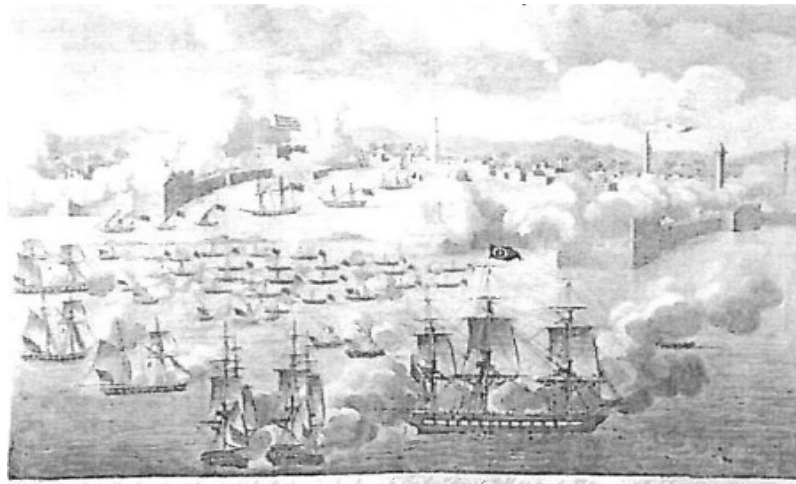


The Forgotten Founding Father of America

The Barbary Conflicts, Part II:

Navy and Commerce, 1776-1816



In the conflict resistless, each toil they endured,
 'Till their foes fled dismayed from the war's desolation:
 And pale beamed the Crescent, its splendor obscured
 By the light of the Star Spangled flag of our nation.
 Where each radiant star gleamed a meteor of war,
 And the turbaned heads bowed to its terrible glare,
 Now, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Hardly was the ink dry on the Declaration of Independence before the United States found its commerce menaced by the Barbary pirates. Out of the coves of the North Coast of Africa, the fast sailing ships of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli swooped down upon vessels flying a flag never before seen in that region and forced American ships to take refuge in Italian harbors. On the Atlantic, American sailors had run the gauntlet of British men-of-war, and in the Mediterranean, they risked their lives and liberties dodging the fierce pirates of Africa. In the face of these twin dangers, American commerce rotted in ports . 2

Most historical accounts of the involvement of America with the Barbary pirates attribute only minor significance to the Barbary Wars. Using reports from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, historians who consider the impact of the Barbary pirates take their cue from President Thomas Jefferson, who categorized the pirates as a mere sideshow on the world stage. A closer look at the history of the Barbary conflicts reveals that they were, in actuality, much more than a sideshow. Historians such as Gerard Gawalt and Thomas Jewett attribute the actions of the pirates and privateers to a holy war, or "jihad," directed against non-Muslims.³ When asked why the Barbary governments encouraged unprovoked attacks upon American ships, the ambassador to England from Tripoli, Sidi Haji Abdul Rahman Adja, replied, "It was

¹Key, Poems of the Late Francis S. Key, Esq., 193.

²Wright and MacLeod, The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle for a Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805, 16.

³ See Gawalt, "America and the Barbary Pirates: an International Battle Against an Unconventional Foe," http://meniory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/jefferson_papers/mtjprece.html, and Jewett, "Terrorism in Early America: The U.S. Wages War Against The Barbary States to End International Blackmail and Terrorism."

written in their Koran, that all nations which had not acknowledged the Prophet were sinners, whom it was the right and duty of the faithful to plunder and enslave . . .^d This interpretation, made even more popular recently by historian Michael Oren (2007), maintains that the Barbary conflicts stemmed from the same kind of jihad that was conducted against the United States by Islamic extremists on September 11, 2001. Historian Frank Lambert (2005), however, criticizes this perspective as too narrow. Lambert suggests that even though the Barbary conflicts may have been motivated by jihad, they were actually the forces that pushed the young United States towards economic independence.⁵

In a previous paper entitled *The Forgotten Founding Father of America: The Barbary Conflicts: 1776-1787*, this author proposed that the Barbary struggles were essential in motivating American leaders towards the development of the Constitution of 1787, which, in turn, enabled the young country to unify and become stronger. The Barbary conflicts that persisted through 1815, however, achieved even more for the young nation. American struggles with the Barbary pirates not only forced the development of the Constitution, but also stimulated a sense of national unity, as well as the re-birth in 1794 of the Navy and establishment of the Marine Corps. As time passed, the Barbary struggles became instrumental in propelling the United States into a position of economic independence and, ultimately, in gaining the notice of world economic powers as America began to establish itself as a force to be reckoned with in world trade and politics. The Barbary struggles moved America into the path of world power which it enjoys to this day.

^d Absolute Astronomy, "Barbary pirates," http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Barbary_pirates.
⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*.

American Commercial Independence Checked

So long as the colonies had remained a part of the British imperial system, American ships engaged in the Mediterranean trade enjoyed such immunities as the British government bought from the Barbary pirates by the customary payment of tribute to the rulers of those separate states. Once the colonies had declared their independence, these protections were withdrawn. More significantly, the pirates proved useful to Britain-- and indeed, to most of Europe-- by throttling the commerce of the rebellious colonies, the same international commerce that had been so instrumental in America's decision to declare autonomy from Britain.' As one colonist wrote, "Commerce has become... absolutely necessary to the happiness of America." ⁸ In writing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) had even recast the issue of free trade in the language of natural rights.⁹

To the American mind, England had joined the predators. Learning of the narrow escape from Algerine pirates by two American merchantmen in March 1783, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) speculated "that those rovers may be privately encouraged by the English to fall upon us, and to prevent our interference in the carrying trade," ¹⁰ As usual, Franklin was correct. Seafaring Englishmen had a history of close cooperation with the Mediterranean corsairs, and rather than protect American commerce as they had before the Revolutionary War, the British now encouraged raids on American ships by the Barbary navies.¹¹ Britain's Lord Sheffield

Ibid.

Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 5.

⁸ Leonidas, source unknown, quoted in Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 26.

⁹ Jefferson and others, *United States Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776. °
Franklin and Sparks, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 544.

Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 22.

(1735-1821), representing England and the European powers, summarized the situation in 1783: the Americans cannot protect themselves... they cannot pretend to a navy."¹²

The large European maritime powers, in an effort to churn wealth from the New World and preserve their dominance within the Old World, ¹³ had established ways of paying off the pirates to preserve their ability to conduct trade. The United States, lacking the funds to pay off the pirates' hefty demands for cash, and lacking the naval power to intimidate them, was confronted with major challenges for protecting its citizens and sustaining them financially. This was a matter of survival for the United States. The pirates were an active threat to nationhood,

European diplomatic and Mediterranean naval policies were interlocked from the outset of the national experience. ¹⁴ Though they wanted access to wider markets and freedom from trade restrictions, colonial American merchants had enjoyed certain benefits from trading within Britain's closed colonial system. One such advantage was the protection of American merchant vessels under treaties that English monarchs had negotiated with the Barbary States and enforced with the British Navy. ¹⁵ The 1682 Treaty of Peace and Commerce between Charles II (1630-1685) and the Dey of Algiers, Ishmael Pasha (r. 1682-1686), provided that all English ships, including colonial ones, "may safely come to the Port of Algiers, or any other Port or Places of that Kingdom, there freely to Buy and Sell... freely pass the Seas, and Traffick without any Search." ¹⁶ Once fighting began with England in 1775, however, these protections ceased, making American merchants, sailors, and shipping fair game for the pirates for Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Subsequently, the wartime Congress sought a new protector in Britain's archenemy,

Sheffield, unknown source, quoted in DeConde, *A History of American Foreign Policy*, 21.
"Norton and others, *A People and a Nation*, 216.

"Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 22.

¹ Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: the Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, 87.

⁶ British Government and others, *Articles of Peace and Commerce Between the most Serene and Mighty Prince Charles II. By the Grace of G-d, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland Defender of the Faith, etc. And the Most Illustrious Lords, The Bushaw, Dey, Aga and Governours of the Famous City and Kingdom of Algiers in Barbary*, quoted in Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 5.

France, which promised in the 1778 Treaty of Amity and Commerce to protect American interests against the Barbary Pirates. ¹⁷ "[France would protect] American vessels and effects against all violence, insults, attacks, or depredations, on the part of said Princes and States of Barbary or their subjects."⁸ However, when called upon for help against the Barbary powers, France responded: "There is no advantage to us procuring for them [the Americans] a tranquil navigation in the Mediterranean," leaving American ships unprotected against piracy. ¹⁹

After the American Revolution, the insistence of the United States upon new policies for international trade threatened the delicate balance of power that had been worked out over centuries, often through war. England was especially angry. Many European countries, including Spain, agreed with England, making decisions to restrict American access to world markets and refusing to enter into commercial treaties with them.²⁰ As a result, American merchants were increasingly confronted by the sobering reality of world markets that were closed to them.²¹ The final blow to hopes of foreign commerce came in the form of overt attacks from the Barbary Pirates, who in 1784 and 1785, captured American vessels and enslaved American citizens. ²²

One of Thomas Jefferson's early acts as Secretary of State in the first administration (1789-1793) of President George Washington (1732-1799) was to report to Congress on the exclusion of American commerce from the Mediterranean and on the state of negotiations with Algiers. Jefferson saw those issues as intimately connected, and he had been troubled by them since July of 1785, when two American merchant ships, the *Maria* out of Boston, and the

¹⁷ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 5. Gerard and others, *Treaty of Amity and Commerce*, 1778.

