

## **Option 2**

# **DEFEND RIGHTS AND HONOR THROUGH LIMITED MARITIME WAR**

British provocations necessitate action. Let us protect our ocean-going trade and our sailors. We must stop Britain's violations of our rights on the high seas. Turn loose our skillful sailors and new navy and strike a blow for what is right.

Britain's interference with American shipping, its impressment of American sailors, and its incitement of the Indians on America's western frontier require a serious response. The time for talk is over. America's consistent attempts to use diplomatic channels and economic coercion to rectify the situation have fallen on deaf ears. Britain does not give us the respect that we deserve. As we learned during the American Revolution, Great Britain understands only force. It is time to send a clear message.

The use of force, however, should be limited to the American navy and authorized privateers. Do we seriously believe that we can beat the mighty armies Britain has mustered to contain Napoleon? Do we dare risk the hardship of foreign soldiers on our soils? The majority of our grievances revolve around British naval actions. Since the British are most vulnerable on the high seas, the American response should focus on this theater.

As we learned during the state of war with France, America can wring the necessary concessions from a European power without a prolonged and costly ground war. The use of American naval vessels as well as privateers authorized by letters of marque will enable America to strike at the lifelines of the British war effort. As an island nation engaged in a life and death struggle with a continental power, the British are extremely vulnerable to interference with their shipping. Their soldiers abroad rely on receiving supplies carried by ships. Their civilians at home depend on the free flow of commerce upon the high seas. Interfering with its trade will be the quickest way to get our antagonist's attention.

In addition, a naval conflict allows America to avoid the devastation that is associated with a ground war. Why should we risk our cities? Our citizens can be spared the trauma of war while sailors exchange salvos on the high seas. Civilians will also be spared the costs of sustaining the large army necessary for ground war operations against the British. With the removal of the whiskey tax early on in Jefferson's first administration, all direct taxes imposed by the federal government were abolished. Let us not compound the problems caused by the British by reinstating taxes that strike at the heart of every American's right to spend his income as he sees fit.

The mighty British army has too much experience for us to defeat it on land. Let us steer clear of the expansionist dreams of Mr. Clay and his compatriots. We must be wise in how we choose to defend ourselves.

The time to act is now. The place to act is on the high seas. Interference with America's neutral trading rights and impressment of our sailors must be stopped by an aggressive campaign at sea. A limited maritime war is our best option. Rights and honor are defended without the costs and bloodshed associated with an unlimited war.

## FROM THE RECORD

*Chauncey Goodrich, Senator from Connecticut:*

"Our course is to use our endeavours to free our commerce from the fangs of the Law, to fortify our most prominent harbors, to equip and man our navy—to provide a means of defence—and there to pause."

*John Jacob Astor, New York Merchant:*

"...we are full of speculation and conjecture as to the measures to be next adopted by government. Some say war with England and other with France and England while some believe that all restriction on commerce will be taking off [sic] and that our merchant vessels be permitted to arm. This I believe will meet the more general approbation."

*Samuel Mitchell, Congressman from New York:*

"An embargo ought to be accompanied with another - with letters of marque and reprisal. We ought to let the cannon accompany the flag. The voice of the cannon ought to speak the voice of the nation, under the stripes of the nation."

*James Monroe, Secretary of State:*

"I am convinced that it is very important to attempt, at present, the maritime war only."

*James A. Bayard, Senator from Delaware in a letter to his son:*

"The Western and Southern Gentlemen are alarmed by a point very seriously insisted upon by the northern—that in case Canada be conquered, that it shall be divided into States and inalienably incorporated into the Union. You will see the great and permanent weight which such an event would throw into the northern scale. No proposition could have been more frightful to the southern men, and it seems they had never thought of what they were to do with Canada before, in case they conquered the country, but they prefer that Canada should remain a British Province rather than become States of America. The consequence has been that they now begin to talk of maritime war, and of the ocean being the only place where G. Britain is tangible. What I am now telling you is not an affair generally or publicly spoken of. It has existed but a short time and passes as yet in whispers and a semi-confidential way. I am inclined to think it true and likely to produce important results."

*Pennsylvania Senator Andrew Gregg Resolution to House Declaration of War:*

"Resolved, That the bill, entitled 'An act declaring war between Great Britain and her dependencies, and the United States and their Territories,' be recommended to the committee to whom was committed the Message of the President, of the 1st instant, with instructions to modify and amend the same, in such manner that the President of the United States shall have power to authorize the public armed ships and vessels of the United States to make reprisals upon the public and private ships and vessels, goods, and merchandise, belonging to the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or to the subjects thereof; and also to grant letters of marque and reprisal, under suitable regulations, to be provided in the bill, to private armed ships and vessels to make like reprisals."

*U.S. Navy Commodore Stephen Decatur:*

"The plan which appears to me to be the best calculated for our little navy...would be to send them out with as large a supply of provisions as they can carry, distant from our coast and singly, or not more than two frigates in company, without giving them any specific instructions as to place of cruising, but to rely on the enterprise of the officers."

*Virginia Senator William Branch Giles, Resolution to the House Declaration of War:*

"Resolved, That the bill, entitled 'An act declaring war between Great Britain and her dependencies, and the United States and their territories,' be recommended to the committee to whom was committed the message of the President of the United States of the 1st instant, with instructions to modify and amend the bill, in such manner as to authorize the President of the United States to instruct the commanders of all ships of war belonging to the United States to recapture any vessel thereof bound to any port or place prohibited to such vessel by the British orders in council, dated the—day—which may have been previously captured by any British armed vessel; and, also, to capture any British armed vessel which shall resist such recapture, or be found hovering on the coasts of the United States for the purpose of interrupting their lawful commerce, and to bring the same into any port of the United States for adjudication

and condemnation.

And, further, to instruct the commanders of all ships of war belonging to the United States, to recapture any vessel of the United States navigating the ocean conformably to the laws of nations, which may have been previously captured by any French armed vessel; and also to capture any such French armed capturing vessel, and, in like manner, to bring in the same for adjudication and condemnation.

And to authorize the President of the United States to cause letters of marque and general reprisal upon the public and private ships and vessels, goods, and merchandise, belonging to the crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or to the subjects thereof: and, also, upon the public and private ships and vessels, goods, and merchandise, belonging to the crown of France, or to the subjects thereof."

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## **BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OPTION 2**

- 1 The United States should have the right to trade with any nation as it sees fit.
2. Neutral nations should not be made to suffer because the major powers have engaged in the folly of war.
3. Great Britain did not respond to our requests during the colonial period until we defeated them on the battlefield. They will not concede anything except by force. However, the battlefield today is the high seas.

## **SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 2**

- 1: A declaration of unlimited war is too risky for the United States. The army of the United States is small and inexperienced. Britain has been battling the mighty armies of Napoleon. We would be foolhardy to think we could defeat the experienced army of Britain.
2. Our sailors are skilled and our merchant ships numerous. We should play to our strengths. We should arm our merchant ships and provide them with letters of marque so that they can strike out at British interests. The use of force against British ships will be the quickest and in the long run most successful way to get them to respect our rights.
3. There is no advantage to be gained from adding Canadian territory to our country. This will only tip the delicate political balance in favor of the northern states.