

Kaplan, Lawrence S. *Thomas Jefferson, Westward the Course of Empire* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999); xvii + 198pp.; ISBN: 0-8420-2630-4; \$17.95 paperback.

Thomas Jefferson constantly presents historians with seeming inconsistencies and contradictions. It leads many to regard him as a hypocrite. Certainly the most glaring of these inconsistencies was his position on slavery. The same man who condemned King George III in the Declaration of Independence for having allowed slavery in his colonies, an item

which was dropped by the Continental Congress before the document was approved, was himself a slaveholder. This was not the only issue where he showed apparent inconsistency. The author makes prominent note of this record of inconsistency from the very start, an inconsistency which many also find when examining Jefferson's statesmanship and foreign policy. On the opening page of *Thomas Jefferson, Westward the Course of Empire*, Lawrence S. Kaplan recites a list of Jefferson's foreign policies where he seems to contradict his own principles. But he then goes on to say that the book will be an attempt to create 'coherence' in Jefferson's foreign policy. The center of gravity which connects apparently disparate and conflicting policies and positions is the question of the success of the United States. In the end, whatever he might have otherwise philosophized, Jefferson practiced a *realpolitik* whose linchpin was the preservation and expansion of the United States.

This book is part of series called *Biographies in American Foreign Policy*. Through the biographies of important historical figures, it attempts to illuminate the development of American foreign policy. The texts are intended primarily for use at undergraduate and graduate levels of study. But it is also hoped that the volumes in the series will attract a broad general audience as well an academic one.

Jefferson's life is presented in a fairly chronological manner. The opening chapter concentrates on Jefferson's intellectual and political development up until the Declaration of Independence. Kaplan does a reasonably good job of reciting the various influences on Jefferson. He firmly identifies Jefferson, for example, as an Enlightenment man. Although he was certainly influenced by many of the major English Enlightenment figures – Locke, Sidney, Coke and Bolingbroke – he was also open to a diverse group of thinkers which included everyone from Aristotle and Cicero to Lord Kames, and Montesquieu. It was an eclectic mix and Jefferson felt free to help himself where he wished in formulating his own personal political outlook. All of these sources coalesced into a system of natural law that would come to serve as the underpinning of his justification to a 'candid world' of American independence. Beginning with attacks on parliamentary abuses, with the hope of conciliation with England, Jefferson then switched to a direct assault on the authority of the Crown and finally to the call for independence. With this step we see the beginnings of his long relationship with France, as he recognized the necessity of French support to counter-balance British power.

Perhaps it was diplomatic naïveté, or perhaps he was just caught up in the excitement of the times, but Jefferson underestimated the price that the fledgling nation would have to pay for support by France and other European powers. Jefferson assumed that the opportunity to damage the British and improve their own trade situation would be incentive enough for France to support the Americans. The French, however, were not so eager to lend their support. They were reluctant to do so until the Americans had proved their ability in battle. This the Americans accomplished in the fall of 1777 at Saratoga. A treaty with France was consummated in February 1778, but it was not the one-sided affair that Jefferson had hoped for at the beginning of the war. It was instead an entangling alliance binding the Americans to French foreign policy objectives. Jefferson had to come to accept such an arrangement not least of all because of British depredations on his home state of Virginia, including the destruction of his own property. Thus the die was cast for his foreign policy vision which saw France as the logical counter-weight to Britain, and which would result in Jefferson being seen as Francophile and Anglophobe.

Jefferson's years as envoy to Europe from 1784 to 1789 began with the same excessive expectations which had marled the beginning of the Revolution. He expected easily to be able to accomplish his objectives at little cost to the new nation. His prime goal was to open up British ports in the Caribbean to American shipping. He intended to accomplish this by negotiated treaties of commerce with other European powers which would make the Americans less dependent on British trade. The British were wholly unresponsive, however, and Jefferson was left feeling snubbed, his Anglophobia stronger than before. Thwarted in that effort, he turned to the opportunity to negotiate with the Barbary States while in London. Although he was not able to convince Congress that a hard-line should be taken with these pirates, Congress continued the practice of paying ransom and tribute, it formed the germ of the policy which Jefferson would carry out as President in his war with Tripoli. After moving on to Paris, he would learn valuable lessons about foreign debt and foreign entanglement from the Dutch. He initially favored refinancing America's debt with France through private sources in Holland, feeling that it would be better to default to them than to a major benefactor such as France. By the time he assumed the duties of Secretary of State, however, he had been disabused of the notion, coming to realize the power this would have given Dutch speculators to control the American economy. The 1787 invasion of Holland by Prussia in the hope of solving internal disputes demonstrated to him the precarious position a republic could be placed in as result of foreign entanglements. Jefferson would return from Europe with none of his major goals achieved. Transforming a French economy to the benefit of the United States during the former's pre-Revolutionary death throes had not been possible. Perhaps the most significant outcome of his stay was his conviction about the need for a strong central government in the area of foreign affairs and the importance of American credit-worthiness: these two realizations would lead Jefferson to support the new Constitution and to accept Hamilton's compromise involving Federal assumption of the debts of the individual States.

When Jefferson joined Washington's first government as Secretary of State, there was no schism yet between Jefferson and Hamilton, as they agreed on the two aforementioned points. Their agreement would quickly break down, however. Jefferson came to believe he had been duped on the debt compromise, coming to see it as aggrandizement on behalf of northern speculators. He also felt repeatedly slighted in an administrative arrangement where consular affairs fell under the domain of Hamilton's Treasury Department and not the State Department, as they are today. The issue which brought their animosity into the open, however, was the proposed navigation law. Jefferson, with the support of Madison in Congress, wanted to force British trade concessions by placing sanctions on trade with countries with which the United States had no formal trade agreement. Hamilton viewed economic co-operation with Britain as essential for the development of the nation's nascent economy, and was able to torpedo Jefferson's proposal. It was from this time that the Federalists came to be cast as Anglophile, the emerging Republicans as Francophile.

