



# 3 Problems with Foreign Powers

## TERMS & NAMES

impressment  
Embargo Act  
of 1807  
Tecumseh  
War Hawk

### MAIN IDEA

Jefferson tried to avoid involvement in the problems of other nations.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

British interference with the affairs of the United States led to the War of 1812.

## ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

In 1804, U.S. Navy Lieutenant Stephen Decatur was on a daring mission overseas. The United States was at war with Tripoli, a state on the North African coast. The war, which began in 1801, was the result of repeated attacks on American merchant ships by African pirates. Decatur's mission was to destroy the U.S. warship *Philadelphia*—which had been captured by Tripoli—so that it could not be used by the enemy.

Decatur bravely sailed into Tripoli's harbor and set fire to the *Philadelphia*. He then managed to escape under enemy fire with only one man wounded. Decatur later issued this rallying cry for all Americans.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Our country! In her [relationships] with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong.

Stephen Decatur, 1816

Decatur's attack was one of the most celebrated events of the war, which ended in 1805. The conflict showed how hard it was for the United States to stay out of foreign affairs while its citizens participated so heavily in overseas trade. In this section, you will learn how President Jefferson handled problems with other nations.

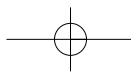
## Jefferson's Foreign Policy

When Thomas Jefferson took office in 1801, he expected to concentrate on domestic concerns. In his inaugural address, he happily noted that America was “kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc [wars] of one quarter of the globe.” Jefferson advised the United States to seek the friendship of all nations, but to enter into “entangling alliances with none.”

However, the president's desire to keep the United States separated from other nations and their problems was doomed to fail. For one thing, American merchants were busily engaged in trade all over the world. For



Stephen Decatur struggles in hand-to-hand combat with African pirates.



### Reading History

#### A. Analyzing

**Causes** Why was it hard for the United States to avoid other nations' problems?

another, the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition were about to open the country to westward expansion. Expansion would bring Americans into closer contact with people from other nations who had already established settlements in the West.

Finally, the United States had little control over the actions of foreign nations—as North African interference with U.S. shipping had shown. Staying out of the ongoing conflict between France and England would be just as difficult.

## Problems with France and England

For a long time, the United States managed not to get involved in the European wars that followed the French Revolution. At times, the nation even benefited from the conflict. Busy with affairs in Europe, France sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States. And American shippers eagerly took over the trade interrupted by the war.

By 1805, however, the British began to clamp down on U.S. shipping. They did not want Americans to provide their enemies with food and supplies. After the United States threatened to take action, the British decided to set up a partial blockade. This would only allow some American ships to bring provisions to Europe.

This partial blockade angered France, which enacted its own laws to control foreign shipping. These changes put American merchants in a difficult position. If they obeyed the British rules, their ships could be seized by the French. If they obeyed the French rules, their ships could be seized by the British.

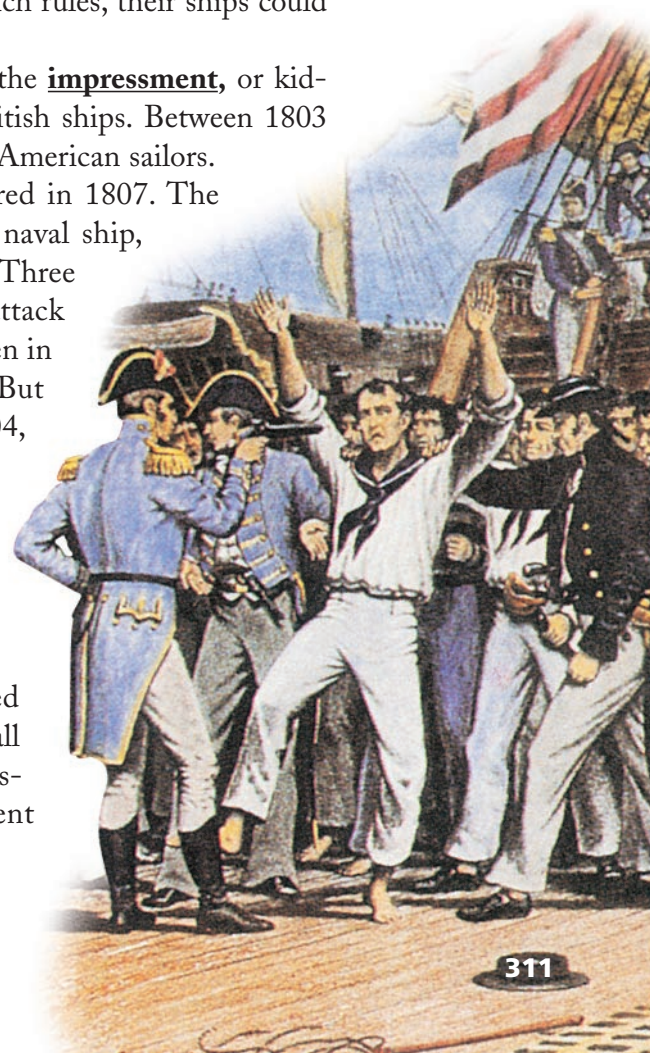
Britain also interfered with U.S. trade by the **impressment**, or kidnapping, of American sailors to work on British ships. Between 1803 and 1812, the British impressed about 6,000 American sailors.

