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### **Option 3**

## **DELAY AN ARMED CONFLICT UNTIL PREPARED**

British injustices are severe. We must prepare for war. But we are not yet ready to strike against such a powerful nation's army and navy. We need time to prepare.

Unquestionably Great Britain has gone too far. It must revise its current practices. Its consistent interference with American shipping, impressment of American sailors, and incitement of the Native Americans on American borders is cause for great concern. America must respond if its rights and honor are to be preserved.

However, now is not the time for us to respond with armed aggression. Neither our navy nor our army is prepared to resist one of the world's greatest powers. After years of neglect under the Jefferson and Madison administrations, how can our armed forces resist the victors at Trafalgar and the battle-tested soldiers of the Duke of Wellington? At this time, discretion is the better part of valor. America must proceed prudently or risk losing all it has worked so hard to gain over the past several decades.

If the United States delays a declaration of war until the fall, we can gain almost six months and perhaps even more time to prepare for war against the British. And prepare we must! Currently, our armed forces, weakened through years of inactivity and budget cuts, are in no condition for a war. Our navy lacks the necessary vessels to battle Britain's larger ships and our army is small and unprepared. What warrior begins a conflict without the ability to inflict pain and harm on the enemy? Great Britain has only become stronger as a result of the continuous warfare with France. To expose this nation to devastating attacks by the British without the power to retaliate in kind or even the ability to defend ourselves seems to place honor and rights before common sense.

How shall we buy the time we need? On April 1, 1812, Congress instated a ninety-day embargo against Great Britain. This embargo hits Great Britain where it hurts with none of the negative risks associated with waging a war for which we are unprepared. We can extend this embargo until November and let it have its effect before launching an armed crusade against Great Britain. By November the bad weather in the Atlantic will work to our advantage, serving as a shield against British naval incursions. This will give us additional time for preparation. We can use this time to strengthen and further prepare our forces and seaports. Stalling in this way is not a sign of weakness or indecision. Rather, it demonstrates an intelligent use of all our advantages as we prepare for battle against a powerful enemy.

Although justified in our anger, now is not the time to engage the British in a military conflict. By delaying a declaration of war, we can allow economic warfare to have its effect, put off a conflict until the natural blockade of poor weather can provide us with a military advantage, and gain valuable time to prepare for a military conflict.

## FROM THE RECORD

*Thomas Sammons, Congressman from New York:*

"[We] would not wish to engage in a war unless we were attacked on our own territories or brought on by our enemies, before we are prepared with an army and would for the present remove all restrictive measures for emports and exports."

*Philadelphia resident Manuel Eyre to Congressman Roberts:*

"Would it not be best to procrastinate the time of making war until we are better prepared to strike the first blow with effect—late in the fall and winter British Ships of war cannot encounter the tempestuous weather on our coasts without almost inevitable destruction—by that time the enlistments of our new army will have greatly progressed & and our sea ports better fortified?"

*Obadiah German, Senator from New York:*

"...if we were even in a state of preparation, and possessed the means of insuring a favorable issue, it would be bad policy for this country; at the present time, to enter into war with Great Britain, although perhaps many weighty reasons might be adduced in support of such argument. I will first call the attention of the Senate to the ability and strength of the nation we are about, by this bill, to declare war against. Gentlemen ought to recollect, that Great Britain has almost constantly engaged in war for twenty years past against one of the most powerful nations that ever existed; and for a considerable part of that time, the energies of her enemy have been directed by war's favorite genius—NAPOLEON, who has succeeded in uniting nearly the whole force of the Continent of Europe against her; against that very nation which we are about to assail; and what has been the effect? Is Great Britain less powerful now, than she was twenty years ago? No, sir, this constant warfare has increased her powers instead of diminishing them. Great Britain is a wily, active nation. She has been trained to war. She will not measure her steps and movements by ours; if we are not prepared to defend our seaports, she will not wait until we are; and should she get possession of New Orleans, it will cost much blood and treasure to dislodge her. I do not, Mr. President, draw all these discouraging pictures, or relate these lamentable facts, because I would shrink from the conflict or terrors

