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The United States and the Barbary Pirates: Adventures in Sexuality, State-Building, and  
Nationalism, 1784-1815

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

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**Jason Raphael Zeledon**

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## ABSTRACT

The United States and the Barbary Pirates: Adventures in Sexuality, State-Building, and

Nationalism, 1784-1815

by

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Throughout the first three decades of its independence, the United States constantly experienced conflicts with the Barbary pirates. Indeed, weathering a hostage crisis or waging war against Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, or Tunis was commonplace from 1784 to 1815. Of these thirty-two years, twenty-five of them featured a serious conflict with the Barbary States. The majority of works about the Barbary conflicts focus on events in North Africa: the experiences of the American captives, the frustrations of the diplomats, the excitement of battles, and the courageous actions of naval and military officers. This manuscript reorients our attention to the United States and reveals the greater significance of the Barbary conflicts. They powerfully shaped the cultural and political development of the early U.S. republic and changed the way policymakers, newspaper editors, and the public saw their country's place in the world.

In the 1780s, problems with the Barbary pirates contributed to the movement to abolish the Articles of Confederation and create the Constitution. Also, American perceptions of North African men changed from the 1780s to 1790s: from fierce adversaries to effeminate pushovers. During the Tripolitan War of 1801-1805, both political parties (Federalists and Democratic-Republicans) believed that much was at stake for themselves—they were fighting for the public's trust in their vision for keeping Americans safe from Barbary piracy. When the navy did win battles, Federalist and Democratic-Republican

newspaper editors alike claimed credit for their party while denigrating their rivals as unpatriotic and not concerned with the public good. Also, although fought 5,000 miles away in the Mediterranean, the Tripolitan War was enormously popular and made a sizable cultural impact. After negligently running the war against Tripoli, President Thomas Jefferson mishandled another conflict, with Tunis. He controversially used federal funds to cover the travel and living expenses of Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli and was ultimately outmatched in negotiations for peace and a new treaty. Another war in the Mediterranean (against Algiers) occurred during the presidency of James Madison, who learned from Jefferson's mistakes and accomplished what policymakers had striven for since the 1780s: the subjugation of the Barbary pirates. By obtaining congressional support at the outset and by sending an overwhelming force to the Mediterranean, Madison obtained a fast and decisive victory and prevented Federalists from raising any viable challenge to his leadership. This manuscript concludes with an examination of the historical memory of the Tripolitan War, Mellimelli mission, and Algerine War.

In making new arguments, this manuscript examines a plethora of primary sources written by Americans, North Africans, and the British and especially draws upon newspapers found via the online databases *Early American Newspapers Series I & II* and *Nineteenth-Century U.S. Newspapers*. Newspapers reveal exciting new voices and information, as they contain editorials, letters not found in published collections, advertisements for cultural events, transcriptions of speeches, toasts given at public events, poems, and election campaign ads. Altogether, this manuscript reveals how America's conflicts with the Barbary pirates during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries affected the development of political parties, ideas about gender and race, and nationalism within the United States.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout the first three decades of its independence, the United States constantly experienced conflicts with the Barbary pirates. Indeed, weathering a hostage crisis or waging war against Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, or Tunis was commonplace from 1784 to 1815.<sup>1</sup> Of these thirty-two years, twenty-five of them featured a serious conflict with the Barbary States.<sup>2</sup> How did policymakers and the public respond to these nearly perpetual problems? How did conflicts with North Africa (which took place 5,000 miles away in the Mediterranean region) shape events on American soil and affect the developing political party system? To what extent did wars against Tripoli and Algiers captivate the public's imagination and generate artistic endeavors and commercial opportunities? These questions drive this manuscript, which breaks new ground by revealing how problems with the Barbary pirates fueled the growth of the political party system, shaped ideas about gender and race, and contributed to American nationalism.

The majority of works about the Barbary conflicts focus on events in North Africa: the experiences of the American captives, the frustrations of the diplomats, the excitement of battles, and the courageous actions of naval and military officers. A few works (often by literature scholars) have broached the cultural dynamics of America's encounters with North Africa, but mostly regarding the 1785-1797 conflict with Algiers.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have largely

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<sup>1</sup> Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis loosely belonged to the Ottoman Empire but made their own foreign policy decisions. Morocco was fully independent.

<sup>2</sup> Morocco took some sailors captive in 1784; Algiers held hostages from 1785 to 1796; Tripoli and the United States were at war from 1801 to 1805; Tunis contested the U.S. Navy's capture of three of its ships from 1805 to 1807; and Algiers waged war against America from 1812 to 1815.

<sup>3</sup> Osman Benchérif, *The Image of Algeria in Anglo-American Writings: 1785-1962* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997); Martha Rojas, "'Insults Unpunished': Barbary Captives, American Slaves, and the



overlooked the cultural and political ramifications of the Tripolitan War of 1801-1805, of the diplomatic mission of Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli during Thomas Jefferson's second term, and of the war against Algiers from 1812-1815. By primarily focusing on these three events, this manuscript reorients our attention to the United States (instead of on the Mediterranean region) and reveals the greater significance of the Barbary conflicts. They powerfully shaped the cultural and political development of the early U.S. republic and changed the way policymakers, newspaper editors, and the public saw their country's place in the world.

The Barbary conflicts were a ubiquitous part of American culture in the early republic. Because the United States rarely enjoyed periods of sustained peace with North Africa, policymakers, newspaper editors, and the public constantly worried about the safety of America's merchant fleet and navy and hoped that their country would permanently end the threat of Barbary piracy. As the political party system evolved, Federalists and Democratic-Republicans alike believed that much was at stake for their parties regarding the Barbary conflicts. They heavily criticized each other's North African policies and vied for credit for naval victories. Barbary piracy also captivated the public's imagination and generated cultural events, commercial products, and literary interpretations. Altogether,

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Negotiation of Liberty," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003); Lawrence Peskin, "The Lessons of Independence: How the Algerian Crisis Shaped Early American Identity," *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 3 (June 2004); Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jacob Berman, "The Barbarous Voice of Democracy: American Captivity in Barbary and the Multicultural Specter," *American Literature* 79, no. 1 (March 2007); Lawrence Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009); Robert Battistini, "Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism: The Muslim World in Early American Periodicals, 1785-1800," *EAS* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2010); Jacob Crane, "Barbary(an) Invasions: The North African Figure in Print Culture," *EAS* 50, no. 2 (Spring 2015). For in-depth analyses of the experiences of the American captives in Algiers see H.G. Barnby, *The Prisoners of Algiers: An Account of the Forgotten American-Algerian War 1785-1797* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) and Christine Sears, *American Slaves and African Masters: Algiers and the Western Sahara, 1776-1820* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Americans believed that the Barbary conflicts constituted a litmus test for their young country—just how free was the United States?

Although called “pirates” by Americans and Europeans, the Barbary pirates more accurately resembled privateers because the North African governments sponsored them and owned many of the ships. Barbary piracy surged in the aftermath of Spain’s expulsion of the Moors in 1492 and, according to one recent estimate, North Africans captured and enslaved 1 million to 1.25 million Europeans from 1530 to 1780.<sup>4</sup> Some were sold in slave markets, while others were forced to work until they died or were ransomed. Barbary piracy played a key economic role in North Africa by creating jobs for men and generating revenue for the governments through the ransom of captives, the consummation of treaties, and annual tribute payments. Regarding the word “Barbary” (which Europeans and Americans used to refer to North Africa), scholars remain unsure of its exact origins. It most likely derived from the Greek *barbaros* or the Latin *barbarus* to denote non-Greeks or non-Romans and it became associated with the coastal and mountainous region north of the Sahara Desert.<sup>5</sup> Over time the word came to signify the notion (among Europeans and Americans) that North Africans were uncivilized or barbarians. Although “Barbary” has a negative connotation I utilize it in this manuscript due to its ubiquity in the primary sources, but I disavow the notion that North Africans were inferior to Europeans or Americans.

In making new arguments, this manuscript examines a plethora of primary sources written by Americans, North Africans, and the British. It especially draws upon newspapers

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2-3; Ann Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes towards the Maghreb in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1987), 11-14.

found via the online databases *Early American Newspapers Series I & II* and *Nineteenth-Century U.S. Newspapers*. Newspapers are the single most underutilized source in books and articles about the Barbary conflicts and, through digitization efforts, have become much more accessible over the past two decades. Newspapers reveal exciting new voices and information, as they contain editorials, letters not found in published collections, advertisements for cultural events, transcriptions of speeches, toasts given at public events, poems, and election campaign ads. Newspapers also allow us to answer several important questions, including: how often did Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspapers publish articles about the Tripolitan War, the Mellimelli mission, and the Algerine War?<sup>6</sup> How did newspaper editors try to shape these events to their party's advantage? How did the public respond to the Barbary conflicts and what cultural impact did those events have? By using a variety of search terms, I found thousands of newspaper articles that discuss the Barbary conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

Published collections and online databases of primary sources have been enormously useful as well. Several chapters draw upon the six-volume *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers* (which mostly covers the Tripolitan War). This compilation of letters, diary entries, and ship-logs was published decades ago, but the sheer

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<sup>6</sup> In determining the party affiliation of newspapers I primarily relied on three sources. Jeffrey Pasley's "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA, 2001) discusses individual newspaper's political views throughout the book and contains a list of Democratic-Republican newspapers on pages 407-409. Donald Stewart's *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (Albany, NY, 1969) lists the political slant of many newspapers on pages 868-893. Finally, the *Early American Newspapers* database states the party affiliation of various newspapers at <http://www.readex.com/sites/default/files/EANMicro%20Selected%20Descriptions.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Newspapers regularly republished material from other newspapers. As a leading scholar has described, reprinted articles constituted "the source of most American newspaper content" and "there were no copyright fees, required permissions, or even well-established canons of giving credit." The federal government encouraged the widespread circulation of newspapers: the Post Office Act of 1792 allowed printers to mail newspapers to subscribers at a reduced rate and to other printers for free. See Pasley, 8-9, 48, 173.

amount of material in it has resulted in many interesting documents being overlooked.

Correspondence and government records available in the *Papers of James Madison*, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, the *American State Papers* series, microfilm reels, the Library of Congress's website, archive.org, Google Books, and the HathiTrust Digital Library have been used as well.

Archival trips to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Huntington Library, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. yielded a trove of unpublished correspondence.

Additionally, I have drawn upon captivity narratives, memoirs, and contemporaneous literature. Altogether, this manuscript incorporates the perspectives of several groups: artists, businessmen, diplomats, foreign visitors to the United States, government officials, merchants, naval officers and seamen, newspaper editors, North African policymakers, and sailors in the merchant fleet.

Chapter 2 examines the origins of the United States' conflicts with North Africa and early efforts by policymakers to resolve them. It also explores the evolution of American perceptions of the Barbary pirates from the mid-1780s to mid-1790s: from powerful marauders to effeminate weaklings. In the 1780s most commentators preferred to pay tribute, arguing that the Barbary States were too strong to fight and that reviving the U.S. navy (dismantled after the Revolutionary War) would be too expensive. As efforts to make treaties faltered and a hostage situation with Algiers dragged on, some diplomats, merchants, and statesmen called for revising the Articles of Confederation and creating a stronger central government in order to deal more effectively with Barbary piracy. Scholars have generally neglected the contributions of the Barbary conflicts to U.S. state-building, as key works on

the creation of the Constitution scarcely mention (or entirely omit) them.<sup>8</sup> Further, the language used to describe the Barbary pirates changed in the mid-1790s by taking on a new gendered edge. Reports of shameful sexual abuse of hostages emerged in newspapers and books, with commentators seeking to put pressure on the federal government to free the captives and to protect the merchant fleet in the Mediterranean. A growing consensus favored fighting the Barbary pirates over paying tribute, but the United States was not ready to fight until Thomas Jefferson's Administration.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 feature a fresh look at the Tripolitan War of 1801-1805 and its impact on American politics and culture. Most books about the conflict emphasize the naval battles, William Eaton's coup attempt, and the experiences of the *Philadelphia* captives.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: Norton, 1969); Frederick Marks III, "Foreign Affairs: A Winning Issue in the Campaign for Ratification of the United States Constitution" *Political Science Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (September 1971); Jack Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretative History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1979); Walter LaFeber, "The Constitution and United States Foreign Policy: An Interpretation," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 3 (December 1987); Roger Brown, *Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007); Richard Beeman, *Plain Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* (New York: Random House, 2009); Pauline Maier, *Ratification. The People Debate the Constitution: 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). By far the most extensive incorporation of the Barbary conflicts occurs in Frederick Marks's *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1973).

<sup>9</sup> Gardner Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (New York: Houghton, 1905); Ray Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers, 1776-1816* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1931); Glenn Tucker, *Dawn like Thunder: The Barbary Wars and the Birth of the U.S. Navy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963); Louis Wright and Julia Macleod, *The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle for a Vigorous Policy against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805* (New York: Greenwood University Press, 1969); Donald Chidsey, *The Wars in Barbary: Arab Piracy and the Birth of the United States Navy* (New York: Crown, 1971); A.B.C. Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines* (New York: William Morrow, 1991); Michael Kitzen, *Tripoli and the United States at War: A History of American Relations with the Barbary States, 1785-1805* (New York: McFarland, 1993); Michael Kitzen, "Money Bags or Cannon Balls: The Origins of the Tripolitan War, 1795-1801," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1996); Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror, 1801-1805* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004); Richard Parker, *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004), 133-147; Joshua London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Built a Nation* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005); Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York:

Only a few authors have taken a more nuanced look at Jefferson's leadership or broached the cultural construction of the Barbary pirates.<sup>10</sup> Overall, these chapters argue that historians have erred in viewing the Tripolitan War as a sideshow.<sup>11</sup> Even scholars of U.S. foreign relations have shockingly deemed it inconsequential—for instance, Bradford Perkins's touchstone *The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776-1815* entirely omits the Tripolitan War!<sup>12</sup> Although Jefferson himself considered the conflict relatively insignificant, newspaper editors and the public at large deemed it enormously important to national identity. Newspapers constantly printed articles about the Tripolitan War, including editorials, details about battles and the captives in Tripoli, and letters from Mediterranean personnel. Since the United States was not at war with any other country during the

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Hyperion, 2005); Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger, *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War that Changed American History* (New York: Sentinel, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005); Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 143-162; Francis Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 144-171.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, *Thomas Jefferson: Westward the Course of Empire* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999), 130; Lambert, 7; Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 242; Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 639. Dumas Malone's six-volume biography of Thomas Jefferson provides a brief overview of the Tripolitan War; *Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801-1805*, vol. 4 of *Jefferson and His Time* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 97-99, 262-263 and *Jefferson the President: Second Term, 1805-1809*, vol. 5 of *Jefferson and His Time* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 37-44. Irving Brant's six-volume biography of James Madison scarcely covers it; *Secretary of State, 1800-1809*, vol. 4 of *James Madison* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 60, 308-309. Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg's 800+ page *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010), only devotes a handful of pages to the Tripolitan War (403-407).

<sup>12</sup> Bradford Perkins, *The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776-1865*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson's *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) relegates the Tripolitan War to the endnotes (294-299) and deems it "a police action" (295) instead of a real war. Kaplan's *Thomas Jefferson: Westward the Course of Empire* spends only four pages on the Tripolitan War (127-130), while Howard Jones's *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) covers it in just two paragraphs (54-55). More positively, a recent issue of *Passport* (the magazine of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations) featured a roundtable discussion about Cogliano's *Emperor of Liberty* that broached the Tripolitan War; *Passport* 45, no.3 (January 2015), 7-16.

Tripolitan War, newspaper editors and the public gave it their full attention. Paradoxically, the conflict enjoyed nearly unanimous public support even though it exacerbated political divisions between the Democratic-Republican and Federalist parties. In contrast to earlier wars against Britain and France, no anti-war movement existed—all Americans despised the Barbary pirates. Newspapers affiliated with both parties endorsed the use of force against Tripoli, yet Jefferson eventually alienated Federalists (who wanted many more warships sent to the Mediterranean) with his half-hearted commitment to the Tripolitan War. When the navy did win battles, Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspaper editors alike claimed credit for their party while denigrating their rivals as unpatriotic and not concerned with the public good. Both parties believed that much was at stake for themselves during the Tripolitan War—they were fighting for the public’s trust in their vision for keeping Americans safe from Barbary piracy.

Moreover, the Tripolitan War had vibrant cultural and commercial aspects that have gone unnoticed. Artists used their creative talents to interpret the conflict in many ways and the public eagerly spent money on Tripolitan War-themed art shows, books, musicals, pictures, and plays. Americans viewed the Tripolitan War as an extension of the Revolutionary War and Quasi-War: all three conflicts entailed defending freedom from foreign oppressors. Newspaper articles and toasts utilized rhetoric from the earlier wars against Britain and France in vocalizing support for fighting Tripoli. Although fought 5,000 miles away in the Mediterranean, the Tripolitan War was enormously popular and made a sizable cultural impact. Previous works about the Tripolitan War have focused on developments in the Mediterranean, but these chapters (and the manuscript as a whole) redirects attention to North America.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 also provide a reevaluation of Jefferson's leadership during the Tripolitan War by arguing that he managed it very poorly.<sup>13</sup> In the 1780s, Jefferson had been a naval hawk and had supported building a navy powerful enough to protect itself from the Barbary States and Europe. By the time he became president in 1801, however, his views had drastically changed. Appalled by the growth of the armed forces during the Quasi-War of the late 1790s, he became both distrustful of military figures and committed to reducing naval expenses. In doing so, he recklessly created the potential for catastrophe, endangered the lives of sailors, and emboldened the Barbary States to treat the United States contemptuously. North African policymakers were not intimidated by a token U.S. fleet in the Mediterranean. Also, Jefferson squandered early Federalist support and foolishly disregarded the advice given by diplomats and naval officers to send more ships. Instead, the president repeatedly tried to end the Tripolitan War by offering to pay off the bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, who rejected such overtures and preferred to fight the United States. Ultimately, Jefferson deemed the Federalists a bigger threat to national security than Tripoli and made the United States look weak instead of powerful. Moreover, Jefferson greatly misunderstood public sentiment. Newspaper editors, naval officers, diplomats, and the public desired unequivocal victory over Tripoli, but Jefferson was willing to settle for much less. Additionally, the public did not share Jefferson's distrust of naval officers—

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<sup>13</sup> My work stands in contrast to other scholars. Wright and Macleod contend that "Jefferson did the best he could with the pitiful navy that Congress allowed him" and view him as an ardent proponent of using "force, vigorously and intelligently applied"; *First Americans in North Africa*, vi, 206. Malone argues that Jefferson "deserves credit for a minor success"; *Jefferson the President: Second Term, 1805-1809*, 44. Allison praises Jefferson for promoting successful naval strategies while keeping the navy "strictly subservient to civil power" and avoiding running up the national debt (25, 32). Wheelan lionizes Jefferson for "prov[ing]" that "facing down terror worked" and for being the "most passionate advocate" of "American's revolution against the established order" (365-366). Cogliano deems the Tripolitan War "a qualified success for Thomas Jefferson" (170). More recently, Henry Nau bizarrely claims that Jefferson "defended America vigorously, perhaps too vigorously, against the Barbary pirates"; *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2013), 83.



newspaper opinion pieces and toasts brimmed with praise for them and lamented their deaths. Far from praising Jefferson's leadership, we should recognize its myriad shortcomings and instead better appreciate the efforts of Federalists. They led the charge to reestablish the U.S. Navy in the 1790s and throughout the Tripolitan War they called for bolder attacks and more warships to be sent to the Mediterranean.

After negligently running the war against Tripoli, Jefferson mishandled another conflict with a different Barbary State, Tunis. Chapter 6 discusses the controversial visit of Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli to the United States from November 1805 to September 1806—an event that has received little attention from historians.<sup>14</sup> The Mellimelli mission fell through the cracks for so long because most of the primary sources that shed light on the trip were underutilized. This chapter rests on research done via the “Early American Newspapers, Series I & II” and “Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers” online databases, which yield abundant evidence about Mellimelli's visit.<sup>15</sup> Newspapers throughout the country constantly ran stories about it. Federalist newspaper editors portrayed Jefferson as an unfaithful steward of the public trust since he used federal funds to cover the travel and living expenses of the diplomat and his entourage. Some Democratic-Republican editors

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<sup>14</sup> Allen, 269-272; Irwin, 164-166; Louis Wright and Julia Macleod, “Mellimelli: A Problem for President Jefferson in North African Diplomacy,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 20, no. 4 (1944), 555-565; Whipple, 259, 335-336; Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, 183-184; Wheelan, 319-320; Parker, 152-155, 260; Marr, 66-67; Denise Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders* (New York: Knopf, 2013), 8, 218-222, 225-226. Three recent books that omit Mellimelli's trip are Lambert's *The Barbary Wars*, Peskin's *Captives and Countrymen*, and Cogliano's *Emperor of Liberty*. Annette Gordon-Reed briefly mentions it in *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 231-232, as does Catherine Allgor in *Dolley Madison: The Problem of National Unity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 48. Dumas Malone spends merely one paragraph on it; *Jefferson the President: Second Term, 1805-1809*, 43-44. Also see Brant, *Secretary of State, 1800-1809*, 305-310.

<sup>15</sup> Few newspaper articles mentioned Mellimelli by name; they most commonly referred to him as the Tunisian Ambassador or the ambassador or minister from Tunis. Searching these databases with the terms “Tunis” or “Tunisian” elicited far more results than did various spellings of the diplomat's name. Altogether, I found more than 650 instances of a newspaper printing an article about the Mellimelli mission from November 11, 1805 to December, 31 1806.

joined in the disparagement, but over time they published fewer critical pieces and preferred to ignore it. The public at large, however, was fascinated with Mellimelli, viewing him as a glamorous and exotic celebrity whose foreignness and flashy clothing provided entertainment value. Further, this chapter draws on memoirs left by American elites and British visitors that discuss Mellimelli. Some admired the ambassador and felt a class-based kinship with him, while others considered him a barbarian. Collectively, these new sources reveal a spectrum of opinions about the Tunisian Ambassador and a consensus that his trip had enormous political and diplomatic significance. Moreover, Mellimelli and the Bey of Tunis ultimately outmatched Jefferson in negotiations for peace and a new treaty. Coming on the heels of the divisive Tripolitan War treaty, the Mellimelli mission underscored Jefferson's failure to subdue the Barbary pirates.<sup>16</sup>

Chapter 7 discusses the unanticipated Second Barbary War, waged against Algiers from 1812 to 1815. Although Americans at the time saw a strong correlation between it and the monumental war against Britain, scholars of the War of 1812 have inexplicably ignored the Algerine War.<sup>17</sup> Even biographies of James Madison devote scant attention to it (or

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<sup>16</sup> This chapter expands upon my article in *Diplomatic History* by incorporating new correspondence and newspaper articles. Jason Zeledon, "'As Proud as Lucifer': A Tunisian Diplomat in Thomas Jefferson's America," *Diplomatic History*, Advance Access published October 8, 2015, material reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, <http://dh.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/recent>.