French Government, quoted in Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, 20.

²⁰ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²² *Ibid.*, 9.

Dauphin out of Philadelphia, were seized by Algerine corsairs and the crews imprisoned.

Numerous attempts by Jefferson and other American diplomats to ransom the hostages had been thwarted by escalation of the asking price set by the Dey of Algiers. In 1790, Jefferson estimated the cost of bailing out the remaining fourteen American captives at somewhere between \$1,200 and \$2,920 per man. To this sum, which Jefferson thought exorbitant, he added \$1 million, the estimated Algerine price for negotiating a commercial treaty with the United States. Without such a treaty, the United States could not safely enter the Mediterranean or hope to resume the profitable pre-Revolutionary War export trade, which annually had brought between eighty and one hundred American ships to that sea. Jefferson realized, as he had expressed six years earlier, that a treaty without backing would be futile.²³ The Algerines "must see that we are in condition to chastise an infraction of the treaty; consequently, some marine force must be exhibited in their harbor from time to time."²⁴ Inflationary Barbary demands for ransom, the expense of securing a treaty, and the inescapable need for sending warships to Algiers, brought Jefferson to the conclusion it might be better "to repel force by force."²⁵

In February of 1791, however, the Senate defeated an administration proposal to declare war on Algiers and advised President Washington to ransom the captives. Washington's administration agreed. In May 1792, the President sought the prior approval of the Senate for two treaties he hoped to negotiate with Algiers. The first treaty proposed ransoming the prisoners for a grand total of \$40,000, and the other treaty sought to secure peace with annual tributary payments of \$25,000.²⁶ Americans would get the chance to prove that they could respond to commercial threats.

²³ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 26.

²⁴ Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, subtitle unknown, 100.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 27.

At the same time, war was brewing in Europe between France and England, partially as a result of the politics of the French Revolution, but also concerning trade. President Washington had issued a proclamation of neutrality towards the war, but the envoy from France, citizen Edmond Charles Genet (1763-1834), compromised United States neutrality by outfitting fourteen French privateers in American ports.²⁷ The President sent several messages to members of Congress in early December 1793, discreetly reminding them that his proclamation from the previous April had been directed toward those unspecified European powers "with whom the United States have the most extensive relations."²⁸ Concerned that the European countries could misconstrue the American desire for peace as weakness, Washington counseled Congress. "If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace... it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."²⁹ The belligerent power Washington had most in mind was Great Britain, which had outraged many Americans by its diplomatic and naval behavior ever since the beginning of the war against revolutionary France.³⁰ In addition to depriving the fledgling country of protection from the Barbary corsairs, British ship builders and ship owners had long been jealous of the developing international shipping commerce of North American seaboard states. A powerful shipping lobby had grown up at Westminster in England, whose object was to control competition from this direction. ³¹

The British government, or at least the British consul in Algiers, was held responsible by Americans for the 1794 truce between Algiers and Portugal that had freed the corsairs to operate beyond Gibraltar, and had made the eastern Atlantic dangerous for United States commerce.

Washington's December 16 message relating to Algiers included a harsh accusation against

²⁷ Ibid., 28.

²⁸ Washington, "Fifth Annual Message to Congress," 1793.

²⁹ Ibid,

³⁰ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 28.

³¹ J Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 30.

England quoting the American consul in Lisbon, Edward Church (dates unknown),³² who saw a "hellish plot" in the truce.³³

The conduct of the British in this business leaves no room to doubt or mistake their object, which was evidently aimed at us, and proves that their envy, jealousy, and hatred, will never be appeased, and that they will leave nothing unattempted to effect our ruin... We are betrayed, and many of our countrymen will fall into the cruel snare.³⁴

Inclusion of such Anglophobic prose in a presidential message to Congress exposed the high level of tension between the United States and Great Britain from 1793 to 1794, and highlighted the inextricable interrelationship between Europe and American policies toward Algiers. ³⁵

On January 2, 1794, Congress met to consider a resolution to provide "a naval force, adequate to the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine corsairs."³⁶ The resolution narrowly passed the House 46-44, and a nine man committee dominated by Federalists was appointed to recommend the exact size of the proposed American fleet. On February 6, the committee made its recommendation to the House for four 44-gun, and two 20-gun vessels. The debate over the committee's recommendation lasted until March 10, and touched upon nearly every aspect of American naval power in the age of sail, including the size and number of ships; the great distance to Europe; the desirability of European allies in foreign waters; protection of commerce; fear of England; fear of a navy as an expensive seedbed of tyranny; arming for coastal defense; and the impossibility of maintaining neutrality when a major

³² Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 28.
³³ Church, source unknown, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 28-29.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29.
³⁴ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 29.

³⁵ United States Congress, unknown source, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 29.

European land power was fighting the major European sea power.³⁷ As a result of these discussions, a Navy bill was produced, and six frigates ordered to be built.³⁸

The opponents of the six ship Navy voiced serious objections to the cost of a fleet, and fundamentally questioned its effectiveness.³⁹ Led by representatives James Madison (1751-1836) and William Giles of Virginia (1762-1830), they favored "assigning a sum of money to buy a cessation of hostilities from the Regency of Algiers."⁴⁰ Some also hoped to convince Portugal to convoy American merchant vessels past the Straits of Gibraltar into safe harbors in the Mediterranean. They argued that either paying tribute or using Portuguese convoys would prove cheaper, safer, and more effective than the proposed fleet of six ships. They maintained that the distance to Algiers was too great and the proposed warships too few in number to permit success against the pirates. They were concerned that the warring European nations would not let the American warships operate freely. ⁴¹ Giles said, "The sending of American armed ships into the midst of the fleets of Europe would certainly produce a quarrel , .."⁴²

Supporters of the naval bill, in contrast, believed that a Navy was necessary because the pirates presented a direct danger to the United States. Representative William Smith (1728-1814), for example, feared that the unleashed Algerines "might very soon be on our coast, under the command of British or American renegades." Recognizing the potential for harboring these international buccaneers in the hidden coves of port cities, Smith "could not tell where the danger might end; nor did he know whether Philadelphia itself would be in safety." He suggested that domestic fortifications against pirates offered no hope, and that the only chance for safety

³⁷ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 29.

³⁸ Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*, 58. ³⁹

Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 29.

⁴⁰ Giles, source unknown, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 29.

⁴¹ [ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

lay sending well built American warships to attack the Algerines' "old and crazy" ships. Noting that the cost of outfitting the warships was inconsequential when compared with soaring insurance rates, Smith concluded: "this country is peculiarly fitted for a navy."⁴³ The naval bill was ratified on March 18, and on March 27, 1794, the President signed An Act to Provide a Naval Armament.⁴⁴ The United States had established a national Navy.

In the meantime, Portugal, which had never sided fully with the European powers, had ended its truce with Algiers by April 1794, and had resumed the convoy of some United States merchant ships in the Mediterranean. The Dey of Algiers, Baba Hussein (r. 1791-1799), angry at Portugal's change of heart, became receptive to American overtures for a peace treaty. News of the Dey's change of heart presented the Washington administration with the opportunity to renew negotiations, a task entrusted to a team of American agents headed by David Humphreys (1752-1818), the plenipotentiary⁴⁵ in Paris and Lisbon, and Joseph Donaldson (dates unknown) and Joel Barlow (1754-1821), plenipotentiaries in Algiers. These negotiations were complex, and a large amount of bribe money changed hands.

On March 2, 1796, the Senate advised ratification of a twenty two article treaty with Algiers.⁴⁶ This occurred one day after Washington's proclamation of the Jay Treaty (also known as the Treaty of London of 1794), which was established between the United States and England to avert war over many issues left over from the American Revolution, and just prior to the Senate's approval of the treaty with Spain. In this treaty, the United States promised to pay a sum of \$642,500 immediately and \$21,600 annually in naval stores. Further, Barlow promised the Dey a custom built frigate. In exchange, the Dey pledged an end to Algerine attacks on

⁴³ Smith, source unknown, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 30. ⁴⁴ United States Congress, *An Act to Provide a Naval Armament*, March 18, 1794.

⁴⁵ A diplomatic agent, invested with full power or authority to transact business on behalf of another. ⁴⁶ Barlow and Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow*, page unknown.

United States ships, the release of captive American seamen, humane treatment of Americans shipwrecked in Algiers in the future, the right to sell captured prizes in Algerine ports, and limited extraterritoriality for American citizens involved in judicial proceedings in Algiers. By the summer of 1796, the captives were freed, and the frigate *Crescent* went under construction in Portsmouth.⁴⁷ Joel Barlow eulogized the Dey of Algiers as the "father of justice."⁴⁸

Through the patient diplomacy of Barlow and Humphreys, as well as former captives Captains Richard O'Brien (1758-1824), James L. Cathcart (1767-1843), and a novice in Barbary affairs, William Eaton (1764-1811), the second Washington administration (1779-1783) also secured treaties with Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis, granting American merchantmen immunity from capture while sailing in the Mediterranean Sea. In all three countries, immediate and annual payments in cash and the promise of military and naval provisions, proved essential as leverage for moving the North African states towards meaningful agreements. Although formal Senate approval of the treaty with Tunis was withheld until January 1800, the second Washington administration had effectively reopened the Mediterranean to the American merchant marine after a closure lasting more than ten years.⁴⁹

President Washington was now compelled to implement the terms of the 1794 naval act, which mandated an end to ship construction once peace was negotiated with Algiers. He nevertheless tried to push Congress in the direction of establishing a permanent national Navy, fearing troubles with Algiers were far from over. On March 20, 1796, the President signed the measure that led to the completion a year later of the *United States*, *Constitution*, and *Constellation*, the first three frigates of the intended six of the permanent United States Navy.

