economy in existence back by an empire that spans the globe, a small well trained army and a huge navy enforce the Queen's will. France, dreams of Napoleon but lives in England's shadow. Russia, Prussia have internal problems but are powerful nations. This is a colonial world, ruled from Europe and populated with monarchs, some with real power. America is the new kid, somewhat pushy with ideas many older kids don't like. The Civil War presents Europe with some intriguing choices. For Great Britain, having two or more nations in America could be a good thing, more so if one is a semi-dependent client state. France dreams of an empire and seizes a chance establish one in Mexico. All of Europe sells war materials to both sides as quickly as possible. This book looks at how international politics play out during the Civil War as a combination of bluff, bluster, lies and spies. The author takes the time to establish the world as it was because this causes major considerations for all parties. From this foundation, we follow the story year by year, to the extent possible. There are many side shows some important enough to linger over and these need to be ended prior to moving on. Seward and Lincoln dominate American policy, while Davis and Benjamin shift with the times, trying to establish a recognized government. Charles Adams is an unrecognized hero for his work in London, well detailed in the book. The writing is crisp, the personalities explained and the agendas understandable giving the reader an excellent understandable look at the subject. This is a history with endnotes, glossary, bibliography, appendices and index.

The diplomacy of the civil war is an overlooked period of history. Most history books barely mention the subject, mentioning that there were efforts to keep Britain and France out of (or in, depending on what side) the war, but not much else. Kudos to David Perry for examining and attempting to shine some light on this aspect of the Civil War. === The Good Stuff ===\* No one would ever accuse Perry of not knowing his subject matter. He has evidently conducted a great deal of research on the diplomacy of the era, both on the side of the Union and the Confederates, and has some excellent insights into the motivations, personalities and ambitions of the major players. Probably the most examined character is Secretary of State William Seward, and a good portion of the book centers around him. But there is excellent information on most of the other major characters on both sides,

as well as European diplomats.\* Perry is honest about the level of truth in his analysis. There are precious few official journals of government actions during the war, especially on the Confederate side. Historians are forced to rely on the accounts of other players, many of whom have their own axes to grind. Still, the author seems to have done a reasonable job of teasing out the truth or at least as good an approximation of it as possible.\* The book has several points in it that should have been obvious, but which I had never thought before. For example, there was never an organized foreign policy or strategy among the CSA, simply because the central government was so weak. By definition, Jefferson Davis and his advisors had about as much authority to make treaties and conduct foreign negotiations as any of the CSA member states. Thus, while Seward and the Union could play power-politics with Britain, France and Russia, the CSA was never really in the game.=== The Not-So-Good Stuff===\* This book was very frustrating to read. The text was loaded with good information, analysis and insights, but the book desperately needed a good editing. The grammar and writing style were fine, but there was not a lot of organization. Topics could shift by paragraph, information and language were repeated countless times, and the text never really headed in one direction long enough to make a convincing point.\* Obviously, Perry expects the reader to do a bit of his own work in sorting through the information and teasing out the truth. Unfortunately, the book is not complete enough to really do that (and it would probably take 3000 pages). As a trivial example, the book lists the number of dispatches received by Seward from various European capitals during 1863. There were 1000 dispatches from London, and 1240 from Paris. But I had no idea what to do with that number. Are three dispatches a day a big number in 1863?=== Summary ===If you are a real civil-war history buff, there is enough information in this book to keep you interested. It is the sort of book that you should read, then throw a few logs on the fire and ponder for a couple hours. However, if you are more of a casual history fan, I believe that the disorganized nature of the text will overpower your determination to slog through the book.=== Disclaimer ===I was able to read an advance copy through the courtesy of the publisher and NetGalley

This treatise is an academic review of foreign policy during Lincoln's period. While very interesting it does not read like a novel. The success of all of the major characters is reviewed and historical sources critiqued.

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