<sup>17</sup> The following books omit the Algerine War: Francis Beirne, *The War of 1812* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949); Harry Coles, *The War of 1812* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Knopf, 1969); James Ripley Jacobs and Glenn Tucker, *The War of 1812: A Compact History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969); Walter Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light* (New York: Norton, 1972); Kate Caffrey, *The Twilight's Last Gleaming: Britain vs. America 1812-1815* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977); J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983); Walter Borneman, *1812: The War that Forged a Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004); Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); J.C.A. Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2012); Troy Bickham, *The Weight of Vengeance: The United States, the British Empire, and the War of 1812* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Watson, *America's First Crisis: The War of 1812*

entirely omit it).<sup>18</sup> The vast majority of books that spend substantial time on the Algerine War stress naval battles and Commodore Stephen Decatur's triumphant negotiations with Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis.<sup>19</sup> James Madison, now president, learned from Jefferson's mistakes and accomplished what policymakers had striven for since the 1780s: the subjugation of the Barbary pirates. By obtaining congressional support at the outset and by sending an overwhelming force to the Mediterranean, Madison obtained a fast and decisive victory and prevented Federalists from raising any viable challenge to his leadership. Indeed, an odd reversal of political roles occurred during the Algerine War as compared with the Tripolitan War. Democratic-Republicans became outspoken champions of having a strong navy, while some Federalists complained about naval expenses. The public at large welcomed another war in the Mediterranean, seeing it as an opportunity to create a new batch of naval heroes and set an example to Europe about how to deal with Barbary piracy. Altogether, the United States triumphed over Algiers in 1815 because policymakers and the

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(Albany: Excelsior Editions, 2014). Two books that very briefly mention the Algerine War are David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler's *The War of 1812* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 148; and A.J. Langguth's *Union 1812: The Americans who Fought the Second War of Independence* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 382.

<sup>18</sup> Irving Brant, *James Madison: Commander in Chief, 1812-1826*, vol. 6 of *James Madison* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), 381, 385, 387, 395, 398, 407; Robert Rutland, *The Presidency of James Madison* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 190-193; Lynne Cheney, *James Madison: A Life Reconsidered* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 422-423. Ralph Ketcham's 700+ page *James Madison: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) has one sentence about it (599) and several other books omit it: Gaillard Hunt, *The Life of James Madison* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1902); Burstein and Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*; Richard Brookhiser, *James Madison* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Allen, 275-301; Irwin, 171-186; Charles Lewis, *The Romantic Decatur* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1937 [1971]), 156-178; James Tertius de Kay, *A Rage for Glory: The Life of Commodore Stephen Decatur* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 153-168; Lambert, 179-202; Spencer Tucker, *Stephen Decatur: A Life Most Bold and Daring* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 153-174; Robert Allison, *Stephen Decatur: American Naval Hero, 1779-1820* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 160-185; Frederick Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War against the Pirates of North Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). Peskin's *Captives and Countrymen* is an exception, providing a solid (if limited) survey of domestic attitudes towards the Algerine War (187-202).

public rejected Jefferson's preference for limited force and his skepticism towards the navy as an institution.

The final chapter examines the historical memory of the Tripolitan War, Mellimelli mission, and Algerine War in nineteenth-century history books and schoolbooks (found primarily through the online databases Google Books and *19<sup>th</sup> Century Schoolbooks*). Authors especially deemed the Tripolitan War a vital part of American history, while less frequently discussing the conflicts with Tunis and Algiers. Prior to the Civil War, authors fiercely contested the Tripolitan's War legacy and the merit of the treaty that ended the conflict. After the Civil War, however, they increasingly urged readers to view the Tripolitan War as an unambiguous triumph for the United States and deemphasized the important land operation led by William Eaton. As calls for building a powerful navy grew in the late nineteenth century, authors created a usable past by pointing to the Tripolitan War and Algerine War as examples of successful naval operations. This chapter also explores the creation of the six-volume *Naval Documents* collection in the 1930s and 1940s, a story which has yet to be told.

Today, America's conflicts with North Africa regrettably remain little understood because high school and college history classes seldom teach them (even after 9/11). I hope that this dissertation persuades readers that the Tripolitan War is the most important overlooked event in U.S. history. It demonstrates that domestic and foreign policies were thoroughly intertwined in the United States' early years and, given our country's current involvement in the Middle East, it offers valuable perspective about America's early relations with the Islamic World.

## **Chapter 2: State-building and Sexuality during the 1780s and 1790s**

In early 1786, John Adams, then serving as the U.S. minister to Britain, attended several dramatic meetings in London with the elderly Tripolitan ambassador. For the past few years, the United States had unsuccessfully attempted to obtain treaties with the Barbary States of Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis. America also currently faced a crisis with Algiers, which had captured two American ships the previous July, then enslaved their twenty-one sailors. Adams hoped that he could reason with the Tripolitan ambassador, Abdurrahman, and learn why these North African countries apparently viewed America with disdain.

However, Adams left the meetings more uncertain than before. Reporting to John Jay, who was Secretary of Foreign Affairs for much of the Articles of Confederation period, he noted that “It would scarcely be reconcilable to the dignity of congress to read a detail of the ceremonies which attended the conference; it would be more proper to write them to the harlequin, for the amusement of the gay at the New York theatre.” Regrettably, Adams did not describe the unusual protocol. Over the course of a few meetings, he learned that purchasing peace treaties with the Barbary States would cost far more than anticipated. Abdurrahman told Adams that the Barbary States considered themselves the “sovereigns of the Mediterranean; and that no nation could navigate that sea without a treaty of peace with them.” The Tripolitan Ambassador offered a “perpetual” peace to the United States for 30,000 guineas and stated that Morocco and Tunis would accept the same terms. Algiers would likely demand more. Adams, though, did not know whether to trust Aga. As he also

wrote to Jay, “This man is either a consummate politician in art and address, or he is a benevolent and wise man.”<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, America’s encounters with the Barbary States in the 1780s through the end of the 1790s typically featured confusion, embarrassment, and frustration resulting from the sense of vulnerability to non-white peoples deemed barbaric, corrupt, and degenerate. Perceptions about the Barbary pirates also underwent a mammoth shift during this time. In the 1780s merchants and policymakers generally deemed them powerful adversaries, with some urging the abandonment of the Articles of Confederation and the adoption of the Constitution in order to deal more effectively with the threat of Barbary piracy. Following Algiers’s capture of more than 100 Americans in 1793, however, a new narrative began to emerge that viewed the Barbary pirates as sexual predators who relished raping captives and lacked any military skill. North African men were recast as effeminate and inept, more interested in gratifying their insatiable sexual appetites than in bearing arms. Further, new attitudes towards North African women emerged in print, with American authors denigrating them as promiscuous and accusing them of jeopardizing captives’ lives by seducing them. Commenting on gender roles in the Barbary States allowed (male) authors to express their support of patriarchy in American society. Of course, American perceptions of the Barbary States should not be taken at face value. This “Othering” of North African peoples and society tells us far more about American values and fears than it does about actual behavior. The Barbary conflicts of the late-eighteenth century had an important cultural dynamic that

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<sup>20</sup> **I have retained the original italics, punctuation, and spelling for all quotes.** John Adams to John Jay, February 17, 1786, Charles Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams: Second President of the United States; with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations*, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1856), 8: 372; Adams to Jay, February 20, 1786, *Ibid.*, 8: 374-376; Adams to Jay, February 22, 1786, *Ibid.*, 8: 377-378.

tapped into American concerns about their country's place in the world, the morality of slavery, and patriarchal control over women.

In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, American merchants, diplomats, and sailors felt very vulnerable to the Barbary States and lamented America's inability to prevent the abduction of sailors who participated in valuable overseas trade. In his 1790 "Report on American Trade in the Mediterranean," Thomas Jefferson estimated that "about one Sixth of [America's] Wheat and Flour...and about one Fourth in Value of their dried and pickled Fish, and some Rice, found their best Markets in the Mediterranean Ports."<sup>21</sup> He suggested that eighty to one-hundred ships with 1,200 sailors annually participated in this commerce. Why these estimates and not more concrete facts? Jefferson noted that many customs house records were lost or destroyed during the course of the Revolutionary War. He acknowledged, too, that declaring independence from Britain meant that American ships no longer received passports that ensured safe passage in the Mediterranean, rendering them attractive targets for North African navies.<sup>22</sup> As his report observed, "it was obvious to our Merchants that their Adventures into that Sea would be exposed to the Depredations of the piratical States on the Coast of Barbary." Following the Revolutionary War, the United States dismantled its military apparatus in an effort to protect civil liberties and reduce government spending. George Washington resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief and dissolved the Continental Army in December 1783, while the sale of the warship

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Jefferson, December 28, 1790, "Report on American Trade in The Mediterranean," <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-18-02-0139-0004> (accessed February 7, 2015). The value of the Mediterranean trade increased to \$10 million by 1800; Cogliano, 171.

<sup>22</sup> For details on the passport system, see Parker, 7.

*Alliance* in 1785 marked the end of the Continental Navy. Consequently, the United States could not defend itself against the Barbary pirates.

Instead, America looked to Europe for protection. Back in July 1776 the Continental Congress had drafted a template for a treaty with France that included a clause stipulating that the French would “protect, defend, and secure” Americans “against all Attacks, Assaults, Violences, Injuries, Depredations or Plunderings by or from the King or Emperor of Morocco, or Fez, and the States of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli” just as Britain had done.<sup>23</sup> Article eight of the February 1778 Franco-American treaty included a guarantee of French mediation. So, too, in 1779 the Continental Congress drafted a U.S.-Netherlands treaty that contained a pledge of Dutch intercession with the Barbary rulers on behalf of the United States, a provision ultimately included in the treaty signed in 1782.<sup>24</sup> The Barbary States were a real—not a theoretical—threat. Ralph Izard, the American Commissioner to the Court of Tuscany, had warned John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Arthur Lee that since U.S. merchants feared “the danger” of Barbary pirates abducting them, they would likely avoid “entering into the Mediterranean trade.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Maryland merchant Richard Harrison admonished Congress to gain “the friendship of the Barbary States — Our Commerce to Lisbon, this port & the Medeterranian must become very important, & these Freebooters will have it in their power ... to molest it greatly.”<sup>26</sup> Richard Henry Lee hoped

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<sup>23</sup> July 18, 1776, Worthington Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 34 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), V: 578.

<sup>24</sup> Plan of a Treaty of Commerce, February 22, 1779, *Ibid.*, XIII: 223-224.

<sup>25</sup> Ralph Izard to the Commissioners at Paris, August 8, 1778, Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, 6 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), II: 693.



that treaties would be made as to “give future security to our Commerce with the South of Europe.”<sup>27</sup> Statesmen and businessmen alike recognized Barbary piracy as a serious issue, one that threatened trade in the Mediterranean region and with European nations. The future prosperity of the United States and the lives of sailors were at stake.

France, however, was not eager to provide support. After a series of exchanges, French Foreign Minister Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes replied that his country would not help America make treaties until the commissioners received explicit authorization to negotiate from Congress and sufficient funds to purchase the customary presents for the Barbary rulers.<sup>28</sup> Shrewd American commentators recognized that European countries (even those allied with the United States) wanted to keep the lucrative Mediterranean trade to themselves. A Maryland merchant warned Secretary of Foreign Affairs Robert Livingston that America could not count on European allies for mediation since “it is not [in] their Interest that our Navigation should become so extensive & free.”<sup>29</sup> John Jay (Livingston’s successor to that post) concurred in this assessment, acknowledging that European countries wanted “the mediterranean Trade divided between as few as possible.”<sup>30</sup> After all, France had allied with the United States during the Revolutionary War not because it endorsed the

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Harrison to Robert Livingston, May 13, 1783, Mary Guinta, ed., *The Emerging Nation: A Documentary History of the Foreign Relations of the United States under the Articles of Confederation, 1780-1789*, 3 vols. (Washington D.C.: National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 1996), II: 115.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Henry Lee to Jefferson, May 16, 1784, Julian Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 41 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950- ), 8: 154.

<sup>28</sup> Comte de Vergennes to the Commissioners at Paris, October 30, 1778, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, 2: 817.

<sup>29</sup> Harrison to Livingston, May 13, 1783, *Emerging Nation*, II: 115.

<sup>30</sup> Jay’s Report on John Lamb’s Memorial and Petition, February 10, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 548.

country's anti-colonial ideology, but from a desire to hurt England, its chief rival.<sup>31</sup>

Remarkably, American diplomats even tried to persuade England to protect U.S. shipping from the Barbary pirates. The proposals submitted by the U.S. peace commissioners to their British counterparts in June 1783 included a stipulation that the King would “employ his good Offices and Interposition” with Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis in order to protect Americans and their ships “against all violence, insults, attacks or depredations.”<sup>32</sup> Naively, Adams, Franklin, and Jay thought that even after a long, violent war Britain would willingly resume protecting U.S. commerce. The final treaty omitted this provision since England had no desire to share the Mediterranean trade with its former colonies. As Lord Sheffield declared in his 1783 pamphlet *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, “it is not probable that the American States will have a very free trade in the Mediterranean; it will not be in the interest of any of the great maritime powers to protect them from the Barbary States....that the Barbary States are advantageous to the maritime powers is obvious. If they were suppressed, the little states of Italy, etc., would have much more of the carrying trade....The Americans cannot protect themselves...they cannot pretend to a navy.”<sup>33</sup> Franklin, Adams, and Jay must have felt very strongly about America's vulnerability to the Barbary pirates (and perhaps frustrated with the lack of success with French and Dutch mediation) to have requested British protection.

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 94-95.

<sup>32</sup> The American Peace Commissioners to David Hartley: Proposals, June 29, 1783, Ellen Cohn, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 41 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959- ), 40: 257.

<sup>33</sup> As quoted in Parker, 35. Also see Lambert, 19.

A torrent of anti-British sentiment emerged, with Americans accusing Britain of actively encouraging Barbary attacks on U.S. ships. Franklin remarked in July that North African “rovers may be Privately encouraged by the English to fall upon us; and to prevent our Interference in the carrying Trade; for I have in London heard it as a Maxim among the Merchants, that *if there were no Algiers it would be worth Englands while to build one.*”<sup>34</sup> George Mason surmised that rumors of Barbary pirates prowling for American ships stemmed from “British Intrigue, to discourage our trade.”<sup>35</sup> American newspapers likewise blamed England. Publications in Pennsylvania and Maine printed a letter from an American residing in London who claimed that the British both “appear[ed] much pleased that the Algerines make captures of Americans ships” and rejoiced in America’s weakness: “the poor devils feel the want of a British fleet to protect them, and their property, from plunder.”<sup>36</sup> Other newspapers reprinted an article from a Halifax publication that celebrated Algiers’s harassment of “the high and mighty” United States: “they are thunderstruck” since their “ships can neither procure freight nor hands to navigate them, and if they could, the insurance alone would annihilate their trade.”<sup>37</sup> Americans correctly deduced that Britain viewed the Barbary pirates as allies in suppressing their overseas commerce, and resentment towards their former mother country continued into the next decade.

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<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Franklin to Livingston, July 25, 1783, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 40: 369.

<sup>35</sup> George Mason to Messrs. Hunter, Allison & Company, August 27, 1783, Robert Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 2: 789.

<sup>36</sup> *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 11, 1785; *The Falmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* (Falmouth, ME), May 14, 1785.

<sup>37</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald and the American Monitor* (Philadelphia, PA), May 14, 1785; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 17, 1785; *The New-Haven Gazette* (New Haven, CT), May 26, 1785; *The Norwich-Packet or, The Country Journal* (Norwich, CT), June 2, 1785.

The lack of progress in obtaining treaties and protection led one frustrated merchant, Robert Montgomery, to undertake unilateral action. While residing in Spain, he met with a Moroccan diplomat and lied about having a commission from Congress to negotiate. He wanted to bolster his and other American merchants' commercial opportunities by ensuring that Moroccan corsairs would not seize their ships. Montgomery emphasized his commitment to "the freedom of Navigation for our flag in the Medeterranian."<sup>38</sup> The emperor of Morocco responded by designating a diplomat, Giacomo Crocco, to deal with the Americans. Crocco contacted Franklin, demanding \$1,500 for travel and lodging expenses and warning him that the emperor could become "forever indispose[d]...against the United Provinces" if America did not agree to a treaty.<sup>39</sup> Franklin decided against meeting with the "absurd and extravagant" Crocco.<sup>40</sup> Instead, he would await orders from Congress.

Franklin's choice to spurn Crocco prompted the United States' first crisis with the Barbary pirates. On October 11, 1784, a Moroccan corsair captured the American merchant ship *Betsey* off the coast of Spain and hauled the vessel and its crew of thirteen to Morocco. This action greatly alarmed the American diplomats. Jefferson feared that the emperor captured the *Betsey* in order have the United States join "the number of his tributaries."<sup>41</sup> He expressed concern that "the embarassments on our commerce from the Pyratical states are likely to be serious. The dangers from them are no longer confined to the Mediterranean or vicinities of the straits but extend considerably further."<sup>42</sup> Similarly, William Carmichael,

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<sup>38</sup> Montgomery to Adams, May 27, 1783, Robert Taylor, ed., *Papers of John Adams*, 17 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977- ), 14: 502.

<sup>39</sup> Giacomo Crocco to Franklin, November 25, 1783, *Emerging Nation*, II: 252-253.

<sup>40</sup> Franklin to William Carmichael, December 15, 1783, *Ibid.*, II: 256-257.

<sup>41</sup> Jefferson to John Page, August 20, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8: 418.

the chargé d'affaires in Spain, feared that Barbary piracy “will be fatal to our Commerce in these Seas, If not soon terminated.”<sup>43</sup> A December report by Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson to Congress described the capture, warned that five Moroccan ships currently patrolled the Mediterranean, and insisted that “immediate measures be taken with the piratical states for the preservation of our trade to the Mediterranean, to Spain & to Portugal, and perhaps to countries still more distant as their vessels may extend their cruising grounds.”<sup>44</sup> Diplomats feared that Morocco’s behavior was but the opening act of a Barbary pirate onslaught that would extend into the Atlantic Ocean to hunt American vessels and cripple the country’s commerce.

American diplomats frantically tried to ascertain the cost of treaties with Algiers, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis. They were troubled by the information that the Marquis de Lafayette provided regarding European payments. France had recently paid 367,000 livres to Morocco, Denmark paid 1,000,000 livres to Algiers in 1773, and Venice paid 222,000 livres to Algiers in 1783.<sup>45</sup> Newspapers spread the same pessimism. An article that ran in multiple American states humorously remarked that “the Spaniards, Portuguese, Venetians, and Maltese, are preparing for the annual drubbing which they go to receive before Algiers.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Jefferson to John Lowell, December 18, 1784, *Ibid.*, 7: 577-578.

<sup>43</sup> Carmichael to Jefferson, November 25, 1784, *Emerging Nation*, II: 504.

<sup>44</sup> American Commissioners in Europe: Second Report to Congress, December 15, 1784, *Ibid.*, II: 515.

<sup>45</sup> Notes on Presents made by Foreign Powers to Algiers, April 8, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8: 72.

<sup>46</sup> *The New-Hampshire Mercury and the General Advertiser* (Portsmouth, NH), May 24, 1785; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 24, 1785; *The Essex Journal and the Massachusetts and New-Hampshire General Advertiser* (Newburyport, MA), May 25, 1785; *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 28, 1785; *The Freeman’s Journal: or, the North-American Intelligencer* (Philadelphia, PA), June 1, 1785; *The United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical* (Providence, RI), June 2, 1785; *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), June 3, 1785; *The Falmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* (Falmouth, ME), June 4, 1785; *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Trenton, NJ), June 6, 1785; *The*

This brief but evocative line clearly grasped that second-rate European powers routinely got defeated by Algiers. And America did not even boast the same naval power as those countries. The message was clear: pay tribute or lose battles and have your countrymen get enslaved.

In the aftermath of the *Betsey*'s capture, American merchants became angry over the increase in insurance rates and many began to use British ships. One of Jefferson's correspondents reported that the prominent insurance broker Lloyd's of London charged at least 25 percent to insure American ships, but only 1¼ percent to 1½ percent for British ones.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, as Jefferson learned from a Philadelphia correspondent, "the difference of Insurance is such that every Merchant Orders their Goods Shipd in British Bottoms."<sup>48</sup> The public knew of this practice as well. Newspapers in several states published an article stating that "captains are afraid to carry the Thirteen Stripes, even in the Atlantic, and have purchased lately many British ships to carry goods from London."<sup>49</sup> Another widely published article spread a sense of fear, portraying foreign trade as enormously dangerous. According to a letter from Gibraltar, the Algerines had "sworn eternal enmity" against the United States and were "indefatigable in making preparations to cruize against the Americans, both in the Mediterranean and Atlantic."<sup>50</sup> The risk of attacks

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*Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), June 8, 1785; *South Carolina State Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), June 29, 1785.

<sup>47</sup> Lambert, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel House to Jefferson, May 28, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8: 169.

<sup>49</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald and the American Monitor* (Philadelphia, PA), April 12, 1785; *The Independent Journal: or, the General Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 13, 1785; *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), April 15, 1785; *The Columbia Herald, or the Patriotic Courier of North-America* (Charleston, SC), April 18, 1785 and April 28, 1785; *The New Haven Gazette* (New Haven, CT), April 21, 1785. *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal* (Boston, MA) ran this article on May 2, 1785, but claimed it was inaccurate: "This is not a fact, as all Factors can testify."

by Barbary pirates had raised the cost of insurance so high that American merchants preferred to pay British ships to transport goods since those vessels had passports that would prevent crews from being captured and goods from being seized. Only one safe option existed: depending upon Britain for protection, just as American merchants had done prior to the Revolutionary War.

Concerns about the ramifications of Barbary piracy were not limited to business interests—parents feared that their children would be abducted. Thomas Coombe Jr, writing from London to his father in Philadelphia, asked him not to send “my dear little boy in any American vessel, till such time as you shall be convinced that those monsters have ceased from their depredations.” Anxiety over the safety of his son kept him up at night. He wrote this letter by candlelight and stated that he had finished a previous letter and did not intend to write another, but “an anxious apprehension has arisen in my mind, from seeing accounts in the public papers, that the Algerine cruisers make captures of the American vesels.”<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, Jefferson wrote from Paris to a family member, Francis Eppes, instructing him not to send Jefferson’s daughter, Polly, to Europe in an American ship. Jefferson abhorred the thought of his child being abducted: “my mind revolts at the possibility of a capture; so that unless you hear from myself (not trusting the information of any other person on earth) that peace is made with the Algerines, do not send her but in a vessel of French or English

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<sup>50</sup> *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 30, 1785; *The Connecticut Courant, and Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 10, 1785; *The Vermont Journal and the Universal Advertiser* (Windsor, VT), May 31, 1785. *The State-Gazette of South-Carolina* (Charleston, SC), June 6, 1785. An abridged version of this article (it lacks the “sworn eternal enmity”) ran in *The United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical* (Providence, RI), May 12, 1785.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Coombe Jr. to his father, December 7, 1785, Thomas Coombe Papers, Folder 25, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

property: for these vessels alone are safe from prize by the barbarians.”<sup>52</sup> Both Coombe and Jefferson viewed the Barbary pirates as destroyers of families, able to inflict deep personal wounds by depriving them of beloved children.

Fortunately for the United States, Barbary relations temporarily improved when the emperor of Morocco surprisingly freed the *Betsey* hostages. He evidently harbored no ill will and had simply sought to get America’s attention. As Morocco’s Secretary for Foreign Affairs explained in a letter to Franklin, the emperor resented the United States for not sending an ambassador to Morocco to make a treaty.<sup>53</sup> The hostages were released in July 1785 and Jefferson and Adams appointed Thomas Barclay to negotiate a treaty, which was finalized in 1786. Remarkably, it did not require the United States to pay annual tribute—only a one-time gift of about \$20,000 in presents.<sup>54</sup> Barclay described the emperor’s fascination with America in a July 1786 report to Adams and Jefferson. The monarch “complain[ed] of the treatment he had receiv’d from the English,” reviewed a map of the United States and requested information about “the best ports.” The monarch also greatly appreciated Barclay’s gift of “the constitutions of America and other public papers” since they contained “the reasons which induced the Americans to go to war with Great Britain.” The emperor ordered a translation of America’s grievances “as soon as possible.”<sup>55</sup> Although a prolific trade with Morocco never materialized, the United States had gained a friend.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Jefferson to Francis Eppes, December 11, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 9: 91-93.

<sup>53</sup> Francisco Chiappe to Franklin, November 3, 1784, *Emerging Nation*, II: 487-488.