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⁴⁷ Ibid.
⁴⁸ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁹ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 36.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 36-37.

The Quasi-War with France (1798-1800) distracted America's second President, John Adams (1735-1826), from dealing particularly with the pirates. Nonetheless, John Adams was devoted to the concept of a national Navy, and during his presidency, the remaining three frigates were completed.¹

In March 1801, Thomas Jefferson assumed the Presidency as the legatee of John Adams. He inherited peace from France and six active frigates. These conditions gave him the opportunity to realize his old dream of extending vigorous naval protection over American commerce in the Mediterranean without endangering the security of the United States. For the next six years, Jefferson pursued an active policy of naval diplomacy at the crossroads of European-American-Mediterranean trade, and his policies set precedents that still influence the United States Navy almost two centuries later.¹

The Tripolitan War: 1801-1805

Thomas Jefferson called his election to the Presidency the "Revolution of 1800" because of the country's bloodless switch from the Federalist Party's program of big, expensive, centralized government, to the ideals of his beloved Republicans. During the campaign, Jefferson and his fellow Republicans blamed Federalist extravagance for undermining liberty at home and failing to ensure American independence abroad. The Republicans complained that despite the growing size of the military, the United States was still "subjected to the spoliations of foreign cruisers" and shamefully paid "an enormous tribute to the petty tyrant of Algiers."⁵³ Jefferson vowed to change this. In his first inaugural address, he pledged that his Republican administration would pursue "peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations." Having

⁵¹ Howarth, *To Shining Sea: A History of the United States Navy, 1775-1991*, 12.

⁵² Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 54.

⁵³ Unknown source, quoted in Schlesinger, *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, 136.

already embraced religious and political tolerance, he believed that Americans needed to be free to sell the fruits of their labor without prejudice or extortion in markets around the world.⁵⁴

Before Jefferson had a chance to assume the Presidency in March of 1801, the Barbary pirates once again challenged American interests and thereby, Jefferson's resolve. On February 26, 1801, the Bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli (1766-1838), made good on his October 22, 1800, ultimatum that if the United States did not meet his demands for more tribute within six months, he would declare war and send his corsairs after American merchantmen. Jefferson's reaction was immediate,⁵⁵ Long a proponent of using military force against the pirates, he declared in a letter to Secretary of State Madison, "I am an enemy to all these doceurs, tributes and humiliations.. I know that nothing will stop the eternal increase from these pirates but the presence of an armed force."⁵⁶ In 1798, Jefferson and Madison had opposed a naval buildup during the Quasi-War with France and had argued that a deep water fleet was expensive and unnecessary. Now, however, he had changed his mind. Jefferson was now ready to dispatch a Navy squadron to the Mediterranean, though he preferred a defensive force that included gunboats to protect the American shoreline. The frugal president reasoned that a naval deployment against Tripoli was more economical in the long run than continuing to pay tribute.⁵⁷

Since the beginning of Adams' presidency, the rulers of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, had been demanding an increasing amount of tribute in money and naval stores. By the end of January 1800, the Adams administration was planning to send a naval squadron to the Mediterranean as soon as peace with France released ships committed to the Caribbean and West

⁵⁴ Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801.

⁵⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Powers: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 124.

⁵⁶ Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, subtitle unknown, 124.

⁵⁷ Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, 203.

Indies operations.⁵⁸ The Treaty of Mortefontaine (1800) came too late for Adams, but it gave Jefferson the chance to follow through.⁵⁹ The President made his intentions quite clear: "We mean to rest the safety of our commerce on the resources of our own strength and bravery in every sea."⁶⁰ The acting Secretary of the Navy explained the administration's policy vividly in early April: "It is conceived... that such a squadron Cruizing [sic] in view of the Barbary Powers will have a tendency to prevent them from seizing on our Commerce, whenever Passion or a Desire of Plunder might Incite them thereto.⁶¹

The dangers to American Mediterranean commerce were not underestimated. Reports received from William Eaton, the United States consul to Tunis, and Richard O'Brien, the consul general in Algiers, persuaded Secretary Madison that Tripoli entertained hostile designs against the United States.⁶² Jefferson hoped to avoid actual warfare through an "awe and talk" strategy. He planned a display of overwhelming naval power that would close the harbor at Tripoli and impress the Tripolitans so much that the Bashaw would agree to negotiate on American terms. Since the first Barbary attacks on United States shipping seventeen years earlier, Jefferson had thought that the pirate republics could be easily defeated by a few modern warships. He believed that the unwillingness of the European powers and the inability of the United States to challenge the pirates had allowed the problem to continue. Now that the country had a fleet of frigates manned by sailors battle-hardened from the Quasi-War with France, the President was confident that he had the necessary power to defeat the Tripolitans. Madison confidently informed James Cathcart, the United States consul at Tripoli, of the administration's strategy.⁶³ Anticipating the

⁵⁸ Adams, *Works of John Adams*, vol. 8, *Letters and State Papers 1782-1799*, page number unknown, quoted in Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 54.

⁵⁹ Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 54.

⁶⁰ Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, *Notes on Virginia 1, Correspondence 1780-1782*, 54.

⁶¹ Unknown source, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 54.

⁶² Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 55.

⁶³ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 124-5.

negotiations that would follow decisive United States action, Secretary Madison instructed Cathcart "to stifle every pretention or expectation, that the United States will on their side, make the smallest contribution to him as the price of peace. ⁶⁴ This war was intended to end the tributary status of the United States in the Mediterranean. ⁶⁵

Jefferson's "awe and talk" policy floundered, however, on the shores of Tripoli harbor. In the late 1790s, Yusuf Karamanli, eager to assert Tripoli's economic and political independence, was increasing the size of his navy. At the same time, he harbored two grievances against the United States. First, he resented American treatment of Tripoli as a subordinate of Algiers.⁶⁶ Yusuf found particularly offensive Article 12 of the American treaty with Tripoli, which designated the Dey of Algiers as the guarantor of peace." Second, and even more insulting to him, was that the United States denied Tripoli the same annual tribute which it was willing to pay Algiers and Tunis. Earlier, in lieu of tribute, Congress had agreed to pay Yusuf \$40,000 and additional presents with the appointment of a consul at Tripoli, But this promise still remained unfulfilled two years after the Senate had ratified the treaty. ⁶⁸ In a letter to the President during the final days of John Adams' administration, the Bashaw made his position clear: "treat us as you do the other Regencies, without any difference being made between us." When his demands were not met, he presented an ultimatum: meet our demands within six months or face war.⁶⁹

After declaring war on the United States in March 1801, just before Jefferson's inauguration, Yusuf Karamanli indicated the United States could "reestablish" the peace for a

^W United States Office of Naval Records and Library, Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers: Naval Operations Including Diplomatic Background from 1785 through 1807, vol. 2, November 1798-March 1799, 126-127.

⁶⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 125.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Barlow and U.S. Senate, *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli*, June 7, 1797.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 1, 4 March- 31 July 1801, 197-198.

price. He demanded a prompt payment of \$225,000 and \$25,000 annually, which were the same terms that the Swedes had recently accepted and that the Danes were considering. William Eaton, the American consul at Tunis, argued against accepting the terms on the grounds that if Jefferson yielded, Tunis would go on to make a demand of double the amount, and Algiers would expect even more. Eaton saw no alternative to war.⁷⁰ "If the United States will have a free commerce in this sea they must defend it." He explained that since only American vessels were sailing in the Mediterranean at the time, they were the only targets available to satisfy the "restless spirit of these marauders."⁷¹ For Eaton, Jefferson had no alternative but to defeat the Barbary pirates by force. Jefferson agreed, at least to the extent of approving a squadron of three frigates and a schooner, to meet the threat. Thinking of them as superfluous, Jefferson did not include the gunboats that could penetrate Tripoli's shallow harbor and prevent pirate vessels from slipping around the blockade. This was an omission that he and his Navy commanders would later come to regret.⁷² In close adherence to the Constitution, Jefferson instructed the Navy to engage any enemy vessel that attacked United States shipping, but not to pursue corsairs in their offensive engagements or take them as prizes.⁷³

In May 1801, Madison wrote to Eaton: "The policy of exhibiting a naval force on the coast of Barbary, has long been urged by yourself and the other consuls. ⁷⁴ He and the President found the "present moment... peculiarly favorable" for the use of force, explaining, "not only is it a provision against an immediate danger, but as we are now at peace and amity with all the rest of the world, and as the force employed would if at home, be at nearly the same expense, with

⁷⁰ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 125.

⁷¹ Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 1, 4 March- 31 July 1801, 78-79.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 126.

