

As for presidents who simply deploy troops hither and yon, as many chief executives have done, they seem as likely to wind up with the dirty dozen presidents at the bottom (Warren Harding et al.) as with the admired dozen at the top.

Truman's claim of "a unilateral executive privilege to wage war" has left "a deeply trou-

bling legacy," in Adler's view. But if the parchment barrier the Framers erected against chief executives seeking greatness through martial glory no longer appears adequate, he concludes, history provides presidents with another one, if only they will heed it: the lesson that war is seldom the path to presidential greatness.

## *Jefferson and his Slaves*

"Jefferson, Morality, and the Problem of Slavery" by Ari Helo and Peter Onuf, in *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 2003), Box 8781, Williamsburg, Va. 23187-8781.

It's a perennial puzzle: How could the author of the Declaration of Independence, with its soaring proclamation of human equality, justify in his own mind remaining a slave owner?

Thomas Jefferson "never thought that slavery was morally justifiable," write historians Helo and Onuf, of the University of Helsinki and the University of Virginia, respectively. But neither did he think that he had violated "the natural rights of man" by having been born into a slaveholding family.

Jefferson's thinking was grounded in a complicated but coherent "historical conception of morality." Slavery was as old as Western civilization, and even the great liberal philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) had argued that victors in a just war were morally justified in enslaving (rather than killing) their captives. No longer, Jefferson insisted. The "moral sense" had shown a further "remarkable instance of improvement."

But that was not to say slavery needed to end immediately. Long before the American Revolution, white Virginians, in Jefferson's view, "had developed institutions of government and made laws for themselves and so had emerged as a distinct people with a civic and

moral identity." Until the enslaved blacks did the same, they had no rights.

Jefferson's "primary goal was not to free black people," observe Helo and Onuf, "but to free white people from the moral evil of being slaveholders." (In his draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson accused Britain of having imposed the institution of slavery on the colonies, but the congressional editors of the draft excised the charge.) The challenge "was to find a practical solution to the slavery problem that would enable Virginians collectively to extricate themselves from the institution, reversing the process of historical development that had deprived Africans of their freedom, but doing so in a way that would not jeopardize the free institutions that were themselves the products of history."

"Jefferson's solution to the slavery problem was to institute a program of gradual emancipation, separate slave children from their parents in order to prepare them for freedom," and create a new state in Africa. Jefferson didn't do much to advance the cause, and he emancipated only a few of his own slaves, but he believed that Virginia's slaves would one day be free.

### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## *The Decline of War*

"Policing the Remnants of War" by John Mueller, in *Journal of Peace Research* (Sept. 2003), Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320.

Will the world ever war no more? In certain important respects, the ancient institution of war is already on the way out,

asserts Mueller, a political scientist at Ohio State University. Major war among developed countries is now rare and un-



*The new face of war in Liberia: Much of what we now call war is simply banditry.*

likely, and, despite appearances, conventional war in the wider world also is in decline. Much that now passes for war—“ethnic conflict” or outbreaks of the “clash of civilizations”—is actually something else: “opportunistic predation waged by packs, often remarkably small ones, of criminals, bandits, and thugs.”

Most of the three dozen or so wars fought since the end of the Cold War have been civil wars in poor countries. Many, if not most, of the combatants have been either mercenaries recruited by weak states (as in the former Yugoslavia) or warlord gangs that developed within weak or failed states (as in Liberia). The ranks of the Serbian (or Yugoslavian) army were filled by emptying out the jails and promising loot to the new recruits; Bosnia and Croatia turned at first to street gangs for their fighting men. In 1990, writes Mueller, Liberia’s weakened regime “was toppled by an armed group initially of 100 or so led by an accused embezzler and jailbreak artist, Charles Taylor, and by a somewhat larger group led by a psychopathic, hymn-singing drunk.”

Since 9/11, it has been tempting to see the world as a Hobbesian nightmare, teeming with violence-prone fanatics and true believers nursing ethnic, religious, or cultural grievances. In fact, says Mueller, the people drawn to violence are relatively few, and most of them are not fanatics or true believers, but criminals and thugs.

Often drunk or drugged, lacking organization and strong motivation or commitment, the thugs may be “the biggest bullies on the block,” he says, but they are no match for “a sufficiently large, impressively armed, and well-disciplined policing force.” That has been demonstrated in recent years in Panama, Haiti, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Croatia, Bosnia, and even Somalia (though the peacekeepers there found the costs too high, given the low stakes).

“Experience suggests that the essential, and long-term, solution to the problems of civil warfare,” Mueller says, “lies not in ministrations by the international community—so often half-hearted, half-vast, and half-coherent—but rather in the es-

establishment of competent domestic governments in the many places that do not now have them.” He sees grounds for optimism in the elevation of “effective” leaders in almost all of Latin America and in

some countries in Asia in recent decades. What people around the world need and want, Mueller says, is what Canada’s modest national slogan promises: “Peace, Order and Good Government.”

## *Au Revoir, Arms Control*

“The Rise and Fall of Arms Control” by Avis Bohlen, in *Survival* (Autumn 2003), International Institute for Strategic Studies, Arundel House, 13-15 Arundel St., Temple Place, London WC2R 3DX, England.

From the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 to the astonishing summit at Reykjavik in 1986, arms control treaties and talks gave the Cold War some of its most dramatic moments. But the era of strategic arms control ended in late 2001 with a whimper, not a bang, when President George W. Bush announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty—and, despite a host of dire predictions, nothing happened.

Signed 18 years after the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the 1963 treaty

banning atmospheric nuclear tests was the first East-West nuclear agreement. “It put nuclear issues and arms control squarely on the U.S.-Soviet political agenda,” observes Bohlen, a retired Foreign Service officer and former assistant secretary of state for arms control (1999–2002), though it did little to stop the growth of nuclear arsenals or even limit testing (which went underground).

During the administration of Richard Nixon, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) culminated in 1972 in the ABM treaty, which limited each side to two

### EXCERPT

## *The First Freedom*

*The encouragement of free trade and free elections—which is to say, of the American model in commerce and politics—has long been unabashed American policy. But American international policy has included no comparably unabashed encouragement of freedom of religion. I am prepared to take as a premise that worldwide freedom of religion is even more an American national interest than free trade. The ideologues of Al Qaeda regard freedom of religion—that is, the separation of political from religious power—as the mother of all sins, the vice that enables all other vices. Accordingly, militant Islam, acting as it supposes in the defense of Islam and of virtue, has been prepared to take violent action to prevent the spread of this freedom, crushing Muslim diversity no less than religious diversity beyond Islam. The U.S., even as it addresses such other legitimate Muslim grievances as injure the cause of peace, should make freedom of religion the first item on its diplomatic agenda—not a dream endlessly deferred but the most urgent and practical first order of business.*

*If worldwide freedom of religion is the goal, it matters greatly that the Muslim world at this point in time may be almost as exhausted from internecine warfare as the West was just after the Thirty Years’ War; and that grim and blood-drenched moment in Western history was, paradoxically, the moment when a great cultural liberation was accomplished. Western freedom of religion may have been rationalized by the brilliance of the Enlightenment, but the necessary condition for it was the misery of the West’s Wars of Religion and the mood of revulsion and surfeit that these wars created.*

—Jack Miles, author of *God: A Biography*, in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Fall 2003)