<sup>54</sup> Parker, 48. For a detailed synopsis of Barclay’s mission see Priscilla Roberts and Richard Roberts, *Thomas Barclay (1728-1793): Consul in France, Diplomat in Barbary* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Barclay to the American Commissioners, September 13, 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10: 361.



Barclay's letter also contains a discussion of gender and sexual issues, unusual for American depictions of North Africans in the 1780s. The diplomat portrayed the monarch as a sexual stallion with an enormous harem of one-thousand and one women. In addition, he had four queens (the youngest of whom was "14 or 15") and forty more women "who are not married" to him but held an equivalent rank to queen.<sup>57</sup> The emperor also had twenty-three children: sixteen sons and seven daughters. Barclay presented the emperor as a virile lusty man despite being a pudgy sixty-six year old. The diplomat did not criticize, but rather stood in awe. The emperor was a man of appetites—for both women and knowledge about America. Barclay respected the monarch, considering him "of great personal Courage, liberal to a Degree, a Lover of his People, [and] stern and rigid in distributing justice." Yet he thought poorly of the Moroccan people and society, portraying the country as decrepit. Barclay remarked that "all the Arts and Sciences are buried in oblivion....The Streets and Houses in the City of Morocco are despicable beyond belief, with there and there the remains of something....The people seem to be warlike, fierce, avaritious and Contemners of the Christians."<sup>58</sup> Barclay's rhetoric resembled longstanding European descriptions of Muslims as backwards and degenerate.<sup>59</sup> Yet such portrayals were irrelevant to American policy for the time being. What mattered was that the Moroccan navy would cease to seize American ships and sailors.

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<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the U.S.-Morocco treaty is the longest unbroken treaty in American history.

<sup>57</sup> Islamic law permitted men to have four wives; Allison, 64.

<sup>58</sup> Barclay to the American Commissioners, September 13, 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10: 359-360. Barclay described the emperor's appearance as such: "he is of a middle Stature, inclining to fat, and has a remarkable cast in his right eye which looks blacker than the other; his Complexion is rather dark owing to a small mixture of Negro blood in him."

<sup>59</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

This lull in Barbary affairs proved to be very short. It became clear that the United States needed to do much more than make a treaty with Morocco to protect its merchant fleet when the Algerine navy, sensing an opportunity to exploit America's vulnerability, captured two U.S. ships off the Spanish coast in July 1785 (the *Maria* from Boston and the *Dauphin* from Philadelphia) and enslaved the twenty-one sailors. The hostage crisis with Algiers ultimately lasted until 1797, led to the creation of a navy in 1794, and became part of the ongoing national conversation about increasing the power of the federal government. Americans debated the extent of Algiers's military strength and the wisdom of creating a naval force.

Most commentators viewed Algiers as a formidable foe due to its impressive naval resources and its large population. Newspapers in multiple American states published an article that claimed that Algiers had raised a 40,000 man army to repulse a Spanish attack.<sup>60</sup> A South Carolina newspaper printed an article that lauded Algiers's recent victory over Spain: the Dey "displayed the greatest foresight, and at the same time very powerful means; he not only repulsed their attacks, but...provided for every place susceptible of an attack....The officers of his troops have also shewn the greater skill....In whatever point of view we consider that Prince, either as a General or a seaman, we cannot recuse him the greatest encomiums."<sup>61</sup> This article not only portrayed the Dey as a military mastermind, but also noted that Algiers boasted an array of talented military leaders. Spain failed in its attempt to defeat Algiers and paid about \$3 million for a peace treaty and hostage ransom.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *The Pennsylvania Evening Herald, and the American Monitor* (Philadelphia, PA), July 13, 1785; *The Charleston Evening Gazette* (Charleston, SC), August 11, 1785.

<sup>61</sup> *South Carolina State Gazette and General Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), May 20, 1785.

<sup>62</sup> Parker, 8.

Even Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones urged caution. He considered Algiers “a powerful State; that can put 200,000 Troops into the Field” and possessed several formidable ships. He wanted the United States to build a navy, but warned that winning would not be easy. However, he saw war as a positive good since it could “unite the People of America” and “rouse them from that illjudged security which the intoxication of success has produced since the Revolution.”<sup>63</sup> John Adams also portrayed Algiers as very powerful. In a July 1786 letter, he emphasized the size of that country’s navy and the strength of its defenses: “they have now fifty gun-boats, which, being small objects against great ships, are very formidable... The harbor of Algiers, too, is fortified all round...which renders it more difficult and dangerous to attempt a blockade.”<sup>64</sup> He also considered it futile for America to fight back. In a letter to John Jay, he argued that even if American ships demolished Algerine towns, these “Unfeeling Tyrants” would “think no more of it than if We had killed so many CaterPillars upon an Apple Tree.” But if the Algerine navy captured American ships and sailors, they would “get a rich Prize...enslave the Men and...demand most exorbitant Ransoms for them.” In Adams’s mind, the United States would profit little from fighting Algiers, while Algiers could gain valuable warships and leverage by taking hostages.<sup>65</sup> He also considered the rulers of the Barbary States as the antithesis of republican rulers, devoted to enriching themselves instead of pursuing the welfare of their subjects.

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<sup>63</sup> John Paul Jones to Jay, August 6, 1786, *Emerging Nation*, II: 734. Jones wrote a near-verbatim letter to Jefferson dated July 31, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8: 334.

<sup>64</sup> Adams to Jefferson, July 31, 1786, Lester Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 146.

<sup>65</sup> Adams to Jay, December 15, 1784, *Emerging Nation*, II: 513.

Clearly, many thought that warring against the Barbary pirates was no small matter, but would require a huge mobilization of resources.

Policymakers also learned from the American captives in Algiers that the country boasted strong defenses. Richard O'Brien, commander of the *Dauphin* and leader of the American prisoners, wrote Jefferson about Algiers's "very strong" and "well fortified" capital city and complimented the Algerines as "a tolerable smart active people." As such, O'Brien admonished the government to "use every means to obtain a peace with the Barbary States, although it would cost vast sums."<sup>66</sup> Unlike Jones, he recommended purchasing peace instead of waging war. In another letter, O'Brien claimed that Algiers had inexhaustible resources with which to construct warships: "no Nation in the World can fit an equal Number of Cruisers half so cheap as the Algerines can."<sup>67</sup> A consensus had emerged that Americans were unprepared to fight professional warmongers such as the Barbary pirates.

In addition to sober commentary about Algiers's military strength, various newspapers utilized gender and the fear of an Algerine invasion to call for government action. An address "From the Pennsylvania Packet, TO THE PRINTERS" ran in newspapers in several states. It urged printers to publish it right away in order to draw the legislature's attention to "the defenseless situation" of Philadelphia's river.<sup>68</sup> Following this preface, a

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<sup>66</sup> Richard O'Brien to Jefferson, June 8, 1786, Dudley Knox, ed., *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, 6 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), I: 3-4.

<sup>67</sup> O'Brien and Others to Adams, February 13, 1787, *Emerging Nation*, III: 422.

<sup>68</sup> *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 3, 1785; *The Freeman's Journal: or, the North-American Intelligencer* (Philadelphia, PA), May 4, 1785; *Loudon's New York Packet* (New York, NY), May 9, 1785; *The Connecticut Gazette; and the Universal Intelligencer* (New London, CT), May 13, 1785; *The Connecticut Courant and Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 16, 1785; *American Herald* (Boston, MA), May 16, 1785; *The American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), May 16, 1785; *The New-Haven Gazette* (New Haven, CT), May 19, 1785; *The New-Hampshire Mercury and the General Advertiser* (Portsmouth, NH),

fake letter (ostensibly written by the Dey of Algiers) declared that he had decided “to let loose our corsairs” upon Americans since they “have not as yet submitted to our prerogative.” The Dey had heard about “the riches and abilities” of Philadelphia and was therefore sending two ships along the Delaware river to “reduce it instantly to ashes” unless he received the following: £100,000 in cash, £30,000 of “most costly manufactures,” and “forty of their most beautiful and virtuous damsels not under 12 nor above 18, descended from honest parents, free from moles, blemish, or latent imperfection.” Evidently, the giving of women was non-negotiable—they would either be handed over willingly or taken by force. American men, the article implied, needed to protect their daughters from abduction by providing for the city’s defenses. As will be seen, over time American authors recast the Dey from lusting after women to lusting after men (although he always remained greedy for money). Further, the letter listed the Dey as ruler of the Atlantic Ocean. This suggests that many Americans feared an Algerine invasion; it was not just a creation of diplomats. The article satirized the Dey for coveting riches and sexual pleasure, yet treated the Barbary pirates as serious threats to commerce and families.

On a national level, Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay (replacing Livingston in 1784) emerged as the most vocal proponent of building a navy and viewed the Algerine hostage crisis as the consequence of having a weak national government. As he bluntly remarked to John Adams, he doubted that the captives in Algiers would be freed since “our

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May 24, 1785; *The Essex Journal and the Massachusetts and New-Hampshire General Advertiser* (Newburyport, MA), May 25, 1785; *The State Gazette of South-Carolina* (Charleston, SC), May 26, 1785; *The Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), May 30, 1785; *The Vermont Journal, and the Universal Advertiser* (Windsor, VT), May 31, 1785; *Thomas’s Massachusetts Spy: or, the Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), June 9, 1785 [this newspaper omitted the preface addressed to printers]; *The Plymouth Journal, and the Massachusetts Advertiser* (Plymouth, MA), June 21, 1785.

foederal Government is incompetent to its Objects.”<sup>69</sup> Yet Jay considered the conflict with Algiers as a positive good in that it could create nationalism and a stronger sense of unity. In a 1785 letter to the President of Congress, Jay proclaimed that “this War does not strike me as a great Evil—The more we are treated ill abroad, the more we shall unite and consolidate at Home.”<sup>70</sup> He hoped that the conflict would “become a Nursery for Seamen, and lay the Foundation for a respectable Navy.” He envisioned a force of forty-five gunboats under the leadership of a “Board of Admiralty.”<sup>71</sup> In the meantime, he recommended that the government provide “military Stores” and reimburse ship owners for the expenses of a hiring a larger-than-normal crew so that, in the event of an attack, they could repulse the Algerines. He urged a strong sense of national pride—the United States should not dignify Algiers with “Overtures for Peace, or Offers of Tribute.” Jay strongly focused on ending the structural conditions that facilitated America’s vulnerability and on achieving a permanent solution to the piracy problem.

However, Jay recognized that many congressmen (particularly those from the South) were apathetic to the problem of Barbary piracy since their states lacked a large merchant fleet. In a letter to John Adams he expressed his loathing of southern congressmen, blasting them for “throw[ing] cold Water on” proposals “for vesting Congress with Power to regulate Trade....Having few or no Ships of their own, they are averse to such Duties on foreign ones as will greatly advance the Price of Freight; nor do they seem much disposed to sacrifice any

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<sup>69</sup> Jay to Adams, October 14, 1785, *Emerging Nation*, II: 863. Lawrence Peskin has also noted Jay’s conviction that troubles with Algiers stemmed from “structural flaws inherent in the Articles of Confederation”; *Captives and Countrymen*, 99.

<sup>70</sup> Jay to the President of Congress, October 13, 1785, *Emerging Nation*, II: 862.

<sup>71</sup> Jay’s Report on the Algerine Declaration of War, October 20, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 868-869.

present Profits for the Sake of their Neighbors who have Ships and wish to have more.”<sup>72</sup>

Only congressmen from the Eastern and Middle States generally supported building a navy. Jay despised regionalism and the breakdown of a belief in a greater national good. Resolving conflicts with the Barbary pirates remained impossible as long as leaders lacked a belief in communal prosperity.

Whereas other commentators dreaded an Algerine invasion, Jay actually welcomed one! Open war, he hoped, would forge national unity. Louis-Guillaume Otto, the French chargé d'affaires in New York, wrote the Comte de Vergennes on Christmas Day 1785 to share an account of a conversation he had with Jay.

“I would not be angry,” he told me among other things, “if the Algerians came to burn some of our maritime Towns, in order to restore to the United States their former energy, which peace and Commerce have almost destroyed. War alone can bring together the various States, and give a new importance to Congress; we will not lack means, but we lack that republican and national spirit which alone can give vigor to our operations.... Commerce has already separated the interests of the various States, war will give them identity. I want the New Englanders to fight for the wheat, tobacco, and rice of the Southern people, and the Carolinians to shed the last drop of their blood for the fisheries of Massachusetts.”<sup>73</sup>

As Jay saw it, desperate situations would force Americans to trust each other and work together. His rhetoric resembled that of jingoes during the War of 1898; both shared a sense of war as a positive good that would restore a powerful national identity.<sup>74</sup> Now that peace with Britain had been made, each state looked out for its own economic interests. Only violence could shock Americans into unity.

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<sup>72</sup> Jay to Adams, November 1, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 885.

<sup>73</sup> Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Vergennes, December 25, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 968.

<sup>74</sup> Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) discusses how jingoes celebrated the War of 1898 for many reasons, including the opportunity to heal the lingering rift between North and South following the Civil War.

Similar to Jay, Jefferson urged that the United States build a powerful navy. Unlike most commentators, though, he believed that America could easily obliterate the Barbary pirates. He endorsed a program of ship-building in a November 1784 letter to James Monroe: “can we begin it on a more honourable occasion, or with a weaker foe? I am of opinion, Paul Jones, with half a dozen frigates, would totally destroy their commerce.”<sup>75</sup> Clearly, Jefferson was ignorant of Jones’s real thoughts on the matter. Jones would have considered Jefferson’s notion that the United States could annihilate the Algerine navy with only a handful of ships as foolhardy. Jefferson outlandishly proposed that the United States could fund its navy by “turn[ing] pirate” itself through demanding an annual tribute from foreign countries whose ships participated in the West Indies trade.<sup>76</sup> He did not broach the issue of confronting the ultra-powerful British navy, but indulged in triumphant victory fantasies over both England and Algiers. Jefferson also made clear his belief that a naval force, unlike a standing army, did not constitute a threat to civil liberties. In another letter to Monroe, he remarked that “every rational citizen must wish to see an effective instrument of coercion, & should fear to see it on any other element but the water. A naval force can never endanger our liberties, nor occasion bloodshed: a land force would do both.”<sup>77</sup> Jefferson’s ideas complicate our understanding of the compatibility of a navy within republican thought.<sup>78</sup> Logistically, a navy strongly differed from an army. A navy was inherently

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<sup>75</sup> Jefferson to James Monroe, November 11, 1784, *Emerging Nation*, II: 499.

<sup>76</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, February 6, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 543.

<sup>77</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, August 11, 1786, Daniel Preston, ed., *The Papers of James Monroe*, 5 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003- ), 2: 330.

<sup>78</sup> Bernard Bailyn’s *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Gordon Wood’s *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University



bound to waters (whether the ocean or lakes) and therefore could not attack or harm inland areas. By contrast, members of an army were trained to track and kill on land.

Jefferson also explored the idea of transforming North African societies into agrarian republics. His plan was short on logistics, but the goal was to “suppress their marine & trade totally...till the present race of seamen” got old or died. Then “the younger people” would adopt “husbandry for which their soil & climate is well fitted” and then “these nests of banditti might be reformed.”<sup>79</sup> Jefferson’s Barbary vision paralleled his notion of reforming Native American societies into agrarian communities.<sup>80</sup> Yet Jefferson did not take this idea too seriously since he never tried to implement it during the Tripolitan War.

But not all Americans supported having a navy; others believed that purchasing peace constituted a less expensive and preferable alternative to war. Ralph Izard, a South Carolina politician, believed that rearming was a financial impossibility. He warned Jefferson that “it is a melancholy fact that we are not in a condition to go to War, with anybody....The Revenues of America, under the present management do not appear to be adequate to the discharge of the public Debt. Where then shall we find resources to carry on War?” Izard took a realistic look at U.S. finances and stressed the paucity of funds to build a navy. Since the United States had not yet paid off its Revolutionary War debt, how could it even consider rearming? He also hinted at a structural problem within the Articles of Confederation. Even if the United States chose to pay tribute, it still needed the power to tax in order to raise

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of North Carolina Press, 1969) ignore the concept of a standing navy. Jefferson’s statement challenges Frank Lambert’s contention that republicanism viewed a standing navy as “a threat to liberty” (29).

<sup>79</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, February 6, 1785, *Emerging Nation*, II: 543.

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, Ellis, 239-240 and Burstein and Isenberg, 390-391.

revenues.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, John Adams thought that paying tribute would ultimately cost less than waging war and that Algiers would not easily be defeated. In a July 1786 letter to Jefferson, Adams expressed his fear that war would cost millions—and the U.S. government would still have to provide expensive presents. Adams recognized that America could “obtain the Glory of finally breaking up these nests of Banditti,” but recognized that “the Southern States” opposed war and cautioned that fighting could last years. Hence, “we ought not to fight them at all, unless we determine to fight them forever. This thought is I fear, too rugged for our People to bear.”<sup>82</sup> Instead, he urged that treaties be made without delay. Abigail Adams expressed a similar concern, noting that since England, France, and Holland “treat and pay, would it not be folly and madness in America to Wage War?” If mighty Europe purchased peace, then the United States should follow suit.<sup>83</sup>

Meanwhile, what was happening in Congress? The *Journals of the Continental Congress* reveal that members seldom discussed the Barbary conflicts. A May 1784 debate underscored how Congress sought to sidestep paying tribute. Elbridge Gerry introduced a motion calling for the U.S. government to issue its own passports that would request the Barbary pirates not to “molest” American vessels.<sup>84</sup> Given the enormous difficulty the federal government had trying to raise money under the Articles of Confederation via state requisitions, his proposal constituted a desperate attempt to find a solution. Gerry foolishly assumed that the Barbary States would abide by this request. For centuries, they had

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<sup>81</sup> Izard to Jefferson, June 10, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 8: 196.

<sup>82</sup> Adams to Jefferson, July 3, 1786, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 138.

<sup>83</sup> Abigail Adams to John Thaxter, March 20, 1785, Robert Taylor, ed., *The Adams Papers: Series II, Adams Family Correspondence*, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963- ), 6: 80.

<sup>84</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, May 3, 1784, XXVI: 339-340.

successfully pressured European countries to pay tribute. Why would they exempt the United States? Congress delegated Gerry's proposal to a committee, but on July 29<sup>th</sup> decided that "further consideration of the ordinance be postponed." Finally, in February 1785, Congress passed a resolution empowering the ministers to borrow up to \$80,000 from Holland for treaties.<sup>85</sup> This amount would prove vastly insufficient. Resolving the conflicts with Algiers proved especially difficult since, in Gordon Wood's words, "Congress had virtually ceased trying to govern" by the mid-1780s.<sup>86</sup> Delegates showed up irregularly and considered positions in state government as more prestigious than serving in the federal government.

For his part, Jefferson cared about the hostages but was ultimately unable to resolve the issue. He informed O'Brien that the United States had authorized John Lamb, a Connecticut merchant, to negotiate a treaty, but cautioned that Congress had limited funds. He added that the captives would possibly have to reimburse the government for the ransom costs!<sup>87</sup> Regrettably, Lamb proved to be an utter failure. The captives considered him incompetent and unreliable and Congress recalled him in October 1787. For his part, Jefferson deemed him "not a proper agent" and suspected him of embezzling money.<sup>88</sup> A leading scholar of the Algiers conflict has concluded that while Lamb "does not seem to have been a very good choice for the job," the "fatal flaw" was America's "unwillingness as well

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<sup>85</sup> Adams to Franklin and Jefferson, May 29, 1785, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 25.

<sup>86</sup> Wood, 359.

<sup>87</sup> Jefferson to O'Brien, November 4, 1785, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 9: 17.

<sup>88</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, August 11, 1786, *Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 329; Jefferson to Jay, December 31, 1786, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10: 649-650.

as an inability to pay what was needed.”<sup>89</sup> Jefferson also recognized that circumstances were so difficult that even a more skilled diplomat would struggle. As he conceded to Monroe, “I am persuaded that an Angel sent on this business, & so much limited in his terms, could have done nothing.”<sup>90</sup>

Jefferson ultimately ended negotiations after learning the Dey’s high prices. He was willing to pay \$200 per captive, but the Dey insisted upon \$3,000 each. Jefferson then sought mediation from the Mathurins, an order of French priests that retained agents in North Africa. They advised Jefferson to feign indifference in an attempt to induce the Dey to lower his demands. This strategy failed—the Dey did not relent and the outbreak of the French Revolution resulted in the Mathurins returning to France. However, Jefferson continued this policy of neglect, telling Adams in December 1787 that plans should remain “secret even from the captives themselves, lest a knolege of the interference of government should excite too extravagant demands.”<sup>91</sup> Jefferson recognized that Barbary piracy was a business and adopted a policy of feigned indifference out of desperation.

Back in the United States, Federalists drew attention to the plight of the captives and the continued vulnerability of American ships during the nationwide debate over whether or not to ratify the Constitution.<sup>92</sup> They occasionally invoked the Algiers conflict in an effort to

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<sup>89</sup> Parker, 64. Parker provides a thorough evaluation of Lamb’s mission on pages 48-65 of *Uncle Sam in Barbary*.

<sup>90</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, August 11, 1786, *Papers of James Monroe*, 2: 329.

<sup>91</sup> Jefferson to Adams, December 31, 1787, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 220.

<sup>92</sup> Frederick Marks III has discussed how the Barbary conflicts generated support among some Americans for scrapping the Articles of Confederation and creating a stronger federal government in *Independence on Trial*. This section of my chapter creates new knowledge, though, by drawing on recently published material in

persuade Americans to adopt the newly proposed government. This especially happened in New York, a state that had a fierce debate over ratification.<sup>93</sup> In doing so, Federalists appealed to the public's sense of national honor and empathy for the prisoners suffering in Algerine dungeons. "A Citizen to the Antifederalists of Columbia County" accused opponents of the Constitution of foolishly turning a blind eye to major problems that plagued the United States. It offered a wake-up call to readers: "you are now coerced by a set of petty tyrants, your countrymen enslaved, and your commerce shackled; and you refuse the only permanent mode to obtain you a redress of these accumulated injuries...the independence of America having thrown away its staff, has begun to totter."<sup>94</sup> The article stressed three major problems stemming from unchecked Barbary piracy: the United States remained vulnerable to a band of thugs, sailors languished in Algerine prisons, and America could not fulfill its economic potential. Also, it nicely captured the country's weakness with the image of a feeble United States unable to support itself after rejecting the crutch of the Constitution. Similarly, an address "To the Farmers of the State of New-York" in the *New York Daily Advertiser* admonished readers to "endeavor to regain what we have lost, and make ourselves and our posterity happy for the future...How have we been insulted by the British? How has our trade been restricted by every nation with whom we traffic?...Are not numbers of our brethren held in chains by the piratical States of Barbary, hopeless of relief?...For heaven's sake, let us remain no longer stupid; let our misery awake us."<sup>95</sup> This

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Merrill Jensen, ed., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, 26 vols. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976- ).

<sup>93</sup> See chapters twelve and thirteen of Pauline Maier's *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster: 2010).

<sup>94</sup> *Hudson Weekly Gazette* (Hudson, NY), April 3, 1788, *Documentary History*, XX: 892.

<sup>95</sup> *New York Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), March 22, 1788, *Ibid.*, XX: 877.

editorial sought to shock readers into supporting the Constitution by listing foreign affairs catastrophes that had befallen the United States. It suggested that Americans had been idiotic to think that the Articles of Confederation could protect sailors and promote commerce. Yet New Yorkers wielded the power to end these crises and rescue the captives in Algiers by ratifying the Constitution.