⁷⁴ Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 1, 4 March- 31 July 1801, 213.

less advantage to our mariners."⁷⁵ Dispatching a squadron to the Mediterranean would protect American commerce at a reasonable expense.⁷⁶

Madison was hardly eager for war. Indeed, he first sent a good faith gesture along with his formal protest of Algiers' treatment of the ship *George Washington*. Returning to Algiers laden with timber and other stores, it would satisfy "at least one annuity" of the two in arrears. The ship's captain had \$30,000 in his possession, which President Jefferson hoped the Dey would accept "as a commutation for the stores due" for another year's tribute. In addition, four hundred yards of cloth and "thirty pieces" of linen were offered up for the "biennial present."⁷⁷ Ironically, the same ship that had been the focus of America's greatest national shame was now returning with gifts to appease the perpetrator of that humiliation.⁷⁸ Later that May of 1801, however, Madison sent a circular letter to all American consuls in the Mediterranean explaining the President's decision to dispatch the squadron. He announced that three frigates and a sloop of war would sail immediately under the command of Commodore Richard Dale (1756-1826). Madison reconfirmed America's preference for peace, but his announcement of the naval operation communicated the administration's firm resolve to end pirate depredations in the Mediterranean,⁷⁹

In the broader context, and for a long time, Jefferson had considered the Barbary affair of miniscule importance. He was aware that American neutrality in the Atlantic was continually ignored by participants in the Napoleonic Wars, and that these European powers constituted a far greater threat to the United States than the pirates. Yet by the time of Jefferson's inauguration, events in the Mediterranean took center stage and would remain a bothersome issue for the

⁷⁵ [bid.

Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 127.
⁷⁶ "Madison, the Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, vol. 1, 4 March- 31 July 1801, 213.

⁷⁷ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 127.

⁷⁹ [bid.

remainder of his presidency, as he conveyed in annual messages to Congress. Sounding more and more like a commander-in-chief determined to protect his nation's interest in hostile waters, Jefferson's notice to the Bashaw of Tripoli in the summer of 1801 struck a much more ironic note.⁸⁰ He offered "assurances of friendship," and indicated that his country's "firm and unabated" desire was to enjoy relations of peace and commerce with Tripoli. He then announced that he was dispatching a "squadron of observation" to the Mediterranean to protect American commerce, and "to exercise our seamen in nautical duties. "⁸¹ Jefferson tried to downplay this awesome display of naval power publicly, but directed the squadron not to give umbrage to any foreign power. Commodore Dale followed up with a similar letter to the Bashaw, emphasizing friendship and respect. ⁸² This approach did not work. Yusuf continued to insist on the payment of tribute. He replied to Dale's peace overture by restating that he had declared war because America was delinquent in meeting the terms of the treaty, and that the treaty itself was unjust when compared with the more generous pacts negotiated with Algiers and Tunis. Further, Yusuf had no intention of backing down in the face of America's show of force; to do so would be political suicide. The Bashaw's declaration of war was popular in Tripoli, and he was not going to jeopardize his leadership by rushing to the bargaining table.⁸³

Dale's fleet consisted of three frigates and a schooner. With its combined 126 guns, the fleet was fully capable of evoking the awe that Madison hoped would force the Bashaw to the negotiating table. At more than a half million dollars, twice what the Bashaw demanded in

⁸⁰ Ibid., 127-128.

§ ♦ United States Office of Naval Records and Library, *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers: Naval Operations Including Diplomatic Background from 1785 through 1807*, vol. 1, February 1797-October 1798, 470-471.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 560-561.

tribute, the costly enterprise underscored Jefferson's determination to eliminate the Barbary pirate scourge.⁸⁴

Jefferson could not have scripted the early action better. On August 1, 1801, shortly after arriving in the Mediterranean, the schooner *Enterprise*, under the command of Lieutenant Sterret (1778-1807), encountered the *Tripoli*, a Tripolitan corsair, and defeated it with overwhelming firepower.⁸⁵ Jefferson himself reported on the triumph. "The arrival of our squadron," he optimistically wrote, "dispelled the danger" to American interests in the Mediterranean. Jefferson heralded the "bravery exhibited by our citizens" in defeating the pirates in this first major encounter. His message was clear in that unlike the tribute paying Europeans, freedom loving Americans could rid themselves of the piratical pestilence.⁸⁶ On February 6, 1802, Congress passed legislation authorizing the President to use all means necessary to defeat the Tripolitans. While not a formal declaration of war, it eliminated Constitutional reservations and signaled America's determination to use its full force on the high seas.⁸⁷ Styled *An Act. for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers,* it authorized naval commanders "to subdue, seize and make prize of all vessels, goods and effects, belonging to the Bey of Tripoli, or to his subjects, and to bring or send the same into port, to be proceeded against, and distributed according to law." ⁸⁸

After Sterrett's spectacular victory, the American squadron took its position outside of Tripoli's harbor and established a blockade. The objective, Jefferson said, was "to secure our

⁸⁴ [ibid., vol. 6, June /800-November 1800, 30.

⁸⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 129.

⁸⁶ Jefferson, "First Annual Message," December 8, 1801.

Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 132.

⁸⁸ United States Office of Naval Records and Library, *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers: Naval Operations Including Diplomatic Background from 1785 through /807*, vol. 2, November 1798-March 1799, 51.

commerce in that sea with the smallest force competent."⁸⁹ Jefferson believed that this policy would secure independence for American merchants in the Mediterranean at the lowest possible cost. Although he had spent an estimated half million dollars on the naval squadron, he reasoned that until the Barbary pirates were defeated, American trade would be threatened and tribute demands would only escalate. ⁹⁰

America's bold actions against the pirates earned the attention and respect of European powers that had long chosen to pay tribute rather than fight. David Humphreys reported that Commodore Dale's circular letter to the European consuls, announcing America's intention to blockade the port of Tripoli, had sounded just the right tone. The commodore's action was defensive in response to the Bashaw's declaration of war, and was a determined pledge to seal the port against all ships entering or departing. Humphreys boasted that "this is the first instance (within my recollection, during my residence in Europe) of any of the ports of the Barbary powers being put in a state of blockade, notwithstanding their multiplied piratical aggressions against the Christian nations."⁹¹

Contrary to expectations, the blockade proved barely effective against the Tripolitan pirates.⁹² With new doubts that the blockade would succeed, Dale began thinking about attacking Tripoli ⁹³ In the spring of 1802, Navy Secretary Robert Smith (1757-1842) replaced the first squadron under the command of Commodore Dale with a second under the command of Richard Morris (1765-1814). Though more costly, Jefferson hoped the new squadron would prove to be economical by bringing the war to a quick end and restoring trade possibilities in the

s'r Jefferson, source unknown, quoted in Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 133.

Ibid.

Humphreys, *The Miscellaneous Works of David Humphreys*, 73-74.

⁹² Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 134.

- "Ibid., 135.

Mediterranean. Accelerating the pressures, Tunis began to threaten hostilities because the American Navy had challenged Tunisian vessels destined for Tripoli. Meanwhile, Algiers continued its demands for tribute and voiced great displeasure at American delays in delivering it. Such challenges might have taxed the most ingenious and resolute of naval commanders, and unfortunately Richard Morris fell short of victory.⁹⁴

While the Americans faltered, Yusuf and the Tripolitans flourished. Treaties with the Swedes and Danes brought hundreds of thousands of dollars into the Bashaw's purse. Richard O'Brien, the former Barbary captive made American consul to Tripoli, reported on October 11, 1802, that new pacts with the Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Sicilians, French, and British would shortly follow. In addition, the French gave Tripoli a 14-gun corsair, and the British sold the Tripolitans a 16-gun corsair. After a year and a half of blockading Tripoli, Americans, not Tripolitans, were now fearful of what the enemy's fleet would do. ⁹⁵

Jefferson, along with Morris's replacement, Commodore Edward Preble (1761-1807), recognized the importance of gunboats in patrolling the Tripoli harbor. Always concerned with economy, Jefferson hoped that the tactical shift would "sensibly lessen the expenses" of the Navy in the coming year.⁹⁶ Before the gunboats arrived, however, the Navy suffered its greatest setback of the war with the capture of the frigate *Philadelphia*, under William Bainbridge (1774-1833), by the Bashaw of Tripoli. The acting American consul at Tunis, George Davis (dates unknown), believed that America's future in the Mediterranean depended on a vigorous military response to the loss of the *Philadelphia*. In December 1803, Davis wrote to consul general at Algiers, Tobias Lear (1762-1816), that "the idea of our naval force has been heretofore impressed on these Regencies, as being very trifling indeed." Lear suggested that America had

⁹⁴ Ibid., 136-137.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁹⁶ Jefferson, "Third Annual Message to Congress," October 17, 1803.

three options. It could pay the price of peace demanded by Tripoli, with near certainty that the other Barbary States would increase their tribute demands. A second option was to withdraw American trade from the Mediterranean. Alternatively, America could follow the "loss of the Phila.[sic] with a force to reduce Tripoli. ❶

Jefferson and Commodore Preble moved toward implementing the third option. In a daring move, a naval raid was planned under the direction of Lieutenant Stephen Decatur (1779-1820), in which the *Philadelphia* was burnt, and America was put back on the offensive. On the night of February 16, 1804, Lieutenant Decatur led a small contingent of America's first Marines onto a captured Tripolitan ketch (frigate), rechristened *USS Intrepid*, to deceive the guards on board the *Philadelphia* and float close enough to board the captured ship. Decatur's men stormed the vessel and decimated the Tripolitan sailors standing guard. With support from American ships, the Marines set fire to the *Philadelphia*, denying her use to the enemy, and captured the city.⁹⁸ This victorious action, later memorialized in *The Marine's Hymn* with a reference to "the shores of Tripoli,"⁹⁹ served as an announcement to the world that American forces (though not yet as powerful as the British or the French) should be recognized as capable of shaping the world. Decatur's bravery in action made him one of the first American military heroes since the Revolutionary War.¹⁰⁰

Delighted with the raid, Preble was eager to press his advantage by making direct assaults on Tripoli.¹⁰¹ Preble attacked Tripoli outright on July 14, 1804, in a series of inconclusive battles, including a courageous but unsuccessful attack by the fire ship *USS Intrepid* under Captain Richard Somers (1778/9-1804). *Intrepid*, packed with explosives, was to enter Tripoli

Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 6, 1 November 1803-31 March 1804, 261. ⁹⁸ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 142-144.