One of the most famous incidents occurred in 1807. The British ship *Leopard* attacked an American naval ship, the *Chesapeake*, off the coast of Virginia. Three Americans lost their lives in the battle. The attack aroused widespread anger. Had Congress been in session, America might have declared war. But Jefferson, who had been re-elected in 1804, decided against it. One critic, furious at the president's caution, called Jefferson a “dish of skim milk curdling at the head of our nation.”

## Trade as a Weapon

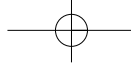
Instead of declaring war, Jefferson asked Congress to pass legislation that would stop all foreign trade. “Peaceable coercion,” as the president described his policy, would prevent further bloodshed.

British officers seize an American sailor at gunpoint.



### Vocabulary

**coercion:** the practice of forcing someone to act in a certain way by use of pressure or threats



In December, Congress passed the **Embargo Act of 1807**. Now American ships were no longer allowed to sail to foreign ports. The act also closed American ports to British ships.

Jefferson's policy was a disaster. It was more harmful to the United States than to the British and French. American farmers and merchants were especially hard hit. Southern and Western farmers, for example, lost important markets for their grain, cotton, and tobacco. Shippers lost income, and many chose to violate the embargo by making false claims about where they were going. One New Englander said the embargo was like "cutting one's throat to cure the nosebleed."

The embargo became a major issue in the election of 1808. Jefferson's old friend James Madison won the election. By the time he took office, Congress had already repealed the embargo.

Madison's solution to the problem was a law that allowed merchants to trade with any country except France and Britain. Trade with these countries would start again when they agreed to respect U.S. ships. But this law proved no more effective than the embargo.

### ReadingHistory

**B. Recognizing Effects** What were the results of the Embargo Act?

The Shawnee chief Tecumseh led Native American resistance to white rule in the Ohio River Valley.



## Tecumseh and Native American Unity

British interference with American shipping and impressment of U.S. citizens made Americans furious. They also were angered by Britain's actions in the Northwest. Many settlers believed that the British were stirring up Native American resistance to frontier settlements.

Since the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 (see page 283), Native Americans continued to lose their land. Thousands of white settlers had swarmed into Ohio and then into Indiana.

**Tecumseh**, a Shawnee chief, vowed to stop the loss of Native American land. He believed that the reason Native Americans continued to lose their land was because they were separated into many different tribes. He concluded that Native Americans had to do what white Americans had done: unite. Events in 1809 proved him right.

That September, William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, signed the Treaty of Fort Wayne with chiefs of the Miami, Delaware, and Potawatomi tribes. They agreed to sell over three million acres of land. But Tecumseh declared the treaty meaningless.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

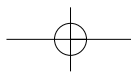
[Whites] have taken upon themselves to say this [land] belongs to the Miamis, this to the Delawares and so on. But the Great Spirit intended [Native American land] to be the common property of all the tribes, [and it cannot] be sold without the consent of all.

**Tecumseh**, quoted in *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*

After the Treaty of Fort Wayne, many Native Americans began to answer Tecumseh's call for unity. But his efforts ultimately failed. In November 1811, while Tecumseh was away recruiting tribes for his alliance, the Shawnee were defeated by Harrison's forces at the Battle of

### ReadingHistory

**C. Forming Opinions** Why did Tecumseh declare the Treaty of Fort Wayne meaningless?



Tippecanoe. It was a severe setback for Tecumseh's movement.

### War Hawks

After the battle of Tippecanoe, Tecumseh and his warriors found a warm welcome with the British in Canada. At that point, the Native Americans and the British became allies. Tecumseh's welcome in Canada raised even higher the anti-British feelings in the West.

Leaders such as Congressman Henry Clay of Kentucky angrily demanded war against Britain. Westerners who called for war were known as **War Hawks**. They wanted British aid to Native Americans stopped, and they wanted the British out of Canada.


Conquering Canada would open up a vast new empire for Americans.

Other Americans sought war because of the British violations of American rights at sea. Future president Andrew Jackson said hostilities were necessary "for the protection of our maritime citizens impressed on board British ships of war," and to "open a market for the productions of our soil."


Urged on by Jackson and the War Hawks, Congress declared war on Britain on June 18, 1812. In the next section, you will read about the second—and final—war between the United States and Great Britain.

### Causes of the War of 1812


**Impressment of U.S. Citizens**




**Interference with American shipping**



**British support of Native-American resistance**





**WAR**

**SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts**

*Which cause of the War of 1812 was not related to activities on the sea?*

#### Vocabulary

**hawk:** a person who favors the use of military force to carry out foreign policy

### Section 3 Assessment

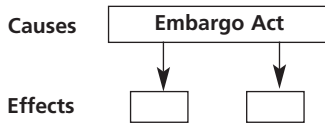
#### 1. Terms & Names

**Explain the significance of:**

- impressment
- Embargo Act of 1807
- Tecumseh
- War Hawk

#### 2. Taking Notes

Use a chart like the one below to record the effects of Jefferson's Embargo Act.



Why didn't the act work?

#### 3. Main Ideas

- a. How did the British and French interfere with American shipping?
- b. How did Jefferson respond to the interference?
- c. Why did the War Hawks favor war?

#### 4. Critical Thinking

##### Analyzing Points of View

Why did Tecumseh think it was important for Native Americans to unite?

##### THINK ABOUT

- what he learned about white men
- what Native Americans would lose if they did not act together

#### ACTIVITY OPTIONS

- ART
- SPEECH

Do research on the Battle of Tippecanoe. Draw a **comic strip story** of the battle or hold a **press conference** to describe the battle's outcome.