Sometimes Federalists utilized whimsy or fantasy when invoking the Barbary conflicts. Various newspapers ran poetry that skewered the Dey of Algiers as arrogant and bombastic. “The News-Mongers’ Song for the Winter of 1788” ran in publications in several states: “While the *Dey of Algiers*, sirs, so haughty is grown,/ That he swears by the prophet, the WORLD’s all his own.”<sup>96</sup> “A PARODY of the NEWS-MONGERS’ SONG” reinforced the image of the Dey as conceited: “The Algerine Dey struts about in his robe/ And swears by Mahomet he owns all the globe.”<sup>97</sup> These lines portrayed Algiers as exceeding its proper place in the world and needing to be chastised. A striking futuristic vision entitled “Anticipation: 1858, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>” purported to be a memo from the future with a message for late-eighteenth century Americans. It proclaimed that “yesterday arrived dispatches in this city for his Excellency the President of the United States, importing, that the Dey of Algiers...caused the 22 American captives to be delivered to the Commodore. The commander had orders to lay the town of Algiers in ashes if the restitution had not instantly

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<sup>96</sup> *Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), November 15, 1787, *Ibid.*, XIX: 250; also see *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 23, 1787; *New York Morning Post* (New York, NY), November 23, 1787; *The Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), November 26, 1787; *The Independent Gazetteer; or, the Chronicle of Freedom* (Philadelphia, PA), November 26, 1787; *The Massachusetts Gazette* (Boston, MA), November 30, 1787; *The Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, MA), December 1, 1787; *The Norwich Packet and the Country Journal* (Norwich, CT), December 6, 1787; *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* (Providence, RI), December 8, 1787; *The Worcester Magazine* (Worcester, MA), December 13, 1787.

<sup>97</sup> *Lansingburgh Northern Centinel* (Lansingburgh, NY), November 27, 1787, *Ibid.*, XIX: 311; also see *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 11, 1787; *The Massachusetts Gazette* (Boston, MA), December 14, 1787; *The New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), December 21, 1787.

taken place.”<sup>98</sup> This article accepted the notion that Barbary piracy would endure and not be eradicated. With a strong navy, the president could order the hostages free—a decree that the Dey of Algiers would eagerly comply with lest his city be destroyed. The article also suggested that future generations of Americans would mock late-eighteenth century opponents of the Constitution. Last week, the author wrote, someone opened an “old oaken chest” filled with Anti-Federalist pamphlets and papers. Many of the authors seemed “honest in principle, but deficient in political wisdom” and would surely repent if they saw “the happy consequences” of the new federal government. The Constitution had inaugurated a golden age of peace: “accounts from every part of the empire announce the public tranquility never to have been more complete.” This article promised that the United States could become powerful and prosperous if only the Anti-Federalists dropped their foolish obstruction. The message was clear: supporting the Constitution would allow the United States to dictate terms to Algiers, bring the captives home, and guarantee security now and forevermore.

Similarly, Peter Markoe’s politically charged *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* called for a strong federal government by playing upon fears of an Algerine invasion. Published in 1787, the book’s premise revolved around a bookseller discovering a large packet of letters from an Algerine spy named Mehemet. The foreigner delighted in observing America’s weakness and gleefully concocted subversive plans to destroy the country. Mehemet intended to “commence a negotiation with Shays, the Massachusetts insurgents, and the refractory leaders of” Rhode Island. Ideally, Algiers could use Rhode Island as a base from which to raid and “plunder” America’s coastline and the United States

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<sup>98</sup> *Poughkeepsie County Journal* (Poughkeepsie, NY), April 8, 1788, *Ibid.*, XX: 905-906.

would be unable to retaliate since “disunion and faction” had impeded the development of a navy. America also had a fundamentally weak federal government as well: the Articles of Confederation had been “adequate to the exigences of war” but had proven “defective in peace.”<sup>99</sup> Markoe used satire to issue a wake-up call to readers. If a puny country such as Algiers could ostensibly plan a take-over, what could a mighty country such as Britain do? Markoe’s book resembled John Jay’s letters and the Federalist newspaper articles in admonishing Americans to realize that immediate governmental reforms needed to happen. Until then, the United States remained vulnerable to foreign attacks.

Other commentators also associated Rhode Island with Algiers as an insult and as a way to pressure the state to ratify the Constitution (it held out until May 29, 1790).<sup>100</sup> Newspapers throughout the country published a letter ostensibly written by the Dey of Algiers in which he endorsed forming an alliance with Rhode Island. The Dey praised the state’s “dispositions, modes of thinking, and disregard for the absurd tenets held by the Christian nations” and announced the dispatching of “our trusty and well-beloved slave, ABUCACAER” to form a treaty.<sup>101</sup> Together, the Dey believed that Algiers and Rhode Island would make a “prompt and efficient” team in committing “devastations on the property of the world.” This article satirized Rhode Island’s refusal to adopt the Constitution

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<sup>99</sup> Peter Markoe, *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania, or Letters Written by a Native of Algiers on the Affairs of the United States of America, from the Close of the Year 1783 to the Meeting of the Convention* (Philadelphia: Pritchard & Hall, 1787), 101, 104-105.

<sup>100</sup> For background on Rhode Island’s opposition to the Constitution, see chapter eight of Pauline Maier’s *Ratification*.

<sup>101</sup> *The Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, MA), March 24, 1790, *Documentary History*, XXV: 797; *Osborne’s New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), March 27, 1790; *The Newport Herald* (Newport, RI), April 1, 1790; *The Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), April 6, 1790; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), April 12, 1790; *The New-York Packet* (New York, NY), April 13, 1790; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 15, 1790; *The Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 16, 1790; *The Carlisle Gazette, and the Western Repository of Knowledge* (Carlisle, PA), April 28, 1790; *The State Gazette of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC), May 27, 1790.



by arguing that it had the selfishness and greed of Algiers and callously disregarded the interests of the United States. Similarly, another widely published letter criticized Rhode Island's refusal to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention and suggested that, instead of joining the United States, it would "become the Algiers of America."<sup>102</sup> Further, as in the New York debates, poetry was used to criticize opponents of the Constitution. The satirical "PETITION of the 'MAJORITY' of RHODE-ISLAND" lampooned the state for embracing anarchy and creating "an Algiers in American seas" to "plunder, and murder, and rob as we please."<sup>103</sup> In blasting Rhode Island's obstinacy, Federalists could think of no lower insult than comparing the rogue state to a predatory nation that sought to enrich itself at the expense of others.

The newspaper articles about Rhode Island only subtly raise cultural criticisms, but Markoe's *The Algerine Spy* overtly satirized both Algerine and American cultures. He criticized Muslims for viewing women as exploitable sexual playthings: Mehemet wanted Rhode Island and the Shays rebels to provide "a certain number of virgins" as tribute to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>104</sup> The book also condemned Algiers for denying citizens the right to criticize the government; as Mehemet remarks, one "would suffer the severest

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<sup>102</sup> *The Newport Herald* (Newport, RI), January 3, 1788, *Documentary History*, XXIV: 81; *The New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), January 11, 1788; *The Salem Mercury: Political, Commercial, and Moral* (Salem, MA), January 15, 1788; *The New-Hampshire Recorder, and the Weekly Advertiser* (Keene, NH), January 22, 1788; *The Norwich Packet and the Country Journal* (Norwich, CT), January 24, 1788; *The Vermont Journal, and the Universal Advertiser* (Windsor, VT), January 11, 1788.

<sup>103</sup> *The Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston, MA), October 29, 1788, *Documentary History*, XXV: 430; *The New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), November 1, 1788; *The Independent Journal: or, the General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 8, 1788; *The Federal Gazette, and Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), November 12, 1788; *The Newport Herald* (Newport, RI), November 13, 1788; *The New-Jersey Journal, and Political Intelligencer* (Elizabethtown, NJ), November 19, 1788.

<sup>104</sup> Markoe., 105.

tortures” for doing so.<sup>105</sup> Yet Markoe also made candid observations about American society. He contended that Muslims were more tolerant of other religions than Christians, with the latter’s bigotry constituting a “disgrace to the pretended disciples of the meek and humble Jesus!”<sup>106</sup> He also reflected the republican fear that Americans’ obsession with luxury goods would destroy their virtue. Philadelphia’s “immense quantities of rich manufactures” would “injure the country by introducing a premature luxury with its concomitant evils.”<sup>107</sup> Markoe implied that both societies could learn from each other since each had admirable and detestable attributes. This even-handed treatment was unusual and, in the following decade, discourse about North Africa became very one-sided. In a reversal of Markoe’s fear, American commentators in the 1790s would claim that Algerine men’s addiction to luxury goods sapped their work ethic and made them indolent.

The ratification of the Constitution did not resolve the hostage crisis. The new federal government came under attack for continuing to ignore the plight of the captives. Some commentators believed that the United States had the money to redeem the hostages but instead exercised bad judgment by using it to pay interest to speculators. An opinion piece that ran in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire newspapers asked “whether the credit of the United States would not be more effectually promoted by an appropriation of 100,000 dollars for the purpose of redeeming the brave sea captains, and others, who languish in slavery, in Algiers, than in the idle dispute whether 4 or 6 per cent should be paid to the purchasers of certificates, especially when there is great reason to believe, that many of those

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

very certificates were once the property of those very sea-captains, and forced upon them by Congress for not more than an eighth part of their nominal value.”<sup>108</sup> This article stressed class issues and accused the government of unjustly favoring the interests of the wealthy. It charged that the government immorally permitted poor sailors, who risked their lives in trade that benefited the economy, to rot in foreign dungeons. Instead of ransoming them, the government preferred to enrich speculators who had taken advantage of sailors’ desperation by buying their bonds at a steep discount. A similar article ran in a Massachusetts newspaper. It denounced the federal government for paying speculators and levying the impost while not taking action against “the capture and *slavery* of our citizens, and the depredations committed upon our trade, by the unprincipled PIRATE of ALGIERS.”<sup>109</sup> Clearly, some Americans distrusted the intentions of national policymakers, seeing the new federal government as an instrument of elite privilege.

One prominent critic attacked beliefs in strict constructionism of the Constitution, even using gendered language to shame its proponents. In a February 3, 1791 House of Representatives debate regarding the legality of a national bank, Fisher Ames invoked the Algiers conflict in lending support for its creation: “suppose the question of redeeming the prisoners in captivity at Algiers was before the house, would it be urged that nothing could be done in their favour by the general government, because no power was specially granted—no;—every person, he conceived, that felt as a man, would not think his hands tied

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<sup>108</sup> *The Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), June 24, 1790; Osborne’s *New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), July 7, 1790.

<sup>109</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), December 14, 1790.

when they were to be extended to the relief of suffering fellow-citizens.”<sup>110</sup> Ames emphasized that the mere absence in the Constitution of an explicit clause on ransoming hostages did not mean that the government lacked the power to do so. Ames also appealed to representatives’ masculinity, implying that if they were truly masculine then they would deliver their countrymen from Algiers. Real men did not hide behind the weak excuse of strict constructionism; they took rigorous and decisive action to fulfill their civic responsibilities.

While Congress remained mired in inaction and apathy, the captives led miserable lives in Algiers.<sup>111</sup> They worked in chain-gangs, faced constant whippings from task-masters, and worked at laborious tasks such as hauling rocks from mountains. The hostages repeatedly wrote policymakers about their sufferings in an effort to expedite ransom. Richard O’Brien, the captain of the *Dauphin*, emerged as the spokesman for the group. He wrote letters to Jefferson (the diplomat who had the most involvement in Barbary affairs) that detailed their miseries. O’Brien nicknamed the Dey the “*King of Cruelties*,” revealed that the Algerines had taken away their clothing, and suggested that the “Crew will certainly starve if there is not some immediate Relief” since they received puny rations (typically two pieces of dark bread each day).<sup>112</sup> O’Brien often used emotional rhetoric in order to motivate Jefferson. He

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<sup>110</sup> *General Advertiser and Political, Commercial and Literary Journal* (Philadelphia, PA), February 9, 1791; *The Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 15, 1791; *New-York Daily Gazette* (New York, NY), February 23, 1791; *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), March 9, 1791.

<sup>111</sup> Much has been written about the experiences of the captives. Robert Allison and Lawrence Peskin each devote a chapter in their books to this topic and other books talk at length about the hardships and efforts made by the captives to arouse public sympathy and government action. Also see the collection of captivity narratives published in Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>112</sup> O’Brien to Jefferson, August 24, 1785, *Emerging Nation*, II: 767-8.

claimed that they experienced “the most poignant grief... beyond our expression or your Imagination....poor fellows endure the severities of slavery.” He viewed being liberated as an entitlement stemming from the American Revolution: “certainly Liberty that is the basis of America will never let twenty one unfortunate citizens remain slaves to the Turkish yoke.” He revealed a strong belief in nationalism, a sense of America as uniquely devoted to human freedom (at least for white men). In using the word “slavery” O’Brien sought to drive his point deeply into Jefferson’s mind, surely knowing that the diplomat was a slaveholder. All Americans knew what slavery was: the state of violent, forced subjugation against one’s will. O’Brien could use no stronger word with which to appeal to Jefferson. Yet the two men were working at cross purposes: O’Brien wanted immediate liberation, while Jefferson intended to act uninterested.

The captives eventually realized that relying upon policymakers was a dead-end. They needed to make maximum effort to free themselves. Eleven of the thirteen captives (O’Brien not among them) even petitioned King George III to intervene on their behalf. These men renounced their American citizenship, stressed that they were born in the British Empire, and claimed that they fought on England’s side in the Revolutionary War. If redeemed by the British, the captives pledged to “exert themselves in Defense of their King and Country.” The British government received the petition in April 1786 and chose not to help the American hostages.<sup>113</sup> Notable among the eleven signers was James Cathcart, a Revolutionary War veteran who later served as U.S. consul to Tripoli. Cathcart later wrote in his memoirs that “no class of men suffered in any degree so much by the consequences

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<sup>113</sup> The Sailors’ Petition is in Appendix 6 of Parker, *Uncle Sam in Barbary*, 220-222.

attending the American Revolution as those were captured by the Algerines in 1785.”<sup>114</sup>

Cathcart chose to ignore his involvement in the petition to King George III, preferring instead to portray himself and his peers as heroic martyrs.<sup>115</sup>

Newspapers expressed support for the captives by printing their letters. A letter by O’Brien written in December 1792 and widely published in American newspapers the following year urged Americans to live up to their ideals by freeing the hostages. O’Brien appealed to nationalism by calling the captives “the living victims of American Independence” and tried shaming fellow Americans by claiming that Europeans made better efforts to free their countrymen held in North Africa than did Americans.<sup>116</sup> Notably, the headline to this letter mentioned the “eighth year of his Captivity.” Clearly, it wanted Americans to feel aghast that the hostage crisis had dragged on for so long. Nearly 200 years later, television news anchor Walter Cronkite similarly ended his newscasts during the Iran Hostage Crisis by stating the number of days that the hostages had been held.

O’Brien even directly addressed the U.S. population in another letter that was signed by twelve captives and published in newspapers throughout the country. He deliberately instructed its recipient (a Philadelphia resident) to “have the inclosed Petition published in

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<sup>114</sup> James Cathcart, *The Captives, Eleven Years a Prisoner in Algiers*, ed. J.B. Newkirk (La Porte: Herald Print, 1899) in *White Slaves, African Masters*, 119.

<sup>115</sup> Cathcart was captured by the British in 1779 and held in a prison ship for three years (he escaped in 1782). Perhaps he really did consider captivity in Algiers a more horrifying experience. See Parker, 88-89.

<sup>116</sup> *The Independent Gazetteer and Agricultural Repository* (Philadelphia, PA), July 20, 1793; *The Weekly Register* (Norwich, CT), July 30, 1793; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), July 30, 1793; *The New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), July 31, 1793; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), July 31, 1793; *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* (Providence, RI), August 3, 1793; *The Phenix; or, Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), August 3, 1793; *The Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), August 3, 1793; *The Federal Spy and Springfield Advertiser* (Springfield, MA), August 6, 1793; *The Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), August 6, 1793; *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), August 7, 1793; *The State Gazette of South-Carolina* (Charleston, SC), August 7, 1793; *The City Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), August 7, 1793; *Catskill Packet* (Catskill, NY), August 13, 1793; *The South Carolina Gazette* (Columbia, SC), August 13, 1793; *Herald of the United States* (Warren, RI), August 17, 1793.

the papers throughout the United States, and to be stuck up to public view; so that the Citizens of the United States will know the melancholy situation of the American Captives.”<sup>117</sup> O’Brien invoked the bonds of nationalism and Christianity, addressing his petition to “Fellow-Citizens” and beginning it with “In the Name of Almighty God!” He stressed the horrifying conditions of captivity: one prisoner, James Harnett, became insane (“deprived of his senses by the Almighty”), five others died of the plague, and “the rest of us have been left destitute” and expect to die shortly (“we are on the verge of eternity.”) O’Brien also portrayed the captives as steadfast and loyal to the United States since they had declined the offer of freedom in exchange for turning renegade and “enter[ing] into [Algiers’s] service.” He attacked Congress for ignoring previous petitions and for inconsistency: “at first we were informed, that Mr. Lamb would redeem us; next, that the United States were poor, and that they were forming their government; next, that a subscription would be set on foot for our release; next, that the United States were rich, and would make a peace, and redeem us.” The end of the petition boldly reiterated nationalist and explicitly Christian sentiment: “therefore, we beg of the citizens of the United States, in the name of the Almighty and our Saviour, who died to redeem us all, that our country will adopt some plan to extricate us from this city of human misery.” This letter underscores the

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<sup>117</sup> *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 16, 1793; *Gazette of the United States & Evening Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 16, 1793; *The Diary; or Loudon’s Register* (New York, NY), December 17, 1793; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 18, 1793; *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), December 18, 1793; *Columbian Gazetteer* (New York, NY), December 19, 1793; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), December 21, 1793; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), December 26, 1793; *Impartial Herald* (Newburyport, MA), December 27, 1793; *The Mercury* (Boston, MA), December 27, 1793; *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* (Providence, RI), December 28, 1793; *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), December 28, 1793; *The Medley or Newbedford Marine Journal* (New Bedford, MA), December 30, 1793; *The Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), December 31, 1793; *Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), December 31, 1793; *Thomas’s Massachusetts Spy; or, the Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), January 2, 1794; *The City Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), January 4, 1794; *The Mirrour* (Concord, NH), January 6, 1794; *The Farmers’ Library: or, Vermont Political & Historical Register* (Rutland, VT), January 13, 1794.

desperation of the captives. With just cause they had abandoned faith in federal policymakers and, short of renouncing their American citizenship and converting to Islam, saw their last hope in fueling bottom-up social mobilization. The letter tried every possible way to motivate readers: empathy for enduring the horrid conditions in Algiers, upholding American ideals of justice and freedom, and fulfilling religious duties.

Judging by the surge in private ransom efforts, the letters had an effect on the public. Since historian Robert Allison has provided in-depth analysis of fundraising efforts such as local collections of private donations and benefit performances at theaters, this section will provide a brief overview.<sup>118</sup> Newspapers functioned as a medium with which to advertise upcoming benefit events or admonish Americans to donate on an individual level. In Philadelphia, a ball raised \$60.50,<sup>119</sup> while a theater donated \$1,230.<sup>120</sup> In Boston, a “small society” publicized its decision to donate \$15 to help ransom the captives instead of giving that money to “the Civic Feast”<sup>121</sup> and women at churches donated rings and jewelry.<sup>122</sup> Residents in southern states participated as well—a Charleston theater raised 256 pounds two shillings and sixpence sterling.<sup>123</sup> How much did the benevolence movement actually accomplish? Lawrence Peskin has concluded that “what happened to the money, or even whether it was ever all collected, remains a mystery.”<sup>124</sup> Ultimately, the federal government,

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<sup>118</sup> See chapter six of Allison, *Crescent Obscured*, 127-151.

<sup>119</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 12, 1794.

<sup>120</sup> *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 27, 1794.

<sup>121</sup> *The Mercury* (Boston, MA), March 21, 1794.

<sup>122</sup> Allison, 142.

<sup>123</sup> *Gazette of the United States and Evening Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 19, 1794.

<sup>124</sup> Peskin, 67.



and not private charity, freed the captives. The United States paid nearly \$1 million to Algiers for a treaty and ransom—the surviving sixty captives arrived in Philadelphia in February 1797.<sup>125</sup> Still, public efforts at least encouraged some of the captives. As John Foss wrote his captivity narrative, public “generosity...was of inestimable value. It was more precious from being unexpected.”<sup>126</sup>

Not everyone thought that private fundraising was a good idea. As Robert Allison has discussed, George Washington adamantly opposed benevolence efforts since he viewed them as inappropriately assuming the federal government’s responsibility.<sup>127</sup> Several newspapers published an editorial that blasted the benevolence movement as “mis-judged and ill-timed” and stemming from a “misguided zeal.” It claimed that the Dey had learned about these private ransom efforts and responded by raising his asking price. The article argued that it was the government’s job alone to rescue the captives, not the prerogative of ordinary citizens, and even asserted that had people not tried to raise money “our brethren in Algiers might probably have been, by this time, restored to their country.”<sup>128</sup> This claim was preposterous, since the federal government had failed for years, refusing to meet the Dey’s asking price. The article received an impassioned response (published in a New Hampshire newspaper) that rejected its line of reasoning and emphasized brutal reality. If Americans “wait” for the government to act the captives will die: “worms will have seated upon their

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<sup>125</sup> Lambert, 82.

<sup>126</sup> As quoted in Allison, 150.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131.

<sup>128</sup> *The Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), June 17, 1794; *Columbian Herald: or, the Southern Star* (Charleston, SC), June 25, 1794; *The Mercury* (Boston, MA), June 27, 1794.

bodies, and they be seen no more until the resurrection.”<sup>129</sup> To this writer, opposing fundraising amounted to both a repudiation of common sense and a denial of the obvious failure of the government. Still, despite the presence of some negativity, hostility to private ransom efforts remained atypical.

Groups of Americans throughout the country also expressed solidarity with the captives by toasting them at events, especially Fourth of July ceremonies. Newspapers reprinted these toasts. Toasting accomplished nothing tangible for the captives, but nevertheless demonstrated that those in the United States sympathized with the hostages’ plight. Some toasts urged action, including a New York group of “Patriotic Gentlemen” that wished: “may the benevolent Americans soon relieve their suffering brethren in Algiers.”<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the Revolution Society from South Carolina toasted “to our unfortunate fellow citizens, captives in Algiers: a speedy redemption and happy return to their country and friends,”<sup>131</sup> while celebrants at a New Hampshire tavern drank to “a speedy release to our brethren in slavery at Algiers.”<sup>132</sup> One group had a transnational focus: “All Christian captives in Algiers—may power either human or divine, interpose in their behalf.”<sup>133</sup> Even a literary group joined in. The Shakespearean Society of Boston announced, “in our festivity let us remember our Brethren in slavery and in chains—and may the public spirit of Americans speedily wipe off the stain of permitting their fellow countrymen so long to

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<sup>129</sup> *The Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), June 24, 1794.

<sup>130</sup> *The Farmer’s Library: or, Vermont Political & Historical Register* (Rutland, VT), February 3, 1794.

<sup>131</sup> *Columbian Herald: or the Southern Star* (Charleston, SC), February 14, 1794.

<sup>132</sup> *Osborne’s New-Hampshire Spy* (Portsmouth, NH), July 6, 1791.

<sup>133</sup> *Concord Herald* (Concord, NH), August 24, 1791.

continue captives in *Algiers*.<sup>134</sup> Others took occasion of George Washington's birthday to remember the hostages: "to our unfortunate Brother Mariners in Algiers—may the justice and generosity of their country speedily emancipate them from the chains & stripes of infidel barbarians."<sup>135</sup> Since Washington opposed private ransom efforts, this toast had unintended irony. Another group associated captivity in Algiers as a travesty upon the goals of the American Revolution. Appropriately, the toasting and drinking occurred in front of a liberty tree: "to our unfortunate Brethren now held in Bondage at Algiers; may they soon breathe that Air of Liberty, which they nobly Fought for in 1776."<sup>136</sup> Clearly, the fate of the captives concerned Americans back in the United States. But what was the value of these toasts? Few people at these events would have known the captives, meaning that the majority had no personal connection. Yet they reinforced the bonds of nationalism and fueled an imagined community of white citizens entitled to liberty who shared a common, subhuman enemy.