⁹⁹ United States Marine Corps, "The Marine's Hymn," <http://www.marines.com>.

¹⁰⁰ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 144.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

harbor and destroy itself and the enemy fleet. It was destroyed, perhaps by enemy guns, before achieving that goal, killing Somers and his crew. The turning point in this war came with the Battle of Derna (April-May 1805). Ex-consul General William Eaton and United States Marine First Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon (1776-1850) led a mixed force of five hundred United States Marines and Greek, Arab and Berber mercenaries on a remarkable, overland march across the desert from Alexandria, Egypt, for an assault on the Tripolitan city of Derna. Weary of the blockade and raids, and under threat of a continued advance on Tripoli proper and a political scheme to restore his deposed older brother Harriet Karamanli (r. 1754-1793) as ruler, Yusuf Karamanli signed a treaty ending hostilities on June 10, 1805.¹⁰² Although the Senate did not approve the treaty until the following year, this treaty effectively ended the First Barbary War.

According to Article 2 of the Treaty:

The Bashaw of Tripoli shall deliver up to the American Squadron now off Tripoli, all the Americans in his possession; and all the Subjects of the Bashaw of Tripoli now in the power of the United States of America shall Be delivered up to him; and as the number of Americans in possession of The Bashaw of Tripoli amounts to Three Hundred Persons, more or less; And the number of Tripolitan Subjects in the power of the Americans to about, One Hundred more or less; The Bashaw of Tripoli shall receive from the United States of America, the sum of Sixty Thousand Dollars, as a payment for the difference between the Prisoners herein mentioned.¹⁰³

By agreeing to pay a ransom of sixty thousand dollars for the American prisoners, the Jefferson administration drew a distinction between paying tribute and paying ransom. Some argued that buying sailors out of slavery was a fair exchange to end the war. William Eaton, however, remained bitter for the rest of his life about the treaty, feeling that his efforts had been squandered by State Department diplomat Tobias Lear. Eaton and others felt that the capture of Derna should have been used as a bargaining chip to obtain the release of all American prisoners

¹⁰² Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers, 1776-1816*, 239.

¹⁰³ U.S. Senate, *Treaty of Peace and Amity Between the United States of America and the Bashaii', Bey, and Subjects of Tripoli, In Barbary*, April 17, 1806.

without having to pay ransom. Furthermore, Eaton believed the honor of the United States had been compromised when it abandoned Harriet Karamanli after promising to restore him as leader of Tripoli. Eaton's complaints generally fell on deaf ears, especially as attention turned to the strained international relations which would ultimately lead to the War of 1812.¹⁰

The First Barbary War proved beneficial to the military reputation of the United States. The developments in American military command and war mechanism since the Revolutionary War had been relatively untested. The First Barbary War proved that America could execute a war far from home, and that American forces had the cohesion to fight together as Americans rather than separately as Georgians or New Yorkers. The United States Navy and Marines became a permanent part of the American government and American history, and Decatur returned to the United States as its first post-Revolutionary war hero.⁰⁵

The Tripoli Treaty, interestingly, was not ratified by Congress immediately. In fact, the debate over whether or not to ratify the treaty became part of the larger debate over America's place in the world. While agreeing that American political independence must be accomplished by economic independence, Federalists and Republicans disagreed over how best to achieve the goal. America's international aspirations were expressed in the country's trade policy, and the 1803 expiration of the commercial provisions of the Jay Treaty sparked heated discussions over such questions as access to markets, the introduction of tariffs and duties, and retaliation for trade discrimination. Viewing domestic manufacturers as the basis of national economic independence, Federalists advocated a protectionist trade policy that would shield American industry while the country maintained close commercial ties with its most important trading partner, Britain and the British colonies. Republicans, on the other hand, regarded America's

¹
1 05 Ibid., 1 85.

0◆ Albion, Makers of Naval Policy, 1798-1947, 184.

agricultural surplus as the foundation of a prosperous future and feared that protectionist tariffs would result in retaliation by other countries, resulting in a decline in demand for American exports. Republicans also advocated retaliation for British discrimination against American goods and interference with American shipping.¹⁰⁶

While the Tripoli Treaty inspired celebrations and sparked partisan debate at home, it hardly caused a ripple in Europe, for it had been eclipsed by concern and news about the Napoleonic wars. To Jefferson's administration, this was a reminder that Europe, not America, still controlled the Atlantic world.¹⁰⁷ As a result, Jefferson swore to fight even harder for American economic freedom.

Partisan Debate and Foreign Harassment

Leaving no time for rest, ominous new threats to American commerce soon loomed on the Atlantic horizon. Locked in a war of epic scale, Britain and France redrew the rules of navigation on the high seas and reminded Americans that their victory in the Mediterranean did not fundamentally alter the Atlantic world as a tribute demanding arena. Casting aside the Tripolitan War as insignificant, compared to the more pressing issues of the Napoleonic Wars, the colossal European powers, not the United States, continued to rule the seas and dictate the terms of commerce. In a struggle for the future of Europe, England and France mobilized their entire societies toward a war whose scale eclipsed the conflict in the Mediterranean. Just as Americans celebrated their victory over the Tripolitan corsairs and anticipated new avenues for free trade in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic became a much more dangerous place as the

⁰⁶ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 160.

¹ ⁰⁷Ibid.

European combatants imposed new restrictions on ships of neutral countries, including those of the United States.¹⁰⁸

The debate over the Tripoli Treaty had also masked a larger, equally divisive issue concerning United States trade policy. Since 1789, Federalists and Republicans had debated the commercial terms under which Americans should conduct business with nations around the world. Having controlled the Presidency and Congress throughout the 1790's, Federalists adopted a protectionist stance, though one with relatively low tariffs, averaging about twenty percent on imports.¹⁰⁹ The Republicans maintained a similar schedule of duties after winning the White House and majorities in the House and Senate in 1800. However, they voiced opposition to protectionism, and insisted that tariffs should be levied for revenue only. In 1803, when Jefferson asked for a Mediterranean Fund to finance the war against Tripoli, Congress enacted a tariff schedule that would generate the necessary income.¹¹⁰

The commercial clauses of the Tripoli Treaty of 1805 reflected the Republican Party's vision of an independent America trading on the basis of reciprocity in markets around the world.¹¹¹ As an example, Article 6 of the Treaty explained the financial terms for trade:

Vessels of either party, putting into the ports of the other, and having need of provisions or other supplies, they shall be furnished at the market price. And if any such vessel shall so put in, from a disaster at sea, and have occasion to repair, she shall be at liberty to land and reembark her cargo without paying any duties. But in case shall she be compelled to the land her cargo.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 169.

¹⁰⁹ Norton and others, *A People and a Nation*, 216.

¹¹⁰ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 169-170.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Barlow, and U.S. Senate, *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli*, June 7, 1797. http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/treaty_tripoli.html.

Under the agreement, American merchants would have access to Tripolitan markets under the same terms granted to the most favored nation trading with Tripoli at the present or in the future. Yet the true importance of the Tripoli Treaty was not in its trade provisions, but in its commitment to peace. American imports and exports with Tripoli were miniscule. The real significance of the accord was the right of free navigation whereby American merchantmen could sail past Tripolitan territory without interference. 113

While the Senate was busy ratifying the Tripoli Treaty, Jefferson was deeply involved in seeking a commercial treaty with Britain. Jefferson instructed James Monroe (1758-1831), United States emissary to London, to negotiate a trade agreement with Britain that would replace the commercial terms of Jay's Treaty of 1800. Jefferson had opposed the ratification of Jay's Treaty in the mid 1790's. At the time he had spoken out against the pact's mercantilist policies, including the British decision to grant only limited American access to West Indies markets, as well as the royal Navy's continued harassment of American ships trading with France, which was locked into combat with the British. Jefferson sought a commercial treaty based on the same principles embodied in the Tripoli Treaty, including access to all markets on a most favored nation basis, trade reciprocity between Britain and America, and cessation of British interference with American neutrality. A favorable agreement with Britain was at the top of Jefferson's trade priorities because of the tremendous potential for trade between the two nations. Unlike Tripoli, Britain provided a rich market for American agricultural surpluses and, in exchange, supplied American consumers with manufactured goods. 114

Jefferson failed to secure the terms he sought because at the time, Americans and Europeans were pursuing diametrically opposed trade goals. While Jefferson sought to expand

Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 169-170.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

American access to European markets, British and French leaders were determined to constrict neutral shipping. In 1805, a British judge permitted British warships and privateers to seize and condemn merchant vessels sailing to French ports,¹¹⁵ The next year, Napoleon (1769-1821) responded to the British blockade of the European coast with the Berlin Decree (1806), which forbade all commerce and communication with the British Isles. America's response was to restate its neutral rights and to insist that American merchant vessels had the right to ship nonmilitary goods to both Britain and France."¹¹⁶

Throughout 1806, Monroe gamely pursued a commercial agreement, but Britain had greater priorities than a bilateral trade agreement with the United States. Britain was at the head of a coalition to stop Napoleon's march across Europe.¹¹⁷ Jefferson followed the widening conflict, commenting on one occasion that war had "lightened up Europe," and on another that the nations of Europe were "in commotion and arming against each other."¹¹⁸ To deny Britain war materials, Napoleon devised a strategy known as the Continental System which barred Britain from trading with France, French allies, and neutrals, including the United States. Britain countered this commercial warfare with a naval blockade of its own. Thus, British negotiators utterly refused to consider Jefferson's free trade proposals, regarding them as patent violations of the war effort against Napoleon.¹¹⁹

Britain's refusal to allow American vessels to sail freely in the Atlantic also had a direct effect on Jefferson's plan to enforce the Tripoli Treaty. Peace with Tripoli, as the President knew, did not guarantee American independence in the Mediterranean. Past experiences had proven that the Barbary pirates would resume depredations at the slightest breach of the treaty or

¹¹⁵ Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror, 1801-1805*, 59.