of war, for the defence of the rights of my injured country, sooner than any gentleman of this Senate, nor with a wish that all these evils may be realized; my object is to avert them from my country. I do it, sir, to check the precipitate step of plunging my country prematurely into a war, without any of the means of making the war terrible to our enemy; and with the certainty that it will be terrible to ourselves, or at least to our merchants, our seaports, and cities. Yes, sir; the millions that your merchants will lose in consequence of this rash, this premature step, will strike them with terror and dismay from New Orleans to Maine. A country well prepared to meet war will scarcely find war necessary, but if it cannot be avoided, preparation does away half its terrors. And if gentlemen will show me an army of twenty-five thousand men, well formed, disciplined, and supplied, at the place of the grand rendezvous near Albany, give us a reasonable increase of our navy, and will place both the great belligerents on equal footing, (as I consider them equal trespassers on our rights,) then, I say, if Great Britain will not do us justice, I will vote at the proper time a declaration of war against her; and I will use my utmost exertions to make the war terrible to her, but to declare war without the means of making the enemy feel its horrors, and at a time when it must produce evil and terrors only to ourselves, strikes me with astonishment."

*James A. Bayard, Senator from Delaware:*

"It is not enough that we have cause for war; we must see that we are prepared, and in a condition to make war. You do not go to war for the benefit of your enemy, but your own advantage; not to give proofs of a vain and heedless courage, but to assert your rights and redress your wrongs. If you commence hostilities before you are prepared to strike a blow, and while your cities, your territory, and your property on the ocean, are exposed to the mercy of a Government possessing vast resources of war, what can you expect but to add new distresses, defeat, and disgrace to the wrongs of which you complain? It is a strange motive for war—a wish to gratify the rapacity, to swell the triumphs, and to increase the insolence of the enemy. No time has existed for years past when we had less cause to complain of the conduct of Great Britain. Her vessels of war had all been withdrawn

from our coast, as he presumed, in order to avoid collisions and hostility. If the war be suspended till November, the government and the people will both be better prepared to sustain it. Postpone the war, and we will submit to the embargo till November. This will furnish time for the return of your ships and seamen. Are you provided with means to annoy the enemy, or to defend yourselves? Have you an army or navy which can make any impression? Are your exposed towns fortified and garrisoned? Was any nation ever less prepared for war? It would require the whole military force that you now possess to constitute an adequate defence for New Orleans, New York, and Newport. During the winter months you will be defended by the elements. Postpone the war till November, and we shall not have to dread an enemy on our coast till April. In the mean time, go on with your recruiting, fill up, discipline, and

train an army. Take the stations, if you please, which will enable you to open an early campaign. Your trade will all have time to return before hostilities commence, and having all your ships and seamen at home, you may be prepared to put forth all your strength upon the ocean on the opening of the ensuing Spring. Shall we, by an untimely precipitancy, yielding to a fretful impatience of delay, throw our wealth into the hands of the enemy, and feed that very rapacity which it is our object to subdue or to punish? We can lose nothing by delay; much will be certainly saved; and at a moment pregnant with great events, it was most evidently our true policy to temporize. You give up no right, yield no pretension, and profit by every day in rendering the condition of the country more secure, and its attitude more formidable. The just appreciation of time is among the highest points of political sagacity."

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### **BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OPTION 3**

1. The United States may not be prepared for war now, but we must get prepared or risk losing our rights as a free and independent nation.
2. Engaging in unlimited war with Great Britain at this time threatens the safety of our coastal towns and cities. There is no cowardice in waiting until we are prepared.

### **SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS FOR OPTION 3**

1. The U.S. army and navy are much smaller and weaker than Great Britain's. The United States has few experienced troops and naval commanders, while Britain has been at war with France for a generation. Engaging in unlimited war with Great Britain at this time threatens the safety of our coastal towns and cities and puts our merchant ships in increased danger. Delay will allow time to fortify coastal towns and cities and time for U.S. merchant ships to find the safety of their ports.
2. We have successfully contained Indian aggression on the frontier at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Most of our troops are currently engaged on the frontier and we would be foolish to relocate them now to protect our coastline. If we are going to take on battle with the British, we will need time to prepare more troops.
3. By relying on the embargo as our first defense and delaying a declaration of war until November, we will be able buy time, prepare for war, and benefit from the seasonal advantage provided by the bad weather that begins in the Atlantic at that time. This weather will prevent Britain from bringing its forces to our shores until next spring. And this, in turn, will give us additional time to prepare our forces.