

Foreign Policy, the Old Way

By JOSEF JOFFE

When the cruise missiles started homing in on Baghdad, they put paid to a debate almost as old as the American republic. Why go to war at all? Why not do it on the cheap by inflicting economic punishment—embargoes and blockades—on Saddam Hussein? "Give sanctions a chance" was the battle cry, and peaceable coercion was the point.

Nor was this a new idea. "To conquer without war," reported the French diplomat Turreau in 1805, was "the first fact" of American diplomacy, and that caustic verdict represents the main theme of a splendid new book on Jefferson's foreign policy by Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, "Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson" (Oxford University Press, 360 pages, \$24.95). Jefferson, the authors state at the outset, wanted America to have it both ways—to "enjoy the fruits of power without falling victim to the normal consequences of its exercise."

To chastise the enemy without having to clobber him—that tradition has retained a remarkable hold on the American imagination. Listen to Jefferson, as Europe went to war against revolutionary France, urging Congress to impose an embargo on the "nations committing this aggression" until "full satisfaction" was made. "This would work well in many ways, safely in all, and introduce between nations another umpire than arms."

Here was the core of the "New Diplomacy," the foreign-policy counterpart of building a "shining city on the hill" at home. An exemplar of Enlightenment virtue, the young republic also would teach the world the new ways of statecraft "by showing that nations may be brought to do justice by appeals to their interests" rather than to the *ultima ratio* of force.

Above all, America would not obey "reason of state," that cynical doctrine that recognized no higher law than sheer necessity, and no higher interest than the safety and well-being of the state. And why? Reason of state was the bane of liberty, so Jefferson argued, a sheer pretense camouflaging the murderous follies of princes and potentates. But the republic stood for something new under the sun, for "freedom and self-government," as Jefferson put it. Inevitably, such a lofty purpose would be corrupted by *Realpolitik* and its casual, callous adjunct, which is war. War, a Jeffersonian like Madison argued, "is the true nurse of executive aggrandizement." War meant taxes, debts and standing armies—hence the concentration of power at the expense of liberty and democracy.

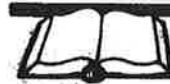
Nevertheless, whether governed by princes or presidents, states *do* have egoistical interests, and they must ensure security in a world that knows neither judge nor enforcer. How then did Jefferson propose to square the circle without recourse to force?

Ironically, the answer was territorial expansion—a strategy hardly alien to the

ians. "Expansion," argue Messrs. Tucker and Hendrickson, "would remove the presence of dangerous neighbors, hence the prospect of wars that must result in the imposition of unbearable burdens on society." As an expansionist, Jefferson put to shame the likes of Louis XIV and Wilhelm II—except that he managed to acquire almost half a continent by dint of the Louisiana Purchase and without shedding a single drop of blood.

America was not so much different as lucky, and that has left an indelible imprint on the nation's outlook. The high-minded Mr. Jefferson deftly maneuvered between the great powers, pitting one against the other, blustering and bluffing—and, in the end, "conquering without war" vast tracts of real estate from France and Spain. "Louisiana," the authors conclude, "had shown that there was no need to arm and to make sacrifices when vital interests are at stake."

Yet Jefferson was not so lucky when he came up against the British. "Peaceable



Bookshelf

"Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson"
By Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson

coercion" turned into the great disaster of his second administration, setting the stage for America's first defeat, in the War of 1812. Locked in mortal combat with Napoleon, Britain responded to France's Continental System (an embargo on British goods) with a counterblockade. That added commercial injury (American ships bound for Europe would have to dock in Britain first and pay hefty duties) to the continuing insult of the impressment of American sailors.

Hence the Great American Dilemma that has vexed the nation ever since: the clash between great ends and limited means. Jefferson could have negotiated a sloppy compromise with London—but that flew in the face of pride and reputation. Or he could have used force—but that would have required a serious blue-water navy while poisoning American democracy with the bane of war. Instead, Jefferson chose "peaceable coercion"—"sanctions" in modern parlance. Hoping to bring Britain to its knees by economic denial, Jefferson imposed an embargo on all seaborne trade. That quixotic move had little impact on the belligerents but wreaked havoc on an export-dependent American economy.

The moral of the story as drawn by the authors has an instructive contemporary ring: "Taken to escape the alternatives of national humiliation or war, [the embargo] led first to humiliation and ultimately to war" in 1812.

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Express

derconsumers. Ms. Owades believes she's still battling the Puritan ethic. "It's not only that we're puritanical and feel that we don't deserve flowers on a regular basis, I also think that we are quite intimidated by flowers." However, this may be changing thanks to the puritanical American capacity for guilt. A spring 1990 Gallup Poll, "Americans on Gift Giving," found that for 51% of Americans "when feeling guilty, flowers and plants are the likely gift." Ms. Owades says of subscribers to Calyx & Corolla's flowers by the year, half-year and quarter: "That's for someone who either loves flowers or else it's a gift from someone who feels really guilty about what he did." And in fact C&C offers a sort of rescue service for the guilty, volunteering on the order form "if you forget or have waited until the last minute . . . call us, we will do whatever we can to rescue you." And then the Calyx & Corolla Plant Doctor is on call to help survivors baby their plants and flowers. "People call back and say "It works! My gardenia is thriving!" Ms. Owades notes. "They're so happy they want to send him things. They're all trying to bake him chocolate cakes. We've had to limit it. They can send recipes." Others simply write: "If only your catalog had existed five years ago, my wife wouldn't have left me!" They send color snapshots of week-old bouquets *still fresh*. "I'm writing to thank you for giving me 'points' with my mother-in-law," one California woman wrote. "I'd long been given to understand that she prefers flowers to remain in gardens, I purposely avoided sending out bouquets." But the Pink Fringed Carnations bouquet changed everything.

Last Feb. 14 an irate Philadelphian wrote in the accusative: "Dear Calyx & Corolla: You've ruined my love life! How could you not have shipped the Valentine's Day tulips to my girlfriend?!" An apology followed two days later: "I guess 'polite thank you's' are no longer a way of life. But at least I am no longer in the doghouse."

In January Ms. Owades sent her flower catalog to war, addressing a special message to American servicemen and women in the Persian Gulf: "As Valentine's Day approaches, we would like to help you remember those that you love back home. Although the distance to your loved ones may be great, you can surprise them by sending them fresh, beautiful flowers this Valentine's Day." Wishing them all home soon, she asked, "Please identify yourself as a part of Operation Desert Storm in order to receive your discount." 20%.

On Jan. 16, the day the U.S. began bombing, Calyx & Corolla received a fax from a soldier on duty in Saudi Arabia. He requested that "Love" cards and bouquets be dispatched to five valentines in five different towns in three states: Lori, Melissa, Dee, Beth and Georgeanne. Once again Calyx & Corolla gave new meaning to the

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