¹¹⁶ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 171.

¹¹⁷ Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, 187.

¹¹⁸ Jefferson, "Draft of Fifth Annual Message, to Congress," 1805.

¹¹⁹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 171.

at any alleged provocation.'²⁰ Therefore, he instructed Secretary Smith to draw up a "naval peace establishment," specifying the number and types of vessels and the number of officers and men needed to keep the peace in the Mediterranean and to secure American's home waters.¹²¹ As the country shifted from wartime to peace, the president sought to restructure the Navy. The effectiveness of American gunboats in the Tripolitan War had reaffirmed his long held belief that the United States would be better served by a Navy composed of small warships and gunboats suited for defending harbors than by a deepwater Navy.¹²²

Secretary Smith ordered Captain James Barron (1768-1851) to take command of a squadron that would patrol the region, protect United States commerce, and remind the Barbary pirates that any raids on American shipping would be met by overwhelming force. Barron took command of his flagship, the frigate *Chesapeake*, at Hampton, Virginia, and sailed for the Mediterranean. On June 20, 1807, the *Chesapeake* and a squadron of other ships set sail for the Barbary Coast.¹²³ While still in the Chesapeake Bay, the Americans passed a British squadron, including the HMS *Leopard*, lying at anchor off Lynnhaven Bay. Upon boarding the ship, a British officer informed Captain Barron that the *Leopard* had been ordered to search for deserters. In the end, the American ship took several broadsides, the last coming even as Barron ordered the flag lowered in surrender. The British boarded the *Chesapeake* and forcibly impressed the sailors they claimed were British deserters. They declined to take the American ship as a prize because the two nations were not officially at war.¹²⁴ In reality, however, the United States had been drawn into a war similar to the Barbary Wars. While the Barbary pirates

²⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹²¹ Jefferson, "Draft of Fifth Annual Message to Congress," 1805.

¹²² Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present*, 45.

¹ in the Atlantic World,

¹²⁴ De Kay, *A Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur*, 83-84.

² Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence* 172.

captured unescorted American vessels that sailed near North African ports, the British had aggressively taken an American warship just off the United States coastline.

Rather than engage in a military conflict that the United States could not win, Jefferson responded to the Leopard's attack by bringing economic pressure against the British. He recommended to Congress an embargo against foreign trade. Jefferson had long held the view that America should retaliate against powers that refused to trade on a reciprocal basis, and he had specifically deemed the cessation of trade as the republic's most potent weapon against Britain.¹²⁵ Years earlier, in 1785, after Britain's refusal to sign a commercial treaty on terms favorable to the United States, Jefferson had suggested to Madison that only "physical obstruction" of trade would bring the British to reason.¹²⁶ Despite strong minority opposition, Congress passed the Embargo Act on December 22, 1807.¹²⁷ As the opposition grew, Jefferson had to scrap his plans for ensuring a lasting peace in the Mediterranean. After the Chesapeake incident he ordered American warships in the Mediterranean to return home and ended the plan for a "Peace Establishment" intended to check the Barbary powers.¹²⁸

Even before all the ships had returned home, Algerine pirates were once again roaming the seas. With no American naval threat to consider, the corsairs soon took three American vessels captive. After spending millions of dollars on defense to eliminate piratical depredations, America once again faced demands for tribute.¹²⁹ Once more, despite the promise of the Tripoli Treaty, American commercial independence rested on the word of the Barbary pirates.¹³⁰

²⁵ Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror, 1801-1805*, 94.

¹² Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, February 1785 to October 1785, 40.

¹¹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 176.

¹ Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, 262-63.

²⁹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 177.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

To Republicans, the election of 1808 was a referendum on Jefferson's performance as President. As one political pamphleteer noted, the Republican candidate for President would "pursue that wise and virtuous policy which Mr. Jefferson has pursued, and in which Madison has so honorably participated,"³¹ Madison represented continuity in foreign policy, pledging ongoing retaliation against Britain's violation of American commercial and shipping rights, and vowing to end the "ruinous depredations," whether perpetrated by European or Barbary powers.¹³² He called Britain's blockade of Europe "a system of monopoly & piracy" and regarded it as an outrage against legitimate shipping as much as that existing "on the shores of Africa." According to Madison, without retaliation, the United States would never take the place to which it aspired in international affairs. Despite Federalist and Quid opposition, Madison vowed to persist in economic warfare against the British and French on the grounds that nothing short of "national independence" was at stake.¹³³

Even as Madison expressed his determination to preserve American independence, events in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic warned that formidable opposition stood in the way. While Tripoli remained at peace, Algiers once again rose as a threat to American shipping. In late 1808, a faction of Turkish soldiers assassinated Dey Achmet (r. 1806-1808), who had, by and large, honored the Algiers Treaty with the United States. The Turks replaced him with a figurehead named Ali (r. 1808), creating uncertainty in Washington about future relations with Algiers. At a minimum, there would be demands for presents and cash payments, as was customary in Barbary upon a change of regimes. The immediate threat to American shipping was minimal because United States merchantmen continued to be bottled up in American harbors by

Unknown source, quoted in Schlesinger, *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, vol. 1, 1789-1844, 231-233.

³² Madison, source unknown, quoted in Schlesinger, *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, vol. 1, 1789-1844, 239.

¹³³ Peterson, *James Madison: A Biography in His Own Words*, 279-80.

the Embargo Act of 1807. Without being able to sail freely in the Atlantic, American merchants who had hoped to benefit from the Tripolitan War were cut off from Mediterranean markets.¹³⁴ Any military victory against the Barbary pirates would be hollow unless American stature in the Atlantic world improved. Given Britain's overwhelming military superiority, meaningful trade was unlikely to happen unless Britain allowed it. 135

The War of 1812

Upon taking Presidential office in March 1809, Madison determined that economic warfare was America's best hope to pressure Britain into honoring neutral rights, despite mounting evidence that the embargo was riddled with problems. First, a brisk smuggling trade had emerged across the Canadian border as New England merchants transported large quantities of goods by land. Moreover, when an embargo was put into effect in late 1807, many American merchantmen continued to operate in foreign waters and engage in trade with the warring nations. These mavericks actually found favor with the British government, who employed American merchants in the fight against Napoleon. Britain suffered little. South American countries supplied it with many of the raw materials no longer available from the United States. With the removal of commercial trade, British merchants increased their market share of the carrying trade.¹³⁶

Hoping for greater compliance, the Republican led Congress repealed the Embargo Act in March 1809, just before Madison's inauguration. It was replaced with the Nonintercourse Act (1809), which opened American trade with all nations except Britain and France.¹³⁷ Like Jefferson, Madison had pinned his hope for peace on a series of bilateral trade agreements. If the

¹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 180.
¹ Ibid., 180-81.
³⁵

¹ *Encyclopedia of American History*, 7th ed., s.v. unknown.

¹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 181.

United States could become an important trading partner with each of the great European powers, then mutual interests in protecting profitable relationships would lessen the likelihood of warfare. Conversely, Madison was confident that economic coercion would force Britain to cease its violations of American trade.¹³⁸ With the embargos, Both Jefferson and Madison had been overestimating the importance of American goods and markets to the British economy, at least in the short term. Eventually, by 1812, American actions combined with Napoleon's Continental System, did begin to pinch the British economically. Though able until that time to circumvent American trade restrictions in the larger Atlantic world, Britain could no longer prosper when both American and European ports were closed to it. In 1812, the cumulative toll was grim, with widespread unemployment, closing factories, and rising prices. Responding to the growing economic crisis, Parliament voted in June to rescind the Orders in Council and recognize American commercial independence. But the action was too late. Before learning of the measure, Madison had requested and received a declaration of war from a Congress led by a group of Republican war hawks.¹³⁹

In his war message, Madison viewed the new conflict as America's defense of what it had won in 1776. Britain, he asserted, had trampled on rights that "no independent nation can relinquish."¹⁴⁰ Though it had recognized the political independence of the United States in 1783, Britain had not embraced American free trade aspirations in the Atlantic world. The War of 1812, Madison hoped, would complete American independence.¹⁴¹

While the war was fought on American soil and in American waters from 1812 through 1814, it must be considered within a broader context. To Britain, this war was of secondary

¹³⁸ Madison, *The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*, vol. 1, 4 March-31 April 1801, 86. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 22.