Toasts occasionally expressed anti-British sentiment and invoked a higher power to come to America's aid. A gathering of Republicans in New York wished that England would suffer for its support of Barbary piracy: "our captive brethren in Algiers; may the protecting hand of our government be speedily extended to their relief, and may the insidious and persecuting government of Britain, feel the shafts of reproach more strong than the sting of an adder."<sup>137</sup> One group of citizens at a 1794 Fourth of July event in Pennsylvania declared "may the Savages of America, Britain and Algiers be restrained by Providence, from murdering, plundering and enslaving such of our innocent brethren as are exposed to their

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<sup>134</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), March 19, 1794.

<sup>135</sup> *Dunlap and Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 17, 1794.

<sup>136</sup> *The Rhode Island Museum* (Newport, RI), July 7, 1794.

<sup>137</sup> *The Diary; or, Evening Register* (New York, NY), March 11, 1794.

depredations.”<sup>138</sup> This toast reveals how lowly these Americans viewed the British—no worse insult existed than comparing them to non-white groups associated with barbarism and violence. Similarly, another July 4<sup>th</sup> toast requested that “the fulminating bolt of divine justice speedily descend on the guilty heads of those who have been the cause of [the captives’] misfortunes.”<sup>139</sup> Beyond declaring a hatred of Barbary pirates, these toasts called for divine intervention on behalf of the captives. Since the federal government had accomplished nothing, a higher power was needed.

As the Algerine captivity crisis dragged on, anti-slavery advocates offered a competing narrative.<sup>140</sup> To them, it embodied a moral crisis. Many of their newspaper articles constituted blunt attacks on American hypocrisy for lamenting over the sufferings of the hostages while upholding the violent enslavement of Africans within the United States. A 1794 address from an abolitionist convention declared that “freedom and slavery cannot long exist together” and stressed that the African slave trade is but “Algerine piracy in another form.”<sup>141</sup> A Philadelphia newspaper reasoned that “if *Pennsylvanians* can, confidently with the great and essential principles of liberty and free government, hold in slavery some thousands of the human race...it cannot be wrong in the Algerines to enslave 4 or 500 Americans for the same purposes.”<sup>142</sup> Judging by my searches in the “Early American Newspaper Database, Series I,” the number of anti-slavery articles that invoked the Algiers

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<sup>138</sup> *Kilne’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), July 9, 1794.

<sup>139</sup> *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 9, 1794.

<sup>140</sup> Robert Allison’s and Lawrence Peskin’s books each have a chapter on the relationship between slavery in the United States and captivity in Algiers, basing their work on the cultural productions of books and plays. This chapter enlarges our knowledge by examining newspaper articles.

<sup>141</sup> *Gazette of the United States and Evening Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 24, 1794.

<sup>142</sup> *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), June 28, 1794.

crisis surged in 1794, after news of the 1793 captures reached the United States. Clearly, opponents of slavery saw an opportunity to promote their agenda. With the abductions of sailors in the public spotlight, anti-slavery advocates sought to change the way white Americans viewed slavery.

Sometimes antislavery articles used a heightened sense of reality that blurred the line between reality and fiction. In these scenarios, Algerines appeared as characters that instructed Americans on their moral blindness. A Massachusetts newspaper published a conversation between an Algerine captain and an American captain, in which the former castigated the latter for treating Africans like chattel. The article broached religious hypocrisy, as the Algerine chided American Christians for ignoring Jesus's command to "do unto others as you would they should do unto you."<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Philadelphia newspapers published a purported conversation between newly abducted American captives and the Dey of Algiers, in which the hostages chide the ruler for enslaving "the crews belonging to Nations who were not at war with him, nor ever gave him cause of offence" and contend that "depriving a man of his liberty was the most atrocious robbery that could be committed." The Dey responds to these accusations by "dart[ing] a furious look at them, and then thunder[ing] out these words—'Begone ye miscreants, out of my presence and if you live to return home tell your Fellow Citizens from me to examine their own conduct towards many thousands of my countrymen who are held in the vilest slavery by them before they presume to censure me or my people.'<sup>144</sup> This article portrayed the Dey as having justice on his side, with the use of the verb "thunder" lending credibility and authority and suggesting a

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<sup>143</sup> *The Medley or Newbedford Marine Journal* (New Bedford, MA), January 6, 1794.

<sup>144</sup> *Dunlap and Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), August 13, 1794; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 16, 1794.

righteous anger. This dialogue encouraged readers to imagine the scene unfolding in their minds and gave the Dey the last words—the American captives were convicted of their hypocrisy and unable to prove him wrong.

Other anti-slavery advocates viewed the Barbary pirates as instruments of divine retribution for America's participation in the slave trade. The Pennsylvania Society claimed that "the captivity and sufferings of our American brethren in Algiers... seem to be intended by Divine Providence to awaken us to a sense of the injustice and cruelty of dooming our African brethren to perpetual slavery and misery."<sup>145</sup> Similarly, a Rhode Island newspaper regarded the "unlawful depredations" committed by the Algerines as "a judgment from heaven" upon the United States and other nations for their participation in the slave trade.<sup>146</sup> These critics challenged the notion of American exceptionalism, the belief that God had uniquely blessed the United States. Far from believing that Providence was always on America's side, they contended that the sinful business of slavery warranted divine retribution. The Barbary pirates were God's wake-up call to America to repent from its wicked perpetuation of slavery.

Some opponents of slavery even downplayed the severity of captivity in Algiers in an effort to focus attention on the brutality of plantation slavery. A Massachusetts newspaper printed an article that declared

the situation of a slave at Algiers is honorable; and when brought in competition with that of a Negro in the Westindies, will hardly bear a comparison.—The former, it is true, is torn from his family & friends—doomed to bondage for life—subjected to the

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<sup>145</sup> Various newspapers ran this article over a period of several years. *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 14, 1788; *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* (Providence, RI), February 20, 1790; *The Herald of Freedom, and the Federal Advertiser* (Boston, MA), March 9, 1790; *The United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), February 13, 1794.

<sup>146</sup> *The United States Chronicle: Political, Commercial, and Historical* (Providence, RI), October 13, 1791.

rage of a contagious distemper, and no other hope is left him but to spend the remaining part of his days in miserable dejection and servitude. . . . And has not the poor Negro all these evils to encounter—with the addition of unprecedented cruel whippings, brandings, & numerous inventions of torture, to which the slave of Algiers is yet a stranger.<sup>147</sup>

Similarly, newspapers throughout the North published an anti-slavery petition to the Senate and House of Representatives that emphasized that “captivity at Algiers is not without a hope, and that the slavery of the West-Indies terminates only with existence.”<sup>148</sup> Both documents portrayed captivity in Algiers as the lesser of two evils since it involved much less violence. However, the first article argued that slavery in Algiers was permanent (perhaps suggesting that the federal government would never redeem hostages), while the second text acknowledged the possibility of redemption (however remote). Notably, both made West Indies slavery the villain, not southern plantations. Perhaps these authors deemed it less uncomfortable to demonize British slaveholders instead of American ones. Regardless, the similarities between southern slavery and West Indies slavery would surely be apparent to readers. These documents sought to produce feelings of remorse in readers for supporting a labor system that dehumanized Africans and treated them with enormous brutality.

Other anti-slavery advocates adamantly rejecting the widespread notion that American and European civilizations were morally superior to the Barbary States. A piece in a Philadelphia newspaper attacked southern Congressmen for feeling offended over an abolitionist petition and declared that “the Algerine treats his slave with more humanity; and

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<sup>147</sup> *The Medley or Newbedford Marine Journal* (New Bedford, MA), February 17, 1794.

<sup>148</sup> *American Minerva* (New York, NY), February 11, 1794; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), February 12, 1794; *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), February 13, 1794; *Columbian Gazetteer* (New York, NY), February 13, 1794; *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 15, 1794; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), February 20, 1794; *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal* (Providence, RI), February 22, 1794; *The Norwich Packet* (Norwich, CT), February 27, 1794.

I believe the sin of oppression on the part of the American, is greatest in the sight of the Father of the Family of Mankind.”<sup>149</sup> Americans, far from being more loving human beings, exceeded North Africans in wickedness. Similarly, an editorial under the name “Wilberforce” (almost certainly a pen name and not the actual famous British abolitionist since the article refers to Americans as “our countrymen”) argued that Algerines enslaved Christians out of “ignorance” rooted in religious ideology.<sup>150</sup> Islam taught them “to consider the Christians as infidels” and “blasphemers of their prophet; and consequently, as their natural enemies.” Americans should pity Algerines for their ignorance (“handed down from generation to generation”), but Americans lacked religious justification for hating Africans. Instead, Americans violated “the benign influence of the christian religion, which breathes mildness, and humanity to all mankind....*even to our enemies.*” This article is extreme in its depiction of the Barbary pirates as unaware that they engaged in cruel behavior. It practically absolved the Barbary pirates of blame! This article saw them as childlike savages (akin to popular American perceptions of Native Americans), whereas other commentators portrayed North Africans as willfully wicked and full of malice.

Books also portrayed slavery in Barbary as milder than American slavery. Even Mathew Carey, who expressed great sympathy for the captives, considered the Barbary pirates less to blame regarding the slave trade: “we are not entitled to charge the Algerines with any exclusive degree of barbarity. The Christians of Europe and America carry on this commerce an hundred times more expensively than the Algerines.”<sup>151</sup> Royall Tyler, in his

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<sup>149</sup> *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 19, 1793.

<sup>150</sup> *The American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), March 17, 1794; *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), April 17, 1794.

<sup>151</sup> Carey, *A Short Account of Algiers: With A Concise View of the Origin of the Rupture between Algiers and the United States* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1794), 16.



1797 novel *The Algerine Captive*, criticized white men for raping African slave women onboard slave ships and portrayed Muslims as more humane. As a Muslim character points out, Islam prohibited the enslaving of fellow Muslims whereas southern Christian slave owners would “baptize the unfortunate African into your faith, and then use your brother Christians as brutes of the desert.” Tyler castigated Christians for justifying slavery in God’s eyes by making a token effort to convert heathens before enslaving them and treating them with brutality. Moreover, the protagonist in *The Algerine Captive* eventually becomes convinced of his past sins, believing that “the miseries, the insults, and cruel woundings, I afterwards received, when a slave myself” in Algiers were chastisement for his participation in the slave trade (as a surgeon who examined the bodies of slaves to ensure their good health).<sup>152</sup>

Anti-slavery rhetoric could draw a heated response. Tyler’s inflammatory prose generated controversy, with contemporary reviewers criticizing him for being overly sympathetic to Islam.<sup>153</sup> The *New York Packet* published an article that attacked the Quakers as lacking the credibility to criticize, noting that they did not aid the American Revolution with their “monied or personal services.” Further, the article portrayed them as callous towards the American hostages: “has this wealthy and charitable sect ever contributed any sum for the release of American slaves in Algiers?”<sup>154</sup> Philadelphia and Vermont newspapers blasted anti-slavery advocates by contenting that too much effort was spent on decrying the enslavement of blacks. Instead, “to our eternal shame and disgrace...we suffer

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<sup>152</sup> Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive; or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, Six Years a Prisoner among the Algerines*, ed. Caleb Crain (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 98, 135, 96.

<sup>153</sup> Marius Péladeau, ed., *The Prose of Royall Tyler* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1972), 46.

<sup>154</sup> *The New-York Packet* (New York, NY), March 23, 1790.

men of the same colour, of the same blood with ourselves, to languish in captivity at Algiers!” These captives were “probably” American Revolution veterans and if the United States refused to redeem them, then others would not risk sailing and, consequently, America “may bid adieu to a valuable and extensive line of commerce.”<sup>155</sup> To this critic, the world was turned upside down. White people were never meant to be enslaved by blacks and the American public’s resignation to the situation constituted a moral failing. If it was “a hardship and a degradation” for blacks to be enslaved by a “superior” race, “how hard, then, must be the lot of our fellow citizens at Algiers” who were subject to “a lawless crew of Barbarians, the best of whom they may justly consider as their inferiors!” If even one captive died, then “his name will be recorded in the page of history, in letters of blood, which, like the stains on the Murderesses hand, all the water of the ocean will never be able to wash out.” This rhetoric resembles early twentieth-century racist language with its emphasis on fixed, immutable racial differences and the innate superiority of white people.<sup>156</sup> The article is unique for its time by not appealing to religion or empathy, but instead emphasizing racial pride. It also insulted Americans by comparing them to the villainous Lady Macbeth (and assumed readers would understand the allusion to Shakespeare’s famous play).<sup>157</sup> Racism and nationalism were intertwined in this commentator’s eyes.

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<sup>155</sup> *Dunlap’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), October 20, 1791; *The Morning Ray: or, Impartial Oracle* (Windsor, VT), November 29, 1791.

<sup>156</sup> For a thorough discussion about how racial ideas shaped American imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, see Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>157</sup> See Act 2, Scene 2: 59-61 and Act 5, Scene 1: 30-31 and 42-43 of *Macbeth*.

Another narrative emerged following Algiers's capture of an additional 119 American sailors in 1793, one that stressed gender and sexuality.<sup>158</sup> Authors, captives, and diplomats recast the Barbary pirates as sexual predators who raped captives and depicted Algerine women as temptresses who sought sex with captives—an act that potentially carried the death penalty in Algiers. These critics claimed, in sharp contrast to the 1780s consensus, that defeating the Barbary pirates would be easy since they were militarily incompetent. Ironically, Algiers's demonstration of its impressive ability to abduct U.S. sailors caused some American commentators to claim that North Africa was an easy target to destroy.

In late 1794, descriptions of captivity in Barbary began to discuss a sexual danger. Newspapers throughout the country published the story of an American captive named John Burnham.<sup>159</sup> The first paragraph provided context (he had recently returned to the United States after raising \$4,000 and gaining help from a Dutch admiral), while the second paragraph portrayed the Dey of Algiers as a sexual predator who eagerly awaited the arrival of captives. The monarch reportedly would have the slaves taken to his yard, where he selected the “boys or good looking young men” to be his palace servants. In his palace, the Dey would take his favorite “boy” and with him commit “the most horrid of all crimes.” Although the article does not use the word “sodomy,” it clearly invites readers to imagine the

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<sup>158</sup> Congress finally passed legislation to create a navy in March 1794, authorizing the construction of six ships. Yet the navy offered no immediate recourse since it would take a few years to build the vessels. For a thorough overview of the passage of the Naval Act of 1794 see Marshall Smelser, “The Passage of the Naval Act of 1794,” *Military Affairs* 22, no. 1 (1958). Also see Peskin, 115-119.

<sup>159</sup> *Columbian Gazetteer* (New York, NY), October 30, 1794; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), November 1, 1794; *Federal Intelligencer, and Baltimore Daily Gazette* (Baltimore, MD), November 1, 1794; *The New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), November 5, 1794; *Hartford Gazette* (Hartford, CT), November 10, 1794; *The Worcester Intelligencer: or, Brookfield Advertiser* (Brookfield, MA), November 18, 1794; *The Norwich Packet* (Norwich, CT), November 20, 1794; *The Newhampshire and Vermont Journal: or, the Farmer's Weekly Museum* (Walpole, NH), December 5, 1794; *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy: or, the Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA) December 10, 1794.

act. Historian Thomas Foster has noted that when sodomy was referenced in eighteenth-century texts, it most often appeared in satirical accounts meant to discredit outside groups.<sup>160</sup> But the Burnham account is quite serious. It forced readers to confront the uncomfortable notion that the American hostages were getting raped.<sup>161</sup>

The Burnham narrative also portrayed life in the Dey's palace as revolving around the bedroom and maintaining an attractive appearance. The monarch forced his captives to be "very clean," be "well dressed in the Turkish mode" and "attend on the Dey and keep clean their own apartments." Clearly, the Dey wanted his American and European house servants to be readily accessible for sexual rendezvous and in desirable physical condition. The Dey also revealed his power over them by forcing them to adopt North African dress. Subsequent sections in the Burnham article describe how other captives had laboring jobs (such as carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, and rope makers), but by placing the description of sexual abuse at the beginning, newspaper editors wanted the public not to miss it. The article concluded by calling for Americans to "leave no reasonable measure unattempted, to relieve as speedily as possible their unhappy brethren from slavery and the prospect of death." In sum, it argued that American men were getting raped due to the inaction of the federal government and wanted readers to feel so horrified that they would participate in private ransom efforts.

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<sup>160</sup> Thomas Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 169-170.

<sup>161</sup> Edward Said's *Orientalism* thoroughly examines many ways in which Europeans depicted Muslims as degenerate or corrupt, but the book contains very little about Western associations of them with sodomy; 62, 103.

Books also mentioned the sexual dangers of captivity. James Wilson Stevens's *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers*, published in 1797, portrayed American captives as the Dey's sexual pawns. Stevens alleged that they underwent

a series of misery which humanity blushes to record. As soon as they landed in Algiers, they were immediately ordered to the dey's palace, where they were drawn up in files, in a back court, and underwent a strick examination. The Dey...passed and repassed in front of them, and was extremely pleased with their appearance. He selected from their number all the boys and younger men, whom he employed in his palace at different occupations...some were ordered to sweep the apartments, some to wash clothes, and others to wait upon the dey and take care of his wardrobe.<sup>162</sup>

The scene resembles Burnham's account, but Stevens provides more detail. The Dey took this selection process very seriously: he looked over the captives twice to ensure that he did not miss any attractive face. The whole event was orchestrated with precision—the attendant Algerines quickly hustled the new captives to the palace and lined them up so that the Dey could easily see each person. As in the Burnham article, neither the word sodomy nor a description of sexual contact is explicitly mentioned, but both are implied. The Dey liked to have his palace servants help him with the intimate acts of dressing and undressing—and presumably have sexual trysts.

When describing North African culture more generally, authors and diplomats portrayed the men as obsessed with sodomy and open about their enjoyment of it. Stevens contended that “sodomy is so extremely fashionable among [Algerines], and so little are they disposed to keep this foible a secret, that it is the subject of their most plaintive songs, and they will spare no pains in procuring the gratification of their infamous love.”<sup>163</sup> Sodomy

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<sup>162</sup> James Wilson Stevens, *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers: Comprehending a Novel and Interesting Detail of Events Relative to the American Captives* (Philadelphia: Hogan & M'Elroy, 1797), 72.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

also served a political purpose by fueling good relations between North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. As Mathew Carey claimed in *A Short Account of Algiers*, the Dey sent “handsome youths” as part of his tribute to the Sultan.<sup>164</sup> Stevens likewise observed that Deys used to “send an annual tribute of a number of beautiful boys to the Grand Signoirs,” although he thought this practice had ended (now Algiers sent Arabian horses). Wealthy Algerine men also allegedly had harems of boys. Stevens described the “famous admiral Pinchinin” who kept forty boys between nine and fifteen years old.<sup>165</sup> Although he did not sodomize them (Stevens did not say why Pinchinin displayed this restraint), he retained them in order to impress his peers. Notably, American diplomats who served in North Africa in the late 1790s and early 1800s also portrayed sodomy as ubiquitous. James Cathcart claimed that the bashaw of Tripoli “was notoriously addicted to the unnatural and detestable sin of Sodomy” and promiscuously courted his captives, punishing those who rejected his advances with whippings and “hard labor.”<sup>166</sup> Author Richard Parker observes that the sodomy descriptions were censored from the published version of Cathcart’s captivity narrative, but exist in the Library of Congress manuscript. Evidently, the publisher of Cathcart’s writings (in 1899) deemed them too sexually explicit for the public. Richard O’Brien, who became consul to Algiers after his captivity there, reported that the Dey “is in Leisure Hours fringed by a boy...he that used to open assholes now has his own shut up.”<sup>167</sup> William Eaton labeled

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<sup>164</sup> Carey, 14. As other scholars have noted, Mathew Carey’s book borrowed heavily from earlier British sources and he only wrote the fifth and final chapter himself (see Peskin, 165-167). However, the issue of original authorship is beside the point. What matters is that gendered rhetoric became much more prominent in American discourse about the Barbary pirates in the mid-1790s. Even if gendered discourse existed earlier in Europe, it did not firmly take root in American minds until after Algiers’s 1793 attacks on American ships.

<sup>165</sup> Stevens, 216.

<sup>166</sup> Parker, 31.

<sup>167</sup> As quoted in Allison, 65.

Tunis the “land of rapine and sodomy” and called for an attack on Algiers comparable to God’s “torrent upon Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>168</sup> By using this biblical reference, Eaton portrayed America as a divine judge empowered to annihilate degenerate North Africans. He also claimed that the Bey of Tunis engaged in behavior that “would excite a blush in the countenance of the most depraved of *nature’s* children”: the monarch had a long-term sexual relationship with “a lusty Turk of about thirty three,” who was more important to him (“the first object of his passion!”) than his wife.<sup>169</sup> These commentators turned the longstanding association of Muslim men with harems filled with women on its head. Instead of desiring the opposite sex, North African men craved sex with other men and ardently sought American and European men as conquests. But were American captives actually raped? I have not found any accounts of an American hostage admitting that he was raped—he would probably reluctant to disclose it due to the element of shame involved. Other authors, though, have concluded that North African men sexually assaulted captives.<sup>170</sup> Also, as a leading scholar of Muslim culture has discussed, Arabic literature of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries “is replete with casual and sometimes sympathetic references to homosexual love.” This celebration of same-sex attraction flourished even though Islamic law stipulates punishments for sexual intercourse between men.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> William Eaton, “Concerning Defenses of Algiers and Tunis,” April 1799, *Naval Documents*, I: 315.

<sup>169</sup> William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, June 15, 1799, as quoted in Charles Prentiss, *The Life of the Late General William Eaton* (Brookfield: Marriam, 1813), 98.

<sup>170</sup> Adrian Tinniswood has claimed that Algerines and Tripolitans raped Christian captives, citing two seventeenth-century accounts written by Europeans who spent time in North Africa; *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests, and Captivity in the Seventeenth-century Mediterranean* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 168-169; 271-272. Also see Robert Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 125-127; John Wolf, *The Barbary Coast: Algiers under the Turks, 1500 to 1830* (New York: Norton, 1979), 61-62.

<sup>171</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-3. El-Rouayheb states that “Islamic law prescribed severe corporal or capital

The notion that Algerine men allegedly considered sodomy as a positive good (not as a shameful behavior) strongly contrasted American attitudes towards it. As historians of American sexuality have discussed, in the eighteenth century sodomy was viewed either as a sinful behavior or (in a non-religious sense) as a “crime against nature.”<sup>172</sup> Yet same-sex intercourse certainly occurred in the United States and was tolerated in some urban areas. As Clare Lyons has discussed, Pennsylvania law considered sodomy a crime but no prosecutions occurred in Philadelphia from 1750-1807 despite the presence of a same-sex erotic culture.<sup>173</sup> However, sodomy was not celebrated as honorable behavior. Christian churches (especially in New England) deemed it sinful, often associating it with the biblical story of God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>174</sup> Massachusetts law even called for the death penalty. Portraying Algerines as addicted to sodomy could function as a powerful emotional call to reach the public and policymakers. For religious readers, these accusations of sodomy could suggest a spiritual duty to wipe libertine Algerines from the earth. Earlier humanitarian attempts to free the hostages had failed, so why not try a new approach?

Other commentators used gendered language to express support for ending the captives’ suffering. A widely published article entitled “TREATMENT of the Prisoners at Algiers, from authentic Testimony” blamed their plight upon “the impotence of America.”<sup>175</sup>

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punishment for anal intercourse between men, but regarded, say, kissing, fondling, or non-anal intercourse as less serious transgressions” (6).