Jefferson's term of service as Secretary of State seemed to be no more productive than his stint as European envoy. Although he made progress in negotiations with Spain to open the Mississippi to American trade, due to European politics no agreement was formalized until after he left office. A treaty with Great Britain dealing with such nagging issues as British garrisons in the Northwest Territories would also not be finalized until after relinquished

power. When Jefferson left the job, he intended it as a permanent retirement from politics, and was only reluctantly persuaded to run for President in 1796, having preferred James Madison as candidate. Coming in second, he became vice-president under the pre-Twelfth Amendment election rules. Although he was damaged by the XYZ affair, where Tallyrand demanded bribes to facilitate French negotiations with the United States, the resulting anti-French sentiment was not fatal to Jefferson. He was able to harness public outrage over the Alien and Sedition Acts to enable a Republican victory in the election of 1800.

As President, Jefferson seemingly maintained the foreign policy of the Federalists during his first administration. This approach did not signal a shift to Anglophilia, but was simply done as a balancing act to keep the new nation out of the sway of any power, and took into account Napoleon's desire for the restoration of Louisiana to France. His war with Tripoli was not just a war against pirate states, but also an attempt to assert American trading rights against incursions by both the French and the English. Although counter to Republican ideals of pacifism and limited government, Jefferson had no qualms about exercising executive power freely in the conduct of foreign affairs. But Tripoli was a minor matter compared to keeping the United States out of the British-French conflict in Europe. He did not hesitate to use the threat of alliance with Britain to try and dissuade France from re-establishing control of Louisiana. Jefferson's greatest coup, the Louisiana Purchase resulted from a fortuitous series of events, and not his own diplomacy, as the president wished to believe. Napoleon had obtained Louisiana as a retrocession from Spain under the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso. Keeping the retrocession secret until he believed it was propitious to send French troops to the territory, Napoleon was foiled by disease among his troops in the Caribbean, which decimated their numbers. Finding his position untenable, he unloaded Louisiana for a bargain price of \$15 million. Jefferson doubted his constitutional authority for such an acquisition, but his dreams of western empire won out over his constitutional qualms.

In his second term, Jefferson's prime foreign policy concern still involved his dealings with the three European powers most directly affecting the United States: Britain, France and Spain. Emboldened by the success of the Louisiana Purchase, the president was convinced of his ability to manipulate the warring powers for the benefit of the United States. Due to changes in the military situation in Europe in 1805, action moved from the battlefield to the economic front, and American trade with Europe became a major casualty. Britain, the dominant sea power, was able to engage in blockade and seizure of American shipping, as well as the impressment of American sailors. James Monroe and William Pinkney were able to negotiate a treaty with Britain which would have restored many American trade rights, but failed to deal with impressment. As a result, Jefferson rejected the treaty, dashing the hopes of an Anglo-American rapprochement and sowing the seeds for the War of 1812, although some argue that due to the conflict in Europe the treaty would not ultimately have been honored by the British. European pressure on American shipping increased. Jefferson was unwilling to become involved in a war with the European powers and instituted the isolationist self-embargo on American shipping to keep the United States out of the conflict. Although 'mortified' that the embargo would only hurt Britain, and benefit Napoleon, he thought this was better than British domination. It did not result in the *quid pro quo* of Napoleon putting pressure on Spain to cede Florida, as Jefferson had hoped. Jef-

erson's heavy-handed enforcement of the embargo was reminiscent of the abuses of the Alien and Sedition Act. Yet ignored by many merchants, especially in New England, the embargo was a failure, and would be repealed three days before the president left office.

Jefferson's retirement in 1809 was permanent. But his interest in foreign affairs persisted. He was convinced that Spain was too weak to hold onto Florida and would have to cede it eventually. He also lobbied his successors to continue a foreign policy which saw Britain as the main adversary. Although he had long been disabused of any illusions about the French Revolution or Napoleon, the French lack of a fleet sufficient to threaten the United States made concerns about any French threat secondary. Although not wanting a direct alliance with France, he did expect Napoleon to be victorious over Britain. In that event he '... should be for peace with England and then war with France.' Jefferson feared the worst for the United States when Napoleon abdicated, but Britain was too exhausted and involved with the restructuring of Europe to pursue revenge. In his old-age, Jefferson would come to support American alliance with Britain in the form of the Monroe Doctrine, not because his views on the British had changed, but because he thought that such an arrangement was expedient to American interests at the time.

One of the most damning charges consistently leveled against Jefferson was that he was a Francophile, and that this tendency had a perverting affect on his foreign policy. Throughout this book, Kaplan attempts to explain Jefferson's seeming preference for France in terms of a broader political agenda which was most concerned with American expansion. When France intruded into the Ohio territory Virginians such as Jefferson welcomed British assistance in repulsing them. He was willing to turn to the former Revolutionary enemy in order to further the American cause. Throughout his career, his preference for France was predicated on the understanding that Britain was a greater threat to the United States and that France was the only nation powerful enough to serve as a counter-balance. Although he was slow to see the flaws of the French Revolution, he was not totally blinded by Francophilia, as many have accused him of being. He was not, for example, deceived concerning the intentions of Napoleon, and was prepared to respond if a French return to Louisiana had threatened westward expansion. Protecting this expansion was what underlay Jefferson's policy throughout his life, and in this he was not inconsistent.