¹³⁹ Madison, unknown source, quoted in Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*, 276-77.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

importance, like the Tripolitan War. Mobilized to defeat Napoleon, the British led a poorly organized international league that included Prussia, Russia, and Austria in what they hoped would be a decisive final battle. At the outbreak of hostilities with America, most of Britain's military assets were committed to the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).¹⁴²

Meanwhile, with the assistance of the British, the Barbary pirates seized on America's war preparations at home to extract more tribute. In July of 1812, a month after America declared war against Britain, Algiers refused to accept America's annual tribute. Dey Hadji Ali (r. 1808-1815) declared the quality of the goods delivered to be substandard, and demanded an immediate cash payment of \$27,000 in their place. When American consul Tobias Lear refused the demand, Ali expelled all Americans from Algiers under the condition that the tribute payment must be made for their safe departure. Lear borrowed the sum at twenty-five percent interest. He made the payment, and left Algiers on July 25th.¹⁴³

Within a month, Algerine corsairs captured the Salem brig *Edwin* and imprisoned its captain and ten member crew.¹⁴⁴ A minor irritant in the context of the impending war with Britain, the Algerine extortion illustrated the challenge facing the United States if it were to achieve its goal of free trade in the Atlantic world. Once more a "petty" pirate state had stifled hopes for American commerce in the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁵

As had often been the case since 1785, British complicity lay behind the new pirate attack. An 1812 letter from Whitehall assured Dey Ali that he could count on British support in any action taken against "enemies of Great Britain," including the United States.¹⁴⁶ The prince

¹⁴² Lambert, *The Barbary Wars. American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 183.

¹⁴³ [ibid., 183-4.

¹⁴⁴ Wright and MacLeod, *The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle for a Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805*, 202-3.

¹⁴⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 184.

¹⁴⁶ Unknown source, quoted in Spencer, *Algiers in the Age of Corsairs*, 139.

regent, writing in the name of his father, King George III (r. 1760-1820), promised naval protection for Algiers if the two countries worked together. Always eager for more tribute, Ali agreed. This alliance between "the two strongest naval powers in the Mediterranean" brought American trade in the region to a halt for the duration of the War of 1812.⁴⁷

The British backed Algerine attack coincided with the beginning of hostilities in America. The American strategy was to take advantage of Britain's preoccupation with Europe and mount an attack against Canada. Hoping for a quick victory, the United States launched a major offensive in July of 1812 aimed at defeating the British in their North American stronghold. The small American Navy handled itself well in several single ship battles but was unable to challenge Britain's control of the seas. Individual commanders in the United States Navy, hardened by war in Tripoli, were able to score victories that stung British pride and spurred American hope. The Constitution, the Constellation, the President, the Essex, the United States, and the repaired Chesapeake engaged the Royal Navy, ⁴⁸ "Preble's Boys," the Captains William Bainbridge, Isaac Hull (1773-1843), Stephen Decatur, and David Porter (1780-1843), served with distinction in the ensuing combat, just as they had in the Mediterranean. ¹⁴⁹ The British were taken aback by the performance of the American Navy during the opening months of the war, when American ships scored a series of single ship victories. The editors of Britain's leading naval journal, The Pilot, reported how the British were appalled by the defeats. ¹⁵⁰

Despite some success by the United States Navy with single ship victories, the Royal Navy's blockade continued to be effective. In August of 1814, British warships overcame American coastal gunships and assisted their army in capturing and burning Washington, D.C.

Ibid.

Lambert, The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World, 184-185.
 ivy Spencer, Algiers in the Age of the Corsairs, 276.

51) Lambert, The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World, 185.

Neither the British nor American side, however, was able to deliver a decisive blow, and the war dragged on in a costly stalemate. Not surprisingly, both sides reacted enthusiastically when Andrei Dashkov (1777-1830), the first Russian minister in Washington, offered his government's assistance to broker a peace treaty. Madison quickly appointed Albert Gallatin (1761-1849), John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), and James Bayard (1767-1815) as peace commissioners, even before the British accepted.¹⁵¹ For the American negotiators, nothing was more important than to settle the maritime issues that had led to war in the first place. The Americans insisted on freedom of navigation, which meant that the British had to forswear the capture of merchantmen, the confiscation of cargo, and impressments of sailors. Instructions to the American negotiators explicitly made the end of impressments essential to any peace settlement. This issue was ultimately dropped, however, and the Treaty of Ghent, which was signed on December 24, 1814, really just restored the status quo ante bellum.¹⁵²

The War of 1812 brought about the expansion of the United States Navy, fulfilling the aspiration of George Washington that he signed in his An Act to Provide a Naval Armament in 1794. Previous to the War of 1812, only three of the mandated six ships had even been built. After the war, the United States no longer questioned the need for a strong Navy and even completed three new 74-gun ships and two new 44-gun frigates shortly after the end of the war. In addition, as a result of the Treaty of Ghent, Britain finally ceased attacking, interfering with, and impressing American trading ships at sea. America was now sufficiently equipped to turn her full attention to the matter of the Barbary pirates.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 186.

¹⁵² Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 284-96.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

The Algerine War: 1815-1816

Having taken advantage of America's preoccupation with the war against Britain, the corsairs were free to prey with impunity on American interests in the Mediterranean. During the War of 1812, the United States had required all available naval vessels to stay in American waters. Moreover, even if Madison had wished to send a squadron to the Mediterranean, the British blockade would have prevented its passage. The end of fighting in 1815 finally gave America freedom of navigation in the Atlantic, especially since Britain had agreed to stop interfering with American shipping directly and indirectly. Thus in 1815, Madison turned once again to the matter of the Barbary pirates, determined to end forever this long-standing menace. Only one week after the February 17, 1815, ratification of the Treaty of Ghent ended hostilities with England, a furious James Madison asked Congress to declare war on Algiers.¹ Madison told Congress that the Dey had committed

acts of more overt and direct warfare against the citizens of the United States trading in the Mediterranean, some of whom are still detained in captivity, notwithstanding the attempts which have been made to ransom them, and are treated with the rigor usual on the coast of Barbary'⁵⁵

On March 3, Congress formally authorized hostilities against Algiers. The naval force that Madison deployed reflected his determination to end all harassment against American ships and citizens, not only by Algiers but by all of the Barbary States. As a Secretary of State under Jefferson, he had witnessed firsthand the futility of purchasing peace through the payment of tribute. Barbary leaders were never satisfied with the amount or nature of the tribute and at the slightest excuse would send their corsairs out to capture more American vessels in order to extort additional payments. As President, Madison meant to stop the payment of tributes once and

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¹ a Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 188-189.
¹ ⁵ Madison, "War Message" February 23, 1815.

forever. Two squadrons would sail to the Mediterranean, each under the command of a battle hardened commodore familiar with the Barbary pirates and their tactics. Captain Stephen Decatur led the first squadron of ten warships. A couple of months later, a squadron under the command of William Bainbridge set sail. ⁵⁶

Decatur's arrival in the Mediterranean made an immediate impression. At Cadiz, he learned that the Algerine pirates had been prowling the Atlantic but had recently returned to the Mediterranean. He also learned that the Algerine Admiral Reis Hammida (dates unknown) had, just two days earlier, sailed for Cape de Gatte on Spain's southeastern coast awaiting Spain's tribute payment of half a million dollars. From Cadiz, Decatur sailed through the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Port of Gibraltar, where he received fresh intelligence confirming Hammida's intention to lie off the Spanish coast. ⁵⁷

Two days after leaving Gibraltar, Decatur spotted a large sail about twenty miles off the Spanish coast, and determined it to be Hammida and company. To conceal the identity of his ships, and in keeping with standard wartime practice, Decatur ordered an English flag displayed. Hammida saw through the ruse, and attempted to elude the attackers by sailing toward Algiers. Decatur soon overtook Hammida's ship, and after an epic battle, Hammida surrendered. Two days later the Americans overwhelmed a 22-gun Algerine brig, the *Estedio*. Within a week of beginning operations against the enemy, Decatur had taken two huge warships and almost five hundred prisoners. He then sailed for Algiers, arriving there on June 28. The following day, Decatur delivered the President's message demanding peace, ¹⁵⁸ It was clear to Decatur that the

⁵⁶Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 189-90.

¹ ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁵⁸ De Kay, *A Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur*, 156-7.

American naval victory made a "visible and deep" impression on the port captain. Decatur responded by handing over a copy of the President's instructions to the Dey."

Decatur demanded a commercial treaty with a most favored nation clause, precisely the kind of pact that the United States had been seeking in its dealings with most of the world throughout the nineteenth century. The pact also sought the abolition of any type of tributary payments. The Dey's negotiators examined the proposed treaty and responded that the Dey would not agree. In particular, they objected to the demand that Algiers return all American property that the regency had captured and distributed among government officials, private investors, and ships' crew. ¹⁶⁰ Decatur accepted that objection, but refused the port captain's request for a three hour truce "to deliberate upon the terms of the proposal treaty." Decatur replied firmly, "Not a minute; if your squadron appears in sight before the treaty is actually signed by the Dey, and the prisoners sent off, ours will capture them."¹⁶¹ Faced with imminent loss of his navy and heavy bombardment of his capitol, the Dey signed Decatur's treaty on June 30, 1815, ¹⁶²

Decatur's boast to the Secretary of the Navy that the settlement had "been dictated at the mouths of our cannon"¹⁶³ was echoed with understandable bitterness by the Algerine minister, who complained to the British consul: "You told us that the Americans would be swept from the seas in six months by your navy, and now they make war upon us with some of your own vessels which they have taken."¹⁶⁴

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⁵⁹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 193,
"¹⁶¹ Ibid.