<sup>172</sup> Doron S. Ben-Atar and Richard Brown, *Taming Lust: Crimes against Nature in the Early Republic in the Early Republic* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1.

<sup>173</sup> Clare Lyons, “Mapping an Atlantic Sexual Culture: Homoeroticism in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Philadelphia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2003), 121.

<sup>174</sup> Foster, 161; Lyons, 149-150.

<sup>175</sup> *Virginal Chronicle and Norfolk and Portsmouth General Advertiser* (Norfolk, VA), February 1, 1794; *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), February 10, 1794; *The Mercury* (Boston, MA), February 25, 1794; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 8, 1794; *The Boston Gazette, and Weekly*



The metaphor of a man's failure to perform sexually paralleled the failure of the government to protect its citizens who bravely ventured to Europe and the Mediterranean to help the United States prosper. Some women even took it upon themselves to mobilize ransom efforts and blamed American men for passively accepting Barbary piracy. A New Hampshire newspaper lamented the fate of the captives forced "to eat the bread, and to drink the water of affliction in a strange land."<sup>176</sup> It urged the population to rethink gender roles in an effort to expedite ransom: "Little is to be expected from the Gentlemen.—Much may be done by the Ladies. Women in every age has been distinguished for sympathy of feeling and correspondent benignity of action. Let the Ladies of Portsmouth set the praise-worthy example, whilst the rest of their lovely Sisters throughout America shall make but one common purse with them, and offer these united offerings of humanity on the altar of the finest affections." Sisterhood was the solution, according to this article. Men had had years to resolve the conflict with Algiers and had failed. Women could display their organizational skills and empathy for the captives by pooling their resources. Yet the article also upheld traditional female stereotypes by stressing that women's activism would be an offshoot of their inherent empathetic nature. It upheld Republican Motherhood even as it called for a stronger public presence for women.

Gendered rhetoric was also used to portray Algiers as militarily weak, with commentators asserting that the country's male population neglected training and spent their time in indolence. Authors argued that Algiers could easily be annihilated if only the United

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*Republican Journal* (Boston, MA), March 10, 1794; *American Apollo* (Boston, MA), March 13, 1794; *The Norwich Packet* (Norwich, CT), March 13, 1794; *The Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), March 15, 1794; *The New Hampshire Journal: or, the Farmer's Weekly Museum* (Walpole, NH), March 28, 1794.

<sup>176</sup> *The Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), April 19, 1794.

States sent sufficient men and ships to the Mediterranean. Newspapers in multiple states printed an article that portrayed the Algerine navy as exceptionally paltry: it was a “contemptible force” and it would be “easy...to check and put a stop to the mischief they premeditate, for a couple of Frigates could block them up in their ports.”<sup>177</sup> A similar article, published in three states, claimed that three or four ships “would be sufficient to take every vessel [the Algerines] have out.”<sup>178</sup> Such claims were a blatant misrepresentation of reality since Algiers had harassed European countries for centuries; sending two or three ships would accomplish nothing. Mathew Carey contended that Algerines deluded themselves in viewing their country as powerful: although considered “a military republic ... it certainly can reflect no lustre on that species of government.”<sup>179</sup> He also ridiculed the country’s national pledge of “we, the great, and small members of the mighty and invincible militia of Algiers.” His rhetoric tried to taunt the American public into taking action. Carey conceded that Algiers once had a respectable force: during the seventeenth century it “set at defiance, several of the most formidable nations of Europe.”<sup>180</sup> Yet Algiers was now a shadow of its former self with a “trifling” navy that fifteen to twenty U.S. frigates could easily destroy.

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<sup>177</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 10, 1794; *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 11, 1794; *Dunlap and Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 11, 1794; *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), February 14, 1794; *The Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), February 19, 1794; *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), February 19, 1794; *Impartial Herald* (Newburyport, MA), February 21, 1794; *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), February 22, 1794.

<sup>178</sup> *The Baltimore Daily Intelligencer* (Baltimore, MD), February 22, 1794; *American Apollo* (Boston, MA), March 6, 1794; *Virginia Chronicle and, Norfolk & Portsmouth General Advertiser* (Norfolk, VA), March 8, 1794.

<sup>179</sup> Carey, 13.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

Such cavalier claims should not be taken at face value, but rather seen as propaganda that tried to galvanize American men into fighting the Barbary pirates.

Authors also portrayed Algiers's militia as a laughingstock. Carey noted that it boasted 6,500 to 12,000 men. Although this may have seemed like a daunting force to readers, he depicted its members as bungling and inept. Algerine men "spen[t] a great part of their time in indolence ... drinking coffee and smoaking."<sup>181</sup> Similarly, Stevens portrayed Algerine men as "slaves of their sensual appetites."<sup>182</sup> They led leisurely lives that entailed "whole days at the coffee houses in smoking and sipping coffee." Americans who spent time in North Africa concurred. John Foss, an American hostage in Algiers from 1793 to 1796 who wrote a narrative of his captivity (published in 1798), likewise belittled the populace's work ethic. He averred that the men "spend a great part of their time in bathing, smoaking, and drinking coffee."<sup>183</sup> The consul to Algiers, William Eaton, declared that "they have neither tactics nor discipline. There is not a bayonet in Barbary. Not much should be feared nor expected from a people whose principal ministers, principal merchants and principal generals consume day after day ... smoking tobacco and playin at chess."<sup>184</sup> Eaton also despised Tunis's capabilities, averring that its "military force...is rather imaginary than real."<sup>185</sup> Commentators at home and abroad believed that Americans had lived in fear of the

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>182</sup> Stevens, 212.

<sup>183</sup> John Foss, *A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss; Several Years a Prisoner in Algiers*, in *White Slaves, African Masters*, 90.

<sup>184</sup> William Eaton, "Concerning Defenses of Algiers and Tunis," April 1799, Knox, *Naval Documents*, I: 316-317.

<sup>185</sup> William Eaton to Timothy Pickering, June 15, 1799, as quoted in Prentiss, 98.

Barbary pirates for too long. Far from being a serious threat, the country would easily crumble if the United States simply fought back. North African men lacked discipline and eagerness for battle, preferring indolent lives given over to pleasure. What was America waiting for?

In addition to criticizing Algerine men as lazy, authors attacked their masculinity by portraying their clothing as feminine. Foss described it as resembling “a woman’s petticoat,” while Stevens contended that “there is not much difference...between the dress of the men and women.”<sup>186</sup> Common people wore modest “linen drawers,” while “men of fashion go more sumptuously clad” in “fur, silk, or cloth...garments finely embroidered with flowers of gold” and turbans “elegantly adored with jewels.”<sup>187</sup> These descriptions of clothing complement the accusations of indolence and disinclination towards military training—Algerine men (at least wealthy ones) preferred to spend their resources on expensive clothing. As historian Susan Klepp has discussed, Americans of the early republic associated flowers with women’s fertility (artists often included them in portraits of women).<sup>188</sup> They also considered a fixation with jewelry and luxury goods as indicative of a lack of republican virtue. By drawing readers’ attention to Barbary clothing, authors represented North Africa as in a state of cultural corruption and ripe for chastisement from the virtuous United States.

Joel Barlow’s letters to the federal government reinforced this image of the Barbary pirates as comically effeminate and militarily weak. His dispatches reveal how gendered ideas shaped actual diplomacy with North Africa in the 1790s. In a March 1796 letter to

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<sup>186</sup> Foss, 89; Stevens, 222.

<sup>187</sup> Stevens, 146.

<sup>188</sup> Susan Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill, 2009), 130.

Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, Barlow depicted Algiers as filled with the refuse of society. He denigrated the militia (comprised of men from Turkey) as “generally ignorant & ferocious adventurers,” thieves, and unintelligent castoffs who gave rise to the regional proverb “no honest man goes to Algiers.”<sup>189</sup> Barlow added that respectable women wanted nothing to do with militia members since the typical soldier “is too poor to bring a Wife with him, and a Turkish single Woman rarely comes to Algiers to get a Husband.” Like Carey, Foss, and Stevens, Barlow portrayed the Algerine militia as pathetic and laughable. They not only lacked military ability, but masculine sexual charm. Lower still in Barlow’s opinion were the native Algerine people, whom he deemed too dimwitted to resist rule by the ruling class of Turks. The Algerines regarded them “as a superior race of beings” and “the favourites of the prophet & the Lords of the Country.”<sup>190</sup> The Algerines contributed to their own subjugation by holding religious superstitions. In a May 1796 letter to his wife, Barlow described the Algerines as “the lowest debasement of the human species.”<sup>191</sup> These passages portrayed an imperial relationship that sharply contrasted America’s recent rebellion against Britain. Barlow’s letters affirmed U.S. greatness by implicitly celebrating valorous American men who had cast off British imperialism, while depicting the Algerines as paralyzed with fear of Turkish power.

In discussing the Dey of Algiers, Barlow found him as pathetic as the populace he ruled over. He portrayed him as emotional and unreliable, emphasizing that his “most ungovernable temper, passionate, changeable & Unjust” prevented diplomats from

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<sup>189</sup> Joel Barlow to Timothy Pickering, March 18, 1796, *Naval Documents*, I: 140.

<sup>190</sup> Joel Barlow to Timothy Pickering, *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Joel Barlow to Ruth Barlow, May 8, 1796, Milton Cantor, ed., “A Connecticut Yankee in a Barbary Court: Joel Barlow’s Algerian Letters to His Wife,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no 1. (1962), 99.

“calculating his policy from one moment to another.”<sup>192</sup> The Dey would proclaim friendship only to later reverse course and spew invectives. In particular, the Dey frequently complained about the tardiness of U.S. tribute. While Barlow recognized that the monarch had a legitimate grievance, he nevertheless presented him as a spoiled brat who threw temper-tantrums. In letters to the Secretary of State, Barlow described the Dey as being “in too great a rage to listen to any thing” and exhibiting “the impatience of a petulant child.”<sup>193</sup> Barlow portrayed himself as a pacifying babysitter, tactfully tending to the complaints and cries of the Dey.

Barlow noted, too, that he had to think in gendered terms in order to succeed. He sought to create a tough masculine image that would mask his personal discomfort. As part of this strategy, he grew a moustache. In an August 1797 letter to his wife, Barlow cited a maxim: “*who makes himself the lamb, the wolf eats*” and added that “no part of this proverb is so useful as in Barbary.”<sup>194</sup> Since he considered himself a “lamb at heart” surrounded by savage Algerines he grew facial hair in order to acquire “the air of a tiger, beast that the wolf does not eat.” He believed that his outward appearance mattered. Since the Dey ignored reasoned arguments, Barlow had to appear hyper-masculine in order to command respect. One gets the sense that Barlow was only half-joking when he said that the moustache had “been very useful in my affairs.”

Most public commentators about North Africa (whether authors, captives, or diplomats) were men. A welcome contrast to this male perspective is Susanna Rowson’s

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<sup>192</sup> Joel Barlow to Timothy Pickering, March 18, 1796, *Naval Documents*, I: 141.

<sup>193</sup> Joel Barlow to Timothy Pickering, April 17, 1796, *Ibid.*, I: 146; Joel Barlow to Timothy Pickering, August 24, 1797, *Ibid.*, I: 209. The Dey was angry over not yet receiving the \$600,000 promised to him at the signing of the U.S.-Algiers peace treaty; Lambert, 86.

<sup>194</sup> Joel Barlow to Ruth Barlow, August 1, 1797, “Connecticut Yankee,” 109.

1794 play *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom*, which was performed in Baltimore, Charleston, Hartford, New York, and Philadelphia.<sup>195</sup> As did male authors, Rowson often employed gendered rhetoric, but she did so with a different intention: to denounce patriarchy. Early in the play, a member of the Dey's harem named Fetnah condemns patriarchy: "is the poor bird that is confined in a cage (because a favourite with its enslaver) consoled for the loss of freedom. No! tho' its prison is of golden wire, its food delicious, and it is overwhelm'd with caresses, its little heart still pants for liberty."<sup>196</sup> Rowson rejected the notion that men best demonstrated their love for women by showering them with affection and striving to make domestic life comfortable for them. In another scene, Fetnah tells of a past encounter with a foreign woman, who "nourished in my mind the love of liberty, and taught me, woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man. Nature made us equal with them, and gave us the power to render ourselves superior."<sup>197</sup> Rowson hoped that socially constructed gender roles would change in America if women demanded rights as an entitlement rooted in natural rights ideology.

Rowson also used gendered rhetoric to mock male characters as sexual predators who sought to confine women instead of treating them as their intellectual and moral equals. Another character, a Spanish captive named Sebastian, makes romantic advances on a person whom he thinks is an attractive young woman, but who really is an Algerine man in woman's clothing. Sebastian proclaims his love in highly sentimental terms, declaring that "women were never made, with all their prettiness and softness, and bewitching ways, to be hid from

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<sup>195</sup> Zoe Detsi-Demanti, *Early American Women Dramatists, 1775-1860* (New York, 1998), 65.

<sup>196</sup> Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers: Or, a Struggle for Freedom*, (Philadelphia: Wrigley & Berriman, 1794), 5.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

us men, who came into the world for no other purpose, than to see, admire, love, and protect them.” Even after part of the Algerine man’s disguise falls off, Sebastian still does not recognize his correct sex. Rowson suggested that men such as Sebastian, who insisted on viewing women as sexual objects intended for male gratification, were clueless. They deceived themselves about the true nature of women just as Sebastian’s eyes misled him about the identity of the Algerine man.

Rowson also discussed the sexual abuse of captives, but accused the Dey of Algiers of targeting women, not men. The play uses the monarch as comic relief by portraying him as an elderly fool, in contrast to how Burnham’s captivity account depicts him as calculating and precise. The character Fetnah mocks the Dey for being “grave and stately” during sex, but still respects his “huge scymetar.”<sup>198</sup> With this penis joke, American audiences were invited to laugh at the Dey’s sexual excesses while also acknowledging his power. Despite being “old and ugly,” he nevertheless enjoys intercourse with nubile young women. The Dey even proposes marriage to a female American captive (although no American women were ever enslaved in Algiers). Rowson’s depiction of the Dey differs from Burnham’s and Stevens’s in that hers makes no mention of sodomy and portrays the Dey as only interested in having relations with the opposite sex. Yet all three of them characterized the Dey as a sexual predator who always sought more sexual conquests.

Women also made appearances in the accounts of Carey, Foss, and Stevens. These authors addressed women’s status in North African society and their sexual behavior. Like Rowson, they observed that men treated women badly. Unlike Rowson, they did not use this information as a means to attack patriarchy. Instead, in portraying North African gender

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 6.



roles as barbaric, they implicitly praised the treatment of American women by American men. Stevens remarked that Algerine men prohibited their wives from eating with them since they “regard women as an inferior order in creation, and consequently not entitled to similar distinctions.”<sup>199</sup> This harsh treatment on earth had religious foundations since Muslim men believed that women had no souls and that God viewed them as “brutes” and would not “reward [them] in the next life.”<sup>200</sup> This worldview also legitimized brutality and violence against women. Stevens observed that the Dey upheld “the right of the Turks to put their wives to death; they being considered as merely the property of their husbands.”<sup>201</sup> Stevens clearly disapproved of such beliefs and practices, implying that Christianity opposed misogyny and commanded men to treat women courteously. Carey and Foss discussed polygamy. Islamic law permitted a man to have up to four wives, but, according to these two authors, most Algerine men had two or three.<sup>202</sup> American authors portrayed Algerine gender standards as heinous and exploitative. Men treated their women like chattel and used religion and law to reinforce female inferiority. These male authors argued that North Africa had a perverse patriarchy that glorified the dehumanization of women. Presumably, American men and women reading these books about Barbary would feel good about the treatment of women in the United States.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Stevens, 211.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>202</sup> Carey, 14; Foss, 91.

<sup>203</sup> Literature scholar Robert Battistini has examined a 1799 essay “Condition of the Female Sex at Constantinople” written by Englishman James Dalloway; Battistini, “Glimpses of the Other before Orientalism: The Muslim World in Early American Periodicals, 1785-1800,” *Early American Studies* 8, no. 2 (2010), 466-467. After detailing Islam’s contempt for women, Dalloway expressed his hope that his “fair countrywomen” would “form favorable conclusions respecting” British treatment of women. Battistini has observed that an American periodical, *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* (New York, NY), published the Dalloway

Some publications addressed the topic of Muslim women's sexuality, portraying them as seductresses who jeopardized the lives of Christian captives.<sup>204</sup> The October 1795 issue of *The Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum* characterized Middle Eastern women as sexual predators in an article entitled "DESCRIPTION of the MOORISH WOMEN." It claimed that Muslim women "are not in general very reserved" and that "licentiousness is there more general and less restrained," in part because the warm climate supposedly made sexually transmitted diseases more tolerable. Young Algerine women would boldly venture out of their homes to interact with foreign men, with their veils aiding their clandestine pursuits since their husbands could not recognize their faces.<sup>205</sup> Similarly, Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* stated that American hostages believed that Algerine women had a reputation for immodesty; the extensive clothing that women had to wear when outdoors allowed them to "take great liberties in this general disguise."<sup>206</sup> As with the discussions of sodomy in Barbary, no hard evidence of American captives having sex with Algerine women has been found. It is possible that such relations did happen and, if so, the Americans succeeded in not getting caught. Ultimately, the value of descriptions of North African women's sexuality lies in their use as propaganda and in suggesting fears that American men had regarding women's sexuality being beyond patriarchal control.

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article in August 1799. I argue that a similar intent lay behind American descriptions of Muslim women (even if not explicitly stated by the authors) earlier in the 1790s.

<sup>204</sup> Allison very briefly describes Western perceptions of Muslim women's sexuality, but he only cites European sources (especially Volney). Allison contends that Westerners believed that a Muslim society "had to confine its women for their own protection" in order "to prevent sexual anarchy" and maintain political order; 63-64. Allison does not broach the concern that North African women jeopardized captives' lives by seducing them.

<sup>205</sup> "DESCRIPTION of the MOORISH WOMEN," *The Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum* (Boston, MA), October 1795, 419.

<sup>206</sup> Tyler, 175.

Accounts of the sexual escapades of North African women were sometimes raunchy and pseudo-pornographic. An article entitled “Arabian Women” appeared in Connecticut and Massachusetts newspapers in summer 1794.<sup>207</sup> It was an excerpt from Abbe Poiret’s *Travels in Barbary* that portrayed Muslim women as harboring intense sexual desires that their husbands did not fulfill. During the day they endured “perpetual imprisonment” in their house, but during the evening when their husband went to the mosque, they would seek “the cool air on their terraces” and flirt with Christian captives that passed by. Indeed, they were “very fond of the Christians” and would “readily expose to their view every thing that the jealousy of their husbands obliges them to hide.” In other words, Poiret’s claim was that the women enjoyed arousing sexual desire among Christian captives by exposing their faces (or, perhaps, their breasts or other hidden body parts). Sex was the end goal, but any Christian caught having intercourse with a Barbary woman faced the death penalty unless he converted to Islam and married her. If the woman was married, though, both would be killed. This newspaper could have printed anything from Poiret’s book, but chose to publish a titillating segment that described the sexual dangers that Christian captives faced. Would readers wonder if the American captives had the moral fortitude to resist these professional temptresses? Were readers supposed to be horrified at North African women’s sexuality or envy the captives for having easy access to sex? These texts are ambiguous, hinting at both possibilities.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> *Hartford Gazette* (Hartford, CT), June 26, 1794; *American Apollo* (Boston, MA), July 3, 1794. It also ran several years earlier, in *The Weekly Museum* (New York, NY), July 2, 1791 and *Litchfield Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), July 27, 1791.

<sup>208</sup> These sexually explicit texts should also be seen as part of a broad tolerance towards bawdy and sexually explicit books, almanacs, and pamphlets. As Clare Lyons has discussed in chapter three of *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), American readers in the mid-to-late eighteenth century enjoyed reading titillating material and could easily obtain a wide variety of it at bookstores.

Stevens's *An Historical and Geographical Account of Algiers* similarly portrayed Algerine women as sexual predators. It described them as "remarkably amorous" and claimed that many "rove the streets every night for the purpose of intrigue" with European and American slaves, "for whom they have a remarkable attachment."<sup>209</sup> These women blatantly disregarded the consequences of illicit sex with a non-Muslim: the death penalty. Yet one did not need to walk about the streets to find a sexually available Algerine woman, as Stevens depicted them as equally "lascivious" at home.<sup>210</sup> There they roamed about in a nearly naked state, wearing only a cloth that spanned the stomach to the knees. Stevens recounted a bawdy tale of an American captive delivering wine to a house only to see an Algerine woman without a veil covering her face. Surprised, she quickly pulled up her petticoat to conceal her face which then "disclosed those parts which were much more the object of the American's risibility."<sup>211</sup> This sexually charged scene straddled the line between repulsion and titillation since it ostensibly condemned Algerine women for their lack of virtue while also inviting readers to fantasize about having sex with them.

Altogether, these authors argued that North African men could not control their women's sexuality and depicted captivity in Barbary as saturated with sexual temptations that promised pleasure, but carried the risk of death. Despite being mostly homebound and forced to wear restrictive dress when outdoors, North African women cleverly found opportunities to explore their sexuality. Would reading these articles trouble American men? Would they wonder if their wives or daughters were being sexually active outside their

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<sup>209</sup> Stevens, 220.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 222. In mentioning the wine delivery, Stevens subtly provided another example of Algerine depravity since on pages 212-213 he noted that the Koran prohibits drinking alcohol.

patriarchal control? These accounts of Muslim women's sexual behavior implicitly contain warnings about leaving women alone without male chaperones. Women would abuse their freedom by seeking sexual fulfillment outside of marriage. Even if they had to endure dress and mobility restrictions, they would find a way to gratify their allegedly insatiable sexual desires.

Is it a coincidence that this surge in gendered rhetoric about the Barbary pirates and North African gender roles occurred in the 1790s? To be sure, throughout American history white men had associated African women with illicit sexuality and often pursued intercourse with them in order to fulfill sexual fantasies.<sup>212</sup> Yet this rhetoric about North African women, sodomy, and the military ineptitude of North African men emerged out of a specific context, at a time when Americans felt especially vulnerable to the Barbary pirates since the Algiers hostage crisis seemed to go on indefinitely. This gendered discourse did not exist during the 1780s and early 1790s. Rather, it reflected a broader discourse regarding gender roles, femininity, and masculinity that Americans were earnestly debating in the 1790s.

Public discussions of women's rights existed became more prominent in the United States in this decade. American Judith Sargent Murray wrote her essay "On the Equality of the Sexes" in 1790, while Englishwoman Mary Wollstonecraft published the landmark *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* two years later.<sup>213</sup> This latter work took the United

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<sup>212</sup> See, for instance, Deborah White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>213</sup> Rosemarie Zagarri observes that Wollstonecraft's treatise "changed the terms of the debate" over women's place in the early republic. Newspapers published excerpts of the tract and it went through three American editions by 1795. Wollstonecraft emphasized gaining educational and economic rights and only briefly mentioned suffrage. Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 41, 44.

States by storm, launching conversations among the middle and upper classes about the application of natural rights ideology to women. American men (and many women) promulgated the notion of “Republican Motherhood,” in which women would not receive political rights but would contribute to national greatness by inculcating moral virtues into their children (especially their sons).<sup>214</sup> Moreover, as Doron Ben-Atar and Richard Brown have recently shown, two rare prosecutions for bestiality occurred in New England in the 1790s. These scholars argue that these cases occurred because elites feared social chaos and a decline of the traditional status-quo.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, Clare Lyons has demonstrated that elites in Philadelphia effectively spearheaded efforts to suppress sexual activity that they associated with society’s “rabble,” while Rosemarie Zagari has ably argued that, following the American Revolution, women experienced a “backlash” against applying natural rights ideology too strongly to their lives.<sup>216</sup> Thus, this discourse about gender and the Barbary pirates reflected anxiety about changing gender roles and contested views about appropriate sexual behavior in the United States.