U.S. Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, *Senate Journal*, 14th Cong., 1st sess. vol. 4, subtitle unknown, 6.
Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 92.

^{v3} Decatur, unknown source, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, 92.

¹⁶⁴ Unknown source, quoted in Hagan, *This People's Navy: the Making of American Sea Power*, 92.

After obtaining the treaty at Algiers, Decatur sailed for Tunis to make similar demands. During the War of 1812, the British had captured two United States merchantmen and brought them to Tunis, where they were held as prizes. Thus in addition to securing peace, Decatur was determined to gain retribution for those vessels. According to an American lieutenant aboard one of the squadron's warships, American "difficulties" with Tunis apparently were settled quickly, with Decatur dictating the terms.¹⁶⁵ Under this treaty, the American flag would be able to "pass unmolested through the Mediterranean, without tribute." The treaty also dictated that the United States receive \$60,000 for the two vessels held by Tunis.¹⁶⁶ The tables were now turned. Instead of the United States paying tribute to a Barbary power, as had been customary for thirty years, a Barbary power was making financial restitution to the United States.¹⁶⁷

From Tunis, the American squadron sailed to Tripoli, where its old enemy, Yusuf Karamanli, was still ruling as Bashaw. Decatur made demands for a peace treaty that would guarantee the safe passage of American warships without the payment of tribute, and an indemnity of \$30,000 for vessels taken by the British in the late war and held in the port of Tripoli. In addition, Decatur demanded the release of prisoners from various nations. His terms were granted.¹⁶⁸ One sailor, recording the historic moment, noted that it would not be lost on those hearing of the event that Europeans "long enslaved" were "released by the American government."¹⁶⁹ An American eyewitness offered a similar expression of national pride:

I need not say how gratifying this cruise must be to every American soul, how delightful it was to see the stars and stripes holding forth the hand of retributive justice to the barbarians, and rescuing the unfortunate, even of distant but friendly European nations, from slavery."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 193-4.
¹⁶⁶ G.O. Decatur and U.S. Congress, unknown source, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Latnbert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, /94.
¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *New-York Evening Post*, title unknown, November 27, 1815, sec. unknown.
¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

An American squadron had done what no European power had ever done before. It had forced the Barbary pirates to disavow tribute and forgo ransom.¹⁷¹

Prior to Decatur's departure to the Mediterranean, Secretary of State James Monroe had predicted that the European powers would take notice of the American expedition against Algiers.¹⁷² He thought that the "honorable manner" in which the United States had concluded the war against Britain, and the stand that it had made against French violations of its neutrality, had resulted in "immense advantages" for American in Europe. He predicted that as a result of these accomplishments, Europeans would be less likely to attack Americans and more likely to trade with American vessels. If Decatur's squadron succeeded in its mission, American prestige among Europeans, especially the English, would only rise.¹⁷³ Monroe's concern with the European reaction reflected his understanding that America's ability to trade on the Atlantic, on an equal footing with the great powers, depended on winning their respect. Monroe was right. Europeans in the Mediterranean did take notice, albeit reluctantly, of America's achievement.¹⁷⁴ Sailing with Commodore Bainbridge when the United States squadron sailed into the British port of Gibraltar, one officer wrote,

It was a proud sight for an American to see in a British port just at the close of a war with her, which the English thought would have been the destruction of our navy, a squadron of seventeen sail, larger perhaps than our whole navy at the commencement of that war.¹⁷⁵

In the United States after 1815, victory against Algiers contributed significantly to a sense of national pride. Americans celebrated their country's new economic independence.

Newspaper editorials and Fourth of July orations congratulated America for standing up to the

¹⁷¹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 194.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 194-5.

¹⁷³ Monroe, *The Writings of James Monroe*, vol. 5, 1807-1816, 331.

¹⁷⁴ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 195.
¹⁷⁵ U.S. Navy officer, Letter, September 10, 1815, quoted in Bowen, *The Naval Monument*, 301-2.

Barbary powers and against British tyranny, and for ensuring free trade in the Atlantic." In an 1818 speech in Detroit, one of Michigan's proud patriots, Andre Griswold Whitney (dates unknown), boasted that Europe had witnessed America's "chastisements and humiliation of the PIRATIC states of Barbary." He declared that "our naval flag has also been equally triumphant" over Britain as commanders "Hull-Decatur- Jones-Bainbridge-Lawrence have demonstrated our superior skill and prowess." There was new confidence that America's fortunes had changed. American orators proudly announced that "pirates dread punishment," how captives were delivered from servitude; and how the "Star-spangled banner" was free to wave in "every port of the civilized world,"¹⁷¹ Unlike the aftermath of the Tripolitan War, the end of the Algerine War transcended partisan wrangling and reinforced the sense of national identity first inspired by the successful outcome of the War of 1812.

American Commercial Freedom

The struggle between America and the Barbary powers pitted two marginal players against each other in the Atlantic world, both of whom had been pawns in the European power game. After 1815, the Barbary powers lost their independence. After agreeing to the humiliating American treaty, the Barbary nations were colonized by various European countries.¹⁷⁸ America, on the other hand, moved in a positive direction towards its goal of conducting free trade, and gained political autonomy and international respect. For the first time since the American Revolution, American vessels operated in the Atlantic world without being molested.¹⁷⁹ Even Britain ceased its harassment of United States ships crossing the Atlantic

⁷⁶ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 197-8.
¹⁷⁷ Whitney, source unknown, quoted in Hawkins, *Trumpets of Glory: Fourth of July Orations, 1786- 1801*, 340,
¹ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 200-1.
⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.
¹⁷⁹

after the Peace of Paris in 1815.¹⁸⁰ After more than thirty years of humiliation at the hands of the Barbary pirates, the United States was no longer at the mercy of the corsairs. As Madison put it, American commercial vessels could now safely pass "within reach of the Barbary cruisers."^{181,182}

America was emerging as a junior power in the Atlantic world. Its rapidly growing population and expanding commerce made it an attractive trading partner, especially for the British. America's population more than doubled from 1785 to 1815, when it exceeded eight million people, presenting a consumer market that could not be ignored.¹⁸³ The rapidly expanding cotton industry provided valuable raw materials for Britain's textile mills. In addition to becoming more important to British merchants, the United States after 1815 found favor with British investors, who poured millions of pounds sterling into developing American factories.¹⁸⁴

Despite the enormous struggles after independence was declared, Britain and America had rediscovered a mutual interest thirty years later. As they forged a strong economic partnership, their new relationship found formal expression in a bilateral commercial treaty in 1815 that aimed at rendering Anglo-American trade "reciprocally beneficial and satisfactory."¹⁸⁵ Trade statistics bore out the optimism. American imports of British goods increased more than sevenfold from 1815 to 1860, and American exports to Britain kept a similar ^{pace.}¹⁸⁶ By opening British markets to American ships and guaranteeing most favored nation status, the agreement enabled American merchants to achieve their political and economic dreams of trading in the Atlantic on free and equal terms.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 201.

Ibid., 197.

¹⁸² To make certain that continued to be the case, Madison ordered two frigates to continue patrolling the Mediterranean.

¹⁸³ U.S. Bureau of Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present*, 7. Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 201. British Government and United States Government, *United Kingdom Commerce and Navigation Treaty*, 1815.

¹⁸⁶ U.S. Bureau of Census, *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present*, 538, 553.

¹⁸⁷ Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, 202.

Epilogue

If it can be said that "what does not kill us, can make us stronger," then it might also be said that while the policy failures and defeats in its relations with the Barbary powers were demoralizing, they actually stimulated new initiatives and strength of purpose in the young nation over the course of its struggle for political and economic independence. The more that the European powers withdrew cooperation and worked at cross-purposes, the more the United States government relied upon American resources and resourcefulness to fight back. Tremendous progress was made from the time when the Continental Congress first sent its representatives to the governments of Europe to beg protection, to 1815, when Decatur assertively dictated to the rulers of Barbary the sole conditions upon which they could avert hostilities. The sufferings of over four hundred and fifty Americans imprisoned at Algiers and Tripoli, representing communities all over the American seaboard, united America in commiseration and outrage. For young America, the experience of common sufferings, the development of common institutions such as the Navy and Marines, and the commemoration of outstanding heroes, helped evolve a unity of the American people.⁸⁸

America declared its independence from England in 1776, but it was many years until the new republic managed to achieve some economic independence and command respect among the world powers of Europe. America's struggles with the Barbary pirates, while originally perceived by Jefferson as a nuisance secondary to other political concerns, played a crucial role in helping the United States define itself as a nation. The Barbary struggles challenged America to find a way to defend itself. Politically, this was achieved through the writing of a Constitution which empowered the government to collect taxes from the states and devise a way to defend the

1 ⁸⁸Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Bar-bag Powers 1776-1816*, page unknown.

country from attack. When the fledgling Navy proved insufficient against the Barbary powers, America finally began the formation of a Navy strong enough to intimidate the British in 1812 and eventually the Barbary powers in 1815. The Barbary challenges, inextricably tied to power struggles with the British, forced the United States to develop national self-sufficiency through the necessity of finding a way to establish a free and uninhibited trading environment that would provide income for Americans. As soon as the United States figured out how to take control of its own destiny and throw off the yoke of England, it emerged not only as a military power, but as an economic power in world trade, a position which it has maintained to this day. In this light, it can be concluded that the Barbary pirates truly served as a Founding Father of the United States of America.

"Pirate is in your blood... you'll have to square with that some day."
- Jack Sparrow 18

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