The mid-1790s marked a turning point in American relations with the Barbary pirates. The long-lasting hostage crisis fueled American anger and a sense of national impotence. The consensus about North African military strength revolved 180 degrees from the 1780s. Then, most commentators deemed the Barbary pirates mighty adversaries who were too powerful for the United States to fight. Merchants and policymakers saw two options: pay tribute or commence a naval buildup. During the 1790s, however, Americans

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<sup>214</sup> Linda Kerber coined the phrase “Republican Motherhood” in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980). Also see Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980).

<sup>215</sup> Ben-Atar and Brown, 9.

<sup>216</sup> Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble*; Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*.

recast North African men as indolent, undisciplined, and easy prey for U.S. forces. Discussions of North Africa also began to reflect the ongoing discussions about proper sexual behavior and women's place in American society. Reports of captivity began to include sexual danger: hostages could be raped by Algerine men or seduced into sleeping with Algerine women (and, if caught, potentially face the death penalty). Americans were fed up with their vulnerability to the Barbary pirates in the 1790s and were itching for a fight. They would have an outlet for their rage the following decade, as the Tripolitan War offered a new generation of American men the opportunity to prove their manhood and end the threat of Barbary piracy.

### Chapter 3: The Beginning of the Tripolitan War

October 9, 1800 began as an ordinary day for Captain William Bainbridge (of the warship *George Washington*) in the Mediterranean. The Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddert, had dispatched him and his crew of 130 to Algiers to deliver tribute consisting of “some plank, some cables and a few canon, & some valuable European goods.” Stoddert also ordered them to adopt the “most Warlike appearance to make the best impressions of our discipline & power” and to leave as “as soon as possible” in order to avoid contracting the plague.<sup>217</sup> The Dey of Algiers, however, had other plans for the *George Washington*.

As Bainbridge recorded in his ship’s logbook, after unloading the cargo he received a “command from a Despotic Dey of Algiers” to take that country’s tribute to “the Grand Seignior at Constantinople.”<sup>218</sup> Outgunned by the Algerian navy and threatened with war if they did not comply, Bainbridge and the crew acquiesced and watched helplessly as “the pendant of the United States was struck and the Algerine Flag hoisted.” The Americans felt enraged and embarrassed and “some tears fell at this Instance of national Humility.” The Dey used his superior force to commandeer the U.S. warship. Richard O’Brien, the U.S. consul at Algiers, reported that Bainbridge and the crew took one-hundred Algerians to Constantinople on the *George Washington* and listed the tribute: one-hundred black slaves (a mix of men, women and children), one-hundred-fifty sheep, twenty-five horned cattle, twelve parrots, four antelopes, four horses, four lions, four tigers, and \$1 million worth of cash and

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<sup>217</sup> Benjamin Stoddert to William Bainbridge, June 25, 1800, *Naval Documents* I: 361-362; Stoddert to Bainbridge, July 31, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 365-366. The *George Washington* arrived in Algiers on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>218</sup> Bainbridge, *George Washington* log, October 9, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 378.



“Regalia.”<sup>219</sup> Previously, the Barbary pirates had abducted American merchant vessels—but now they apprehended warships. It was ironic that this warship was named after George Washington, the general who led his country to victory against mighty Britain (a much more powerful country than Algiers). Yet perhaps it was not so ironic since, as president, Washington paid nearly \$1 million to Algiers for a peace treaty and ransom. The Barbary pirates had once again embarrassed the United States and revealed that, despite having built a navy, America remained vulnerable in the Mediterranean.

Why begin a chapter about the Tripolitan War with an incident caused by Algiers? Americans at the time considered the conflicts rooted in the same structural problem: an insufficient number of U.S. warships in the Mediterranean. Anger at Algiers’s audacity generated cries for retaliation and ultimately helped to fuel the drive for war against Tripoli. The *George Washington* incident generated widespread anger and many Americans called for war against Algiers. As O’Brien exclaimed to the Secretary of State, “can we be a nation of Independent freeman and Suffer Those indignities....war will cost us 2 — or 3 Millions of dollars per annum — but it should be preferred to degradation and a state of Vasalage to The Scruff. of *Asia & affrica.*”<sup>220</sup> To this diplomat, spending vast sums on war was better than saving money and tolerating disgraceful treatment from North Africa. Similarly, consul to Tunis William Eaton marveled that the United States readily cowered before Algiers. In a letter to the Secretary of State, he wondered if his country had “yet one son whose soul revolts, whose nerves convulse, blood vessels burst, and heart indignant swells at thoughts of

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<sup>219</sup> Richard O’Brien to William Eaton, October 19, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 385.

<sup>220</sup> O’Brien to Secretary of State, October 22, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 389.

such debasement!”<sup>221</sup> Like O’Brien, Eaton believed that war against the Barbary States needed to happen in order to avenge the *George Washington* incident. Otherwise, “history shall tell that The United States first volunteer’d a *ship of war*, equipt, a *carrier* for a pirate....Nothing but blood can blot the impression out....I would have lost the peace, and been empaled myself rather than yielded this concession—Will nothing rouse my country!” The diplomats deemed America’s vulnerability to the Barbary pirates embarrassing and even stupefying in light of the Revolutionary War and the Quasi-War (against superpowers Britain and France, respectively). Even before Thomas Jefferson assumed the presidency, these diplomats (whom Jefferson maintained in North Africa) ardently desired war against the Barbary pirates.<sup>222</sup>

Back in the United States, newspapers throughout the country expressed outrage against the *George Washington* incident. The public first learned about it via newspaper reports in December 1800, when the ship *Brutus* arrived in Salem and its commander, William Brown, informed the public. In an article published by thirty newspapers, Brown defended Bainbridge’s decision to surrender the warship since the Dey threatened to declare war upon the United States if refused.<sup>223</sup> He also reported that, over the past two years,

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<sup>221</sup> Eaton to Secretary of State, November 11, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 398.

<sup>222</sup> Richard O’Brien (a ship captain and captive in Algiers during the 1780s and 1790s) was consul to Algiers; James Simpson (a merchant) was consul to Morocco; James Cathcart (an American Revolution veteran and captive in Algiers during the 1780s and 1790s) was consul to Tripoli; William Eaton (an American Revolution veteran) was consul to Tunis.

<sup>223</sup> Twenty-three Federalist newspapers published it: *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), December 12, 1800; *Massachusetts Mercury* (Boston, MA), December 12, 1800; *The United States Oracle of the Day* (Portsmouth, NH), December 13, 1800; *Jenks’ Portland Gazette* (Portland, ME), December 15, 1800; *Connecticut Gazette, and the Commercial Intelligencer* (New London, CT), December 17, 1800; *THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), December 17, 1800; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 18, 1800; *Gazette of the United States, & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 18, 1800; *United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), December 18, 1800; *The Telescope: or, American Herald* (Leominster, MA), December 18, 1800; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), December 19, 1800; *Columbian Courier* (New Bedford, MA), December 19, 1800; *The Spectator* (New York, NY), December 20, 1800; *Federal Galaxy* (Brattleboro,

Algiers had enslaved 368 Frenchmen and had seized twenty-seven Neapolitan, Sicilian, and Maltese ships (enslaving 215 people), seventeen Greek ships, and thirteen ships of “Imperialists” worth \$1 million. Brown added that Tunis had taken eleven Danish vessels worth \$600,000 and Tripoli had captured twenty-four Swedish ships. By printing this information, newspapers suggested that American merchants and sailors should expect to be harassed unless the government took decisive action to stop Barbary piracy. Indeed, most of these publications featured editorial commentary that urged the government to “immediately” send “six stout frigates” to the Mediterranean “to keep *Rogues* in awe.” Several of them also included an admonition to “Look out!” lest Americans “share the fate of the Swedes at Tripoli—the Danes at Tunis—and of many other Nations at Algiers!—‘*Millions for Defence—but not a Cent for Tribute!!!*’”<sup>224</sup> This commentary urged Americans to oppose

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VT), December 20, 1800; *Eastern Herald and Gazette of Maine* (Portland, ME), December 22, 1800; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Worcester, MA), December 23, 1800; *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), December 24, 1800; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), December 25, 1800; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 25, 1800; *The Kennebec Gazette* (Hallowell, ME), December 26, 1800; *The Courier* (Concord, NH), December 26, 1800; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), December 27, 1800; *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), December 29, 1800. Six Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Independent Chronicle and the United States Advertiser* (Boston, MA), December 15, 1800; *The National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), December 24, 1800; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), December 26, 1800; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), December 30, 1800; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), January 3, 1801; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), January 8, 1801. It also appeared in the politically neutral *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), December 17, 1800.

<sup>224</sup> *The Salem Impartial Register* (Democratic-Republican; Salem, MA), December 11, 1800; *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Federalist; Newburyport, MA), December 12, 1800; *The Bee* (Democratic-Republican; New London, CT), December 17, 1800; *The Providence Journal, and Town and Country Advertiser* (Federalist; Providence, RI), December 17, 1800; *American Mercury* (Democratic-Republican; Hartford, CT), December 18, 1800; *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Federalist; Alexandria, VA), December 24, 1800; *The Carolina Gazette* (Democratic-Republican; Charleston, SC), January 8, 1801; *Stewart’s Kentucky Herald* (Democratic-Republican; Lexington, KY), January 13, 1801. *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Federalist; Harrisburg, PA), December 29, 1800 published the “Look out!” statement, but omitted the recommendation to send six ships. Other newspapers lacked the Quasi-War reference but had the rest of the warning: *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Federalist; Philadelphia, PA), December 18, 1800; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (neutral; Philadelphia, PA), December 19, 1800; *The Times and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser* (Democratic-Republican; Alexandria, VA), December 24, 1800; *The Herald of Liberty* (Democratic-Republican; Washington, PA), January 26, 1801.

North African aggression and demands for money just as they did against France in the XYZ Affair and Quasi-War. The “Millions for Defence” slogan became enormously popular during the late 1790s, having been spoken by Federalist congressman Robert Goodloe Harper at a 1798 banquet in honor of John Marshall.<sup>225</sup> A pro-Democratic-Republican newspaper from Pennsylvania castigated President John Adams for leaving American ships vulnerable to Barbary piracy. It viewed the *George Washington* affair as a new low in U.S.-Barbary relations: “as if the character of the Country was not already sufficiently humbled, by paying a tribute to the *Dey* of Algiers...the frigate named *George Washington*, has, by a peculiarity of blindness and fatality, been put in the power of the Barbarians!”<sup>226</sup> Like other newspaper articles, it invoked the slogan “*Millions for Defence; but not a Cent for Tribute!*” as a call to action. Newspaper editors of both parties considered Algiers’s hijacking of the *George Washington* as an enormous affront upon national honor that necessitated a swift militaristic response. Clearly, the public was not war weary from the Quasi-War and welcomed another fight.

Bainbridge also urged retaliation and, at his request, newspapers throughout the country publicized his views. Fearing that surrendering the *George Washington* would cast doubt upon his leadership abilities or even cost him his job, he asked *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* to publish four letters in order to educate the public about “the facts, relative to my conduct.” The letters (two by him, two by Richard O’Brien), discussed their attempts to change the Dey’s mind and the anxiety they felt over surrendering the ship.

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<sup>225</sup> The slogan became erroneously attributed to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, who was one of the three American diplomats (together with John Marshall and Elbridge Gerry) involved in the XYZ Affair. W.A.A., “MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE, NOT ONE CENT FOR TRIBUTE,” *American Journal of Numismatics* (1897-1924) 40, no. 1 (July 1905), 26.

<sup>226</sup> *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), January 14, 1801.

In his October 9<sup>th</sup> letter to O'Brien, Bainbridge averred that he had made "every possible argument" to persuade the Dey to relent and had even tried to get a "British 24 gun ship" to take the *George Washington's* place. He emphasized that he did not "accede to this demand voluntarily" and thought that Algiers's power over the U.S. Navy "makes me ponder on the words *Independent United States*." Clearly, Bainbridge felt tormented over yielding the ship and believed that this episode had great significance for his country. Indeed, his October 10<sup>th</sup> letter to the Secretary of the Navy expressed his hope that the *George Washington* incident would serve as a wake-up call to his countrymen: "the light that this Regency looks on the United States is exactly this; you pay me tribute, by that you become my slaves, and them I have a right to order as I please. Did the United States know the easy access of this barbarous coast called Barbary, the weakness of their garrisons, and the effeminacy of their people, I am sure they would not be long tributary to so pitiful a race of infidels."<sup>227</sup> More than forty newspaper editors published the four letters; clearly, the *George Washington* incident enraged them and they wanted the public to feel livid as well. A bipartisan consensus craved vengeance against the Barbary pirates.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 24, 1801. Bainbridge to O'Brien, October 9, 1800; Bainbridge to Stoddert, October 10, 1800.

<sup>228</sup> Twenty-seven Federalist newspapers printed it: *Gazette of the United States, & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 25, 1801; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 27, 1801; *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), April 27, 1801; *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Alexandria, VA), April 28, 1801; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 28, 1801; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 28, 1801; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 28, 1801; *The Spectator* (New York, NY), April 29, 1801; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), May 4, 1801; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), May 4, 1801; *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Harrisburg, PA), May 4, 1801; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 5, 1801; *THOMAS'S Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), May 6, 1801; *The Providence Journal, and Town and Country Advertiser* (Providence, RI), May 6, 1801; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), May 8, 1801; *The Eastern Herald & Maine Gazette* (Portland, ME), May 11, 1801; *Spooner's Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), May 11, 1801; *Rural Gazette* (Sharon, CT), May 11, 1801; *The Political Repository* (Brookfield, MA), May 12, 1801; *Farmers' Museum, or Literary Gazette* (Walpole, NH), May 12, 1801; *Connecticut Gazette, and the Commercial Intelligencer* (New London, CT), May 13, 1801; *The Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), May 13, 1801; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), May 14, 1801; *The Kennebec Gazette* (Hallowell, ME), May 15, 1801; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), May 16, 1801; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), May 21, 1801

What did the Adams Administration think? The *George Washington* incident occurred towards the end of Adams's presidency, at time when he had lost motivation and had mentally distanced himself from his responsibilities. As one scholar has discussed, by the end of December 1800 Adams "frequently expressed his old wish to resign" and "his thoughts were directed back over his administration and forward to his retirement rather than to the present."<sup>229</sup> This lackadaisical attitude affected Barbary relations since by the time Jefferson assumed the presidency the government had fallen two-and-a-half years behind its tribute payment to Algiers.<sup>230</sup> However, even before news of the *George Washington* incident arrived, Secretary of State John Marshall suggested that the United States would send a fleet of ships to the Mediterranean after the Quasi-War ended. In a July 1800 letter, Marshall informed John Quincy Adams, the U.S. minister to Berlin (and the president's son), that the Swedish minister had proposed an alliance with the Netherlands and the United States against North Africa. Marshall stated that although the president was "far from being pleased with the state of our affairs with the Barbary powers," he thought that current treaties should be honored. However, if the Barbary States broke them, the United States would pursue the alliance. Marshall added that the president would not dispatch the Navy to the

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*The Telescope; or, American Herald* (Leominster, MA), May 21, 1801. Fourteen Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *The Times; and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), April 29, 1801; *The Salem Impartial Register* (Salem, MA), May 4, 1801; *The National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), May 4, 1801; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), May 5, 1801; *The Bee* (New London, CT), May 6, 1801; *Kline's Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), May 6, 1801; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), May 7, 1801; *The Independent Chronicle, and the United States Advertiser* (Boston, MA), May 7, 1801; *The Guardian of Liberty* (Newport, RI), May 9, 1801; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina Weekly Advertiser* (Raleigh, NC), May 12, 1801; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), May 12, 1801; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), May 14, 1801; *The Herald of Liberty* (Washington, PA), May 18, 1801; *Stewart's Kentucky Herald* (Lexington, KY), June 9, 1801. It also appeared in the politically neutral *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 25, 1801 and *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), May 6, 1801 and in the politically indeterminable *Vermont Centinel* (Burlington, VT), May 7, 1801.

<sup>229</sup> Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 268.

<sup>230</sup> O'Brien to Secretary of State, May 12, 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 451.

Mediterranean until “actual hostilities shall cease” with France; sending ships now “would be a hazard, to which our infant navy ought not perhaps to be exposed.”<sup>231</sup> Marshall also wrote to Richard O’Brien, asking him, Eaton, and James Cathcart (the consul to Tripoli) for “a perfect and complete statement” regarding America’s status with the Barbary States. More significantly, the Secretary of State insisted that the Adams Administration had a limited tolerance for Barbary piracy: “the burthensome caprices of the Barbary Sovereigns cannot always be submitted to.”<sup>232</sup> Upon learning that Tunis demanded presents, Marshall told Eaton in August that the president acquiesced “with very much reluctance” to buy jewels and thought that “this system of heavy exaction must not be continued.”<sup>233</sup> Also, on the eve of leaving office, Marshall wrote in a memorandum that “the state of our affairs with the Barbary powers generally & with Tripoli in particular requires immediate attention.”<sup>234</sup> He knew, though, that these problems would fall to the Jefferson Administration to resolve. Altogether, this evidence suggests that the Adams Administration wanted to send warships to the Mediterranean in order to protect the merchant fleet and to discourage the Barbary States from demanding gifts. Since none of the Barbary States actually declared war during his presidency, Adams lacked a reason to divert resources from the Quasi-War (which did not officially end until 1801).<sup>235</sup> Had John Adams been reelected he likely would have taken more vigorous naval action against Tripoli than Jefferson ultimately did.

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<sup>231</sup> John Marshall to John Quincy Adams, July 24, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 364-365.

<sup>232</sup> Marshall to O’Brien, July 29, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 365.

<sup>233</sup> Marshall to Eaton, August 30, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 369.

<sup>234</sup> John Marshall Memoranda on Foreign Affairs, February 2, 1801, ed., Charles Hobson, *Papers of John Marshall Digital Edition*, University of Virginia, <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JNML.html>.

<sup>235</sup> The Convention of 1800 was signed in Paris on September 30, 1800. The Senate ratified it in February 1801 and, after France ratified it in July, the Senate passed a resolution on December 19, 1801 that proclaimed the

By the time Thomas Jefferson assumed the presidency in March 1801, the United States had longstanding grievances against the Barbary pirates (especially against Algiers). The Jefferson Administration recognized the public fervor over the *George Washington* incident; as Secretary of State James Madison told Richard O'Brien, "the sending to Constantinople, the national ship of war, the *George Washington*, by force, under the Algerine flag, and for such a purpose, has deeply affected the sensibility, not only of the President, but of the people of the United States....the indignity is of so serious a nature, that it is not impossible, that it may be deemed necessary, on a fit occasion, to revive the subject."<sup>236</sup> Even though Congress had reduced the size of the navy with the March 3, 1801 "Act providing for a Naval peace establishment," it still retained thirteen frigates—more than enough to deal with the Barbary States. This act mandated that "six of the frigates...shall be kept in constant service in time of peace" and the other seven put in storage.<sup>237</sup> In times of war, however, the entire fleet could be activated. Jefferson inherited a tumultuous situation with the Barbary pirates—the only question was how to respond.<sup>238</sup>

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pact entirely ratified. "Convention between the French Republic, and the United States of America," *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/fr1800.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fr1800.asp) (accessed November 11, 2015).

<sup>236</sup> James Madison to O'Brien, May 20, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 460-462.

<sup>237</sup> "An Act providing for a Naval peace establishment, and for other purposes," March 3, 1801, Richard Peters, ed., *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, 6<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, vol. II, (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1845), 110-111.

<sup>238</sup> The outgoing Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddert, recommended that the government build twenty-five new ships, but Congress (and Jefferson) rejected this advice. Charles Paullin, *Paullin's History of Naval Administration, 1775-1911* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute, 1968), 118.



The bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, had become increasingly angry with the United States during the Adams Administration and began to threaten war.<sup>239</sup> Since taking power in 1795 (by killing his father and one of his brothers and driving his other brother into exile), he sought to bolster his navy and demand respect from other countries.<sup>240</sup> He particularly resented what he perceived as the United States treating him as a weaker monarch than the Dey of Algiers or the Bey of Tunis. In a 1799 letter to President Adams, Yusuf warned that peace between their two countries would last only as long as “you are Willing to treat us as you do the two other Regencies, without any difference being made between us.”<sup>241</sup> Similarly, Cathcart reported (in a letter published by newspapers throughout the country) that the bashaw complained that the United States gave gifts to Algiers and Tunis but not to him: “why do not the United States send me a voluntary present? They have acted with me as if they had done every thing against their will” even though “I concluded a peace with them for almost nothing in common to what I have received from other nations.”<sup>242</sup> The bashaw presented himself as an aggrieved party and warned that “I can hurt the commerce of any nation, as much as the Tunisians.” Additionally, it later

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<sup>239</sup> O’Brien to William Kirkpatrick, December 24, 1800, Dudley Knox, ed., *Naval Documents related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France*, 7 vols. (Government Printing Office: Washington D.C., 1938), VII: 45; Protest of James Cathcart, October 29, 1800, *Naval Documents* I: 392.

<sup>240</sup> Kola Folayan, *Tripoli during the Reign of Yusuf Pasha Qaramanli* (University of Ife Press: Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1979), 25-30.

<sup>241</sup> Yusuf Karamanli to John Adams, April 15, 1799, *Naval Documents*, I: 323.

<sup>242</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), December 24, 1801; *Gazette of the United States* December 28, 1801; *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), December 29, 1801; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 29, 1801; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 30, 1801; *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Alexandria, VA), December 31, 1801; *American Citizen and Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 31, 1801; *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), January 1, 1802; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), January 1, 1802; *National Intelligencer*, and *Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), January 6, 1802; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), January 11, 1802; *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), January 19, 1802. Jefferson shred this letter with Congress in December 1801. Newspapers provide two different dates: May 12, 1800 or May 12, 1801. Since it is not included in the copious *Papers of James Madison*, I am inclined to date it as May 12, 1800 (during the Adams Administration).

became clear that Yusuf despised Articles I and XII of the 1797 U.S.-Tripoli treaty, which specified that the Dey of Algiers would mediate disputes.<sup>243</sup> As one scholar has summed up, from Yusuf's standpoint the United States had "treated Tripoli with contempt."<sup>244</sup>

Tensions escalated throughout Adams's presidency, culminating in Yusuf's threatening to declare war on the United States unless he received a lump sum of \$225,000 plus \$25,000 annually.<sup>245</sup> Cathcart tried to defuse the situation by offering \$30,000 plus presents (he later increased the offer to \$40,000) if the bashaw would write a letter to the president and wait ten months for a response.<sup>246</sup> Yusuf declined. He officially declared war on May 14, 1801 (signified by chopping down the pole bearing the U.S. flag), but provided a forty-day grace period before the Tripolitan navy would target American ships.<sup>247</sup> War had happened whether Jefferson wanted it or not—it was out of his control.

Although Yusuf bore responsibility for abrogating the 1797 treaty, his behavior was not egregious when compared to America's earlier experiences with the Barbary States. In the 1780s and 1790s, Algiers had enslaved more than one-hundred Americans (many of whom died in captivity) and, more recently, had commandeered the *George Washington*. By contrast, since their 1797 treaty Tripoli had not enslaved any Americans and, when a Tripolitan ship captured an American vessel (the *Catherine*) in October 1800, the bashaw

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<sup>243</sup> Richard Dale to Robert Smith, August 18, 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 552.

<sup>244</sup> Folayan, 35.

<sup>245</sup> Eaton to Secretary of State, 10 April 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 430.

<sup>246</sup> Cathcart to Yusuf Karamanli, May 14, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 453. Cathcart to Secretary of State, May 16, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 459.

<sup>247</sup> Cathcart to Nicholas Nissen, May 15, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 453; Circular letter to U.S. Agents and Consuls from Cathcart, May 15, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 454-455.

quickly released it and the crew.<sup>248</sup> Yusuf even offered a grace period so that U.S. consuls could warn American ships about the Tripolitan Navy. Clearly, the bashaw had treated the United States much better than the Dey of Algiers had. Furthermore, it was common knowledge in Europe and the United States that the Barbary rulers annulled treaties from time to time in order to bolster their revenue. Yusuf's behavior towards the United States was business as usual in North Africa.

How did the public respond upon learning about Tripoli's hostility? Newspapers (mostly Federalist) directly associated the *George Washington* incident with the bashaw's new demands. Commentators ignored the longstanding element of Yusuf's complaints and interpreted it as an unexpected outburst. An article published in several states declared that "the outrageous conduct of the regency of Algiers in the case of the American frigate, *George Washington*, and the recent demands of the bashaw of Tripoli, must excite a general emotion of indignation in this country."<sup>249</sup> It condemned European countries for purchasing "peace" from these "petty states of barbarians and pirates on the coast of Africa" and argued that a turning point had arrived:

now we find that our flag is outrageously disgraced; that new tribute is insolently demanded; that their injustice is as capricious as it is extravagant, that our commerce is insecure and our citizens exposed to slavery upon every fresh wish of avarice, or new whim of almost unbounded insolence. Where will this scene of extortion and arrogance on one side and submission and humiliation on the other cease? It is easy to see that it will continue and increase until these villains feel our power, are impressed with some respect for our

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<sup>248</sup> Folayan, 35. Cathcart to Charles Lee, October 18, 1800, *Naval Documents* I: 382-384; Cathcart to O'Brien, October 25, 1800, *Ibid.*, I: 390.

<sup>249</sup> Six Federalist publications printed it: *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), May 5, 1801; *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), May 12, 1801; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), May 15, 1801; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Worcester, MA), May 19, 1801 [for this newspaper's politics, see William Lincoln, *History of Worcester, Massachusetts* (Worcester: Moses D. Phillips and Company, 1837), 333]; *The Kennebec Gazette* (Hallowell, ME), May 22, 1801 [see Joseph Griffin, ed., *History of the Press of Maine* (Brunswick: J. Griffin, 1872), 88]; *The Vergennes Gazette and Vermont and New-York Advertiser* (Vergennes, VT), May 28, 1801. One Democratic-Republican newspaper ran it: *The Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), May 25, 1801.

strength and perceive that if they exceed a certain limit in their demands they shall find not tribute but chastisement. When we first agreed to *make them presents*, we were without a ship of war; we have now a naval force competent to wipe away the ignominy which lies upon us, to repress their insolence to prevent our commerce becoming their prey, and at least induce them to keep within some bounds in their villainy.

This article argued that America had permitted North Africa to disgrace it long enough and that new insults by Algiers and Tripoli necessitated a strong naval response that would permanently end Barbary piracy. Unlike in previous decades, the United States now had a naval force capable of defending national honor and merchant ships. Why not use the navy? What else was it for?

Moreover, Tripoli made a more attractive target for vengeance than Algiers since it had a smaller navy (and, in theory, could more easily be defeated). Cathcart reported that Tripoli's force consisted of five main vessels: a twenty-eight gun ship (that could hold two-hundred men), a twenty-gun ship (one-hundred-fifty men), a fourteen-gun brig (one-hundred men), and two polaccas of fourteen- or sixteen-guns (one-hundred men each).<sup>250</sup> Regarding Algiers's fleet, Bainbridge reported that it boasted fifteen vessels plus sixty mortar and gun boats.<sup>251</sup> The Jefferson Administration recognized this difference. As Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith observed to Captain Richard Dale (the leader of the Mediterranean squadron), Algiers had "the principal strength" among the Barbary States while "the force of Tunis & Tripoli are contemptible, & might be crushed with any one of the Frigates under your command."<sup>252</sup> The president himself, in his First Annual Message to Congress, dismissed

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<sup>250</sup> Circular letter to U.S. Consuls and Agents in Europe from Cathcart, May 11, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 450. Cathcart appears to have omitted Tripoli's gun boats from his list.

<sup>251</sup> Marine Force of Algiers, *Ibid.*, I: 371-372.

<sup>252</sup> Robert Smith to Dale, May 20, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 467.

Tripoli as “the least considerable of the Barbary States.”<sup>253</sup> The Jefferson Administration also tried to reassure concerned citizens: Smith informed the chairman of Philadelphia’s Chamber of Commerce that four ships were “fully adequate to the Destruction of the Naval Power of Tripoli & to meet the Navies of Algiers & Tripoli united.”<sup>254</sup> Such statements are breathtaking in their naiveté. Jefferson and his cabinet officials were delusional in believing that three frigates and a schooner could hold their own against the combined navies of Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis.<sup>255</sup> It was to the bashaw’s advantage that Jefferson was now president instead of Adams. Throughout the Tripolitan War, the Jefferson Administration had a tendency to underestimate the capabilities of the Tripolitan Navy.

Fortunately for the bashaw, Jefferson refused to use the U.S. navy to its fullest extent. Although in the 1780s he had called for a substantial naval buildup and had (in debates with John Adams) argued for war over paying tribute, Jefferson had rethought his position. As discussed in the previous chapter, in 1784 Jefferson proposed sending six ships to the Mediterranean under John Paul Jones and, the following year, he suggested that the United States generate revenue by “turn[ing] pyrate” through demanding an annual tribute from foreign ships that participated in the West Indies trade.<sup>256</sup> In the late 1790s, however, Jefferson became appalled at Federalist policies during the Quasi-War, especially the repressive Alien and Sedition Acts and the soaring military and navy budgets. He now thought that the problems presented by a formidable navy outweighed the good that it could

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<sup>253</sup> Jefferson, First Annual Message, December 8, 1801, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29443>.

<sup>254</sup> Smith to Thomas Fitzsimons, June 4, 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 486-487.

<sup>255</sup> As for Tunis, as of April 1799 it had thirteen vessels, ranging from eight to twenty-two guns. Concerning Defences of Algiers and Tunis, April 1799, *Ibid.*, I: 315.

<sup>256</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, November 11, 1784, *Emerging Nation*, II: 499; Jefferson to Monroe, February 6, 1785, *Ibid.*, II: 543.

do. Jefferson eagerly shared his views with correspondents. In January 1799, for instance, he endorsed “a naval force only as may protect our coasts and harbours” but nothing more, lest its “expences and the eternal wars in which it will implicate us, will grind us with public burthens, & sink us under them.”<sup>257</sup> In other letters, Jefferson stressed the astronomical costs of creating and maintaining a strong navy. To Aaron Burr, he calculated that Federalist plans to make the United States “a great naval power” would require \$10 million in building costs and “annual expenses between” \$5 million and \$6 million.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, Jefferson despised public enthusiasm for the navy and claimed that “we are running navigation-mad, & commerce-mad, and navy-mad, which is worst of all.”<sup>259</sup> Clearly, Jefferson was a different person in 1801 than he had been in the mid-1780s. Previously, he considered a navy as a protector of republican liberties. Now, however, he deemed it a dangerous drain on financial resources. Regrettably, in his enthusiasm to reduce the federal government’s expenses, he squandered the opportunity to decisively deal with Barbary piracy.

What was Jefferson willing to do? Although it would take several months before learning about the bashaw’s actual declaration of war, he knew about Tripoli’s longstanding anger and, after consulting with his cabinet, decided to send three frigates (the *President*, *Philadelphia*, and *Essex*) and a sloop (*Enterprize*) to the Mediterranean under Commodore

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<sup>257</sup> Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, January 26, 1799, Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition University of Virginia, <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/TSJN.html>.

<sup>258</sup> Jefferson to Aaron Burr, January 7, 1799, Ibid. Jefferson wrote similar letters to Madison and Thomas Mann Randolph on January 16, 1799.

<sup>259</sup> Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, January 18, 1800, Ibid.

Richard Dale.<sup>260</sup> They sailed in early June.<sup>261</sup> However, Jefferson wanted to avoid war and find a diplomatic solution—even if that meant paying for it. Commodore Dale’s official orders stipulated that if the bashaw “has conducted himself peaceably towards the United States” he should receive up to \$10,000 as a gift (Dale could use his discretion regarding the exact amount). If all the Barbary States were friendly towards America, then the squadron should sail for home on October 15<sup>th</sup>. If Dale learned that Tripoli had declared war, then he was to implement a blockade, provide convoy to American merchant vessels, and intercept any ships that the Tripolitan Navy “may have captured.” If Dale took any Tripolitans prisoner, he was to “treat them with humanity and attention, and land them on any part of the Barbary shore most convenient to you.” Notably, Jefferson only authorized attacks in two scenarios: if “all the Barbary Powers, have declared War against the United States” or if “Algiers alone have declared War.” If either of these situations occurred, then the U.S. squadron could “sink burn, or otherwise destroy their ships & Vessels.” Clearly, Jefferson harbored much more irritation towards Algiers than he did towards Tripoli (presumably from the *George Washington* incident). Jefferson hoped that Yusuf would relent and give the president an opportunity to make a fresh start. Privately, however, Jefferson feared that Tripoli had begun preying upon American ships. As he wrote to James Monroe, “Tripoli has probably commenced depredations on us...totally without cause.”<sup>262</sup> Yet even while sending

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<sup>260</sup> Smith to Dale, May 20, 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 465-467. Circular letter to American Consuls from Madison, May 21, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition, University of Virginia, <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN.html>. Jefferson and Madison learned about Tripoli’s declaration of war by early September. In a September 4, 1801 letter to Robert Livingston, Madison acknowledged having received “official information that the Bashaw of Tripoli declared war against the United States before the middle of May last.” Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Letter from Surgeon William Turner, U.S. Navy, *Naval Documents* I: 480.

<sup>262</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, May 29, 1801, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 34: 205.

the ships to the Mediterranean, Jefferson sought to reduce tensions with Tripoli. In a May letter to Yusuf, he stressed America's "sincere desire to cultivate peace and commerce with your subjects" and disavowed any desire for conflict. He described the warships as a mere "squadron of observation into the Mediterranean sea, to superintend the safety of our commerce there, and to exercise our seamen in nautical duties."<sup>263</sup> Clearly, Jefferson wanted to avoid war and to make amends with Tripoli.

Regarding the constitutionality of sending the fleet without first consulting Congress, the president reported his Cabinet's discussion about this topic and their unanimous support for sending the four ships. As Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin argued, "to declare war & to make war is synonymous. The Exve [Executive] cannot put us in a state of war. but if we be put into that state either by the decln [declaration] of Congress or of the other nation, the command & direction of the public force then belongs to the Exve."<sup>264</sup> That is, Gallatin argued that since a state of war already existed (instigated by the bashaw of Tripoli), Jefferson had the constitutional authority (as commander-in-chief) to dispatch the navy.

Even though he recognized that Tripoli would probably want war (his suspicions would soon be confirmed), Jefferson sought to keep the navy on peacetime footing. He wanted the minimum amount of force necessary to protect American shipping and generally concurred with the opinions of Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin, who predicted that "there will be no fighting in the Mediterranean" since "the sight of our Frigates will be sufficient to arrange matters there."<sup>265</sup> Time would prove Gallatin very wrong. In any event,

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<sup>263</sup> Jefferson to Yusuf Karamanli, May 21, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 470.

<sup>264</sup> Notes on a Cabinet Meeting, May 15, 1801, "Founders Online," National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-34-02-0088>.

<sup>265</sup> Albert Gallatin to Jefferson, August 18, 1801, Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition.



at the same time Jefferson dispatched the four ships he told Monroe about his goal to heavily reduce naval expenses by “partly selling off” ships and “laying up” others and reducing the marines to “about 400.”<sup>266</sup> The president also spoke more broadly about condensing the size of the federal government, complaining about “agencies upon agencies in every part of the earth, and for the most useless or mischievous purposes, & all of these opening doors for fraud & embezzlement....we are lopping them down silently to make as little noise as possible.” To his Secretary of War, Jefferson singled out the armed forces as ripe with corruption and unchecked power: “the abuses in the military & naval departments seem to have been so great, that it will doubtless be indispensable that we bring them in some way, directly or indirectly, under the eye of the legislature.”<sup>267</sup> Jefferson suspected Federalist bureaucratic and financial conspiracies galore and considered the navy (which included many Federalist officers) to be part of the problem.

Since Jefferson hoped to avoid a prolonged war with Tripoli in order to fulfill financial reform goals, it is flawed to interpret (as others have done) Jefferson’s decision to fight Tripoli as the fulfillment of his 1780s desire to use force against the Barbary pirates.<sup>268</sup> By the time he became president Jefferson did not want war against Tripoli—he preferred to pay a settlement and keep naval expenses low. Jefferson’s views had changed dramatically since the 1780s and his obsession with reducing the navy prevented the United States from dealing effectively with the Barbary pirates.

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<sup>266</sup> Jefferson to Monroe, June 20, 1801, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 34: 308-310.

<sup>267</sup> Jefferson to Henry Dearborn, August 14, 1801, *Ibid.*, 35: 188.

<sup>268</sup> Wright and Macleod, *First Americans in North Africa*, 87; Tucker and Hendrickson, 294-295; Ellis, 241; Kaplan, 127; Allison, 25, 32, 231; Wheelan, 3-4; Richard Parker, 135; Cogliano, 152.

Had Jefferson pursued it, a robust assault upon Tripoli would have been very popular with the public. Fourth of July celebrations throughout the country in 1801 included toasts to belligerency and imagined triumph over North Africa. In New York, a group of “officers of the brigade” drank to “Commodore Dale and the navy—may they pay the tribute due to Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, in 24 pounders instead of specie or naval stores.”<sup>269</sup> At another celebration, “a very numerous and respectable assemblage of impartial Patriots” wished “success to the American Navy and our Expedition against the Pirates of Barbary” and wanted Dale to “spread terror amidst the piratical Tripolitans.”<sup>270</sup> Connecticut celebrants invoked the Quasi-War in urging the Navy to “teach the pirates of Barbary, our favorite doctrine, ‘Millions for defence, but not a cent for tribute.’”<sup>271</sup> At a Virginia barbeque, guests drank to the prestige of the Navy—“May it in peace be the wealth and pride of the country and in war its glory and defence”—and wished success to “Our Mediterranean fleet—May the *tribute* it carries to the Barbary powers be punctually paid.”<sup>272</sup> From Rhode Island, a group celebrated “Our Naval Expedition to Barbary—Without being barbarous, may it chastize Barbarians.”<sup>273</sup> The Franklin Typographical Association of New York hoped that the Navy would unleash its “large font of canon” and “*well distributed balls*” against the “faithless marauders” of North Africa.<sup>274</sup> Clearly, the public was not war weary after the two-year conflict with France. Americans took problems with the Barbary States seriously

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<sup>269</sup> *American Citizen and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), July 8, 1801.

<sup>270</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1801.

<sup>271</sup> *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), July 9, 1801.

<sup>272</sup> *The Fincastle Weekly Advertiser* (Fincastle, VA), July 10, 1801.

<sup>273</sup> *The Providence Journal, and Town and Country Advertiser* (Providence, RI), July 22, 1801.

<sup>274</sup> *Federal Galaxy* (Brattleboro, VT), July 13, 1801.

and celebrated Jefferson's decision to send a squadron (although they misunderstood the president's intentions).

Had Jefferson chosen to deal aggressively with Barbary piracy, he would have enjoyed bipartisan support. Many Federalist publications set aside their opposition to the president and commended his decision to dispatch a squadron to the Mediterranean. Newspapers in three states published an article that defended Jefferson for sending warships to the Mediterranean against those who claimed that he had acted unconstitutionally: "self-defence is lawful....The President, by using force in this manner, performs a duty which it would be very culpable in him to neglect. If war should ensue it is not his fault."<sup>275</sup> Other Federalist newspapers rejoiced that Jefferson had decided to use the navy despite previous Democratic-Republican hostility: "though the party now in power opposed the raising of a naval force, in every stage of that business, yet it must be granted that they have beneficially employed...part of it...in protecting the commerce of the United States against the Barbary pirates."<sup>276</sup> To be sure, some Federalists adopted a middle ground that endorsed war while accusing Jefferson of acting unconstitutionally. Newspapers in three states ran an article declaring that "every friend to American Commerce, approves the measure of Mr. JEFFERSON, in sending a squadron into the *Mediterranean* to prevent the depredations of the *Tripolians* on our commerce. They, however, have a right to deem that measure an infringement on the Constitution of the United States, which declares that Congress alone

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<sup>275</sup> *The Spectator* (New York, NY), July 15, 1801; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), July 16, 1801 [see Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Jefferson and Madison* (New York: Random House, 2010), 354]; *The Ploughman; or, Republican Federalist* (Bennington, VT), August 3, 1801.

<sup>276</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), October 30, 1801; *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), November 7, 1801.

have the ‘*Power to declare war*’<sup>277</sup> Such criticism aside, Jefferson had the luxury of bipartisan support in waging the Tripolitan War. It is remarkable that he eventually squandered it (as will be seen). The bitterness over losing the 1800 election somewhat evaporated when Federalists talked about North Africa—they wanted Jefferson to succeed as commander-in-chief for the greater good of the country.

Other Federalists argued that their party deserved credit for any future triumph over the Barbary pirates since creating a navy was their idea. An article published in three states reminded readers that “the federal Administration of those ‘*old tories*,’ Washington and Adams, has furnished an American navy; and put it in the power of the United States to set a glorious example to Europe” by not giving “*another cent* in tribute to the piratical states of Barbary.”<sup>278</sup> It further stressed that ‘*Millions for defense but not a cent for tribute*,’ has been a federal doctrine for years. The jacobins, too, have at *last* become coverts to it.” Similarly, several newspapers bitterly remarked that “no thanks are due to the democrats, that the United States has such a squadron to send” against Tripoli.<sup>279</sup> Clearly, some Federalists saw

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<sup>277</sup> *Columbian Centinel*, *Massachusetts Federalist* (Boston, MA), November 7, 1801; *The Independent Gazetteer* (Worcester, MA), November 10, 1801; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 13, 1801; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), November 14, 1801.

<sup>278</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), June 25, 1801; *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), June 27, 1801; *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Alexandria, VA), June 30, 1801. Three Democratic-Republican newspapers offered a rebuttal: “but, say the *Tories*, this is our Navy, you must thank us for it.—How so? whose money paid for this Navy? Why, the People’s to be sure—and the People have a right to derive all the benefit from it, as they pay all the expence.” This populist approach sought to undercut Federalist efforts to gain politically from the Tripolitan War, but rested upon dubious logic since the navy owed its existence to Federalist policymakers of the 1790s. *The Salem Impartial Register* (Salem, MA), November 5, 1801; *The Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser* (Boston, MA), November 9, 1801; *The Patriot, or, Scourge of Aristocracy* (Stonington-Port, CT), November 27, 1801 [see “Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers,” Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sf88091526/>].

<sup>279</sup> *Columbian Centinel*, *Massachusetts Federalist* (Boston, MA), June 6, 1801; *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), June 9, 1801; *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), June 9, 1801.

the Tripolitan War as a natural extension of the Quasi-War, although they felt threatened by the prospect of Democratic-Republicans increasing in popularity among the public.

Other Federalist papers were overtly hostile towards their political rivals and portrayed them as unqualified to defend national security. They reminded readers that Democratic-Republicans had tolerated France's harassment of American merchant ships in the 1790s. An article published in two states asserted that, during the debates over creating a navy in 1794, "the democratic members" of Congress "said all they could say against a navy, as useless, expensive, and dangerous to liberty." The article considered them hypocrites for now adopting the "millions for defence" rally cry because "when France demanded tribute, they were then as meek as whipped children."<sup>280</sup> Similarly, several newspapers observed that Democratic-Republicans "were entirely silent about their '*independence*,' their '*honor*,' and their '*liberty*,' when Talleyrand urged his ever memorable demand of tribute from the American envoys! In the present instance, therefore we may fairly suspect their sincerity. They are only enraged that we should be tributary to any barbarians but *French barbarians*."<sup>281</sup> The *Washington Federalist* editorialized that it was "very well, very laudable" to use the navy against the Barbary pirates, but contended that Democratic-Republicans cared less about their country's honor than increasing their political power: "suppose[e] this squadron had been sent to the Mediterranean under the administration of Mr. Adams, and a part of the object had been avowed to be instruction to our young officers; how had the democratic papers clamored against the inutility of the plan, the wanton mispending

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<sup>280</sup> *The Mercury and New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), July 17, 1801; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), July 27, 1801.

<sup>281</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), June 8, 1801; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 10, 1801; *The Spectator* (New York, NY), June 13, 1801; *The Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), June 17, 1801.

of public money, and the base gradual attempt to nurse a growing navy.”<sup>282</sup> Although many Federalist newspaper editors endorsed taking vigorous naval action against Tripoli, they feared that the public would bestow all the glory upon Jefferson and his party. One senses that Federalists bitterly lamented the lack of a good opportunity to fight the Barbary pirates during Adams’s Administration and thereby increase their public appeal.

Many Democratic-Republican newspaper editors also supported sending the navy and urged Jefferson to accomplish what the two Federalist presidents had not: securing American commerce in the Mediterranean. Publications in four states ran an article that urged Jefferson to unleash naval hero Commodore Thomas Truxton against the Barbary “*barbarians*” in order to uphold the principle behind the Quasi-War: “Millions for defence—but not a cent for tribute.”<sup>283</sup> An article in a New York newspaper utilized gendered rhetoric in associating belligerence with masculinity: “it is the desire of every man in the United States that we be freed from the shackles of the Mediterranean powers. And we hope it is reserved to Mr. Jefferson to liberate us. It would be far better for our republican cannon to thunder in the ears of the barbarians than to pay them a tribute.”<sup>284</sup> This article also dismissed critics who complained about naval expenses by countering that the government would not hesitate to repulse a land attack. Similarly, a Philadelphia newspaper hoped that the U.S. Navy would “force the Barbary states to pay us *tribute* instead of our

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<sup>282</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), June 10, 1801.

<sup>283</sup> *The Times; and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), April 28, 1801; *The Constitutional Telegrapher* (Boston, MA), May 2, 1801 [this newspaper replaced “*barbarians*” with “*Algerines*”]; *Haswell’s Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), May 4, 1801; *Columbian Minerva* (Dedham, MA), May 5, 1801; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), May 14, 1801; *The Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), May 19, 1801. Truxton distinguished himself in the Quasi-War and received a gold medal from Congress in March 1800. He declined the opportunity to fight in the Tripolitan War.

<sup>284</sup> *American Citizen and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 6, 1801.

paying them.”<sup>285</sup> Clearly, many Democratic-Republicans felt just as strongly about national honor as did Federalists. Even though that party opposed the Quasi-War against France, many members nevertheless found it analogous to the current situation with Tripoli—both involved the principle of defending free trade.

To be sure, some newspaper editors preferred to pay Tripoli rather than fight. An article published in two Federalist newspapers argued that paying tribute did not violate national honor since America “followed the example of the European nations” and it constituted “the cheapest method of securing our Mediterranean commerce.” Moreover, it drew a distinction between purchasing peace from “civilized nations” and from “barbarians”: “buying the friendship” of the former “implies their superiority—buying the friendship of barbarians, implies only that they are barbarians.”<sup>286</sup> This article sought to make readers feel good about paying tribute to the Barbary States, oddly suggesting that it was evidence of U.S. supremacy. Clearly, though, the public at large rejected this rationalization—when had Americans ever viewed paying tribute as an inherently positive thing? At best, it was deemed a necessary evil. More radically, an article published in Democratic-Republican newspapers in five states argued for “the policy and prudence of suspending the trade to the Mediterranean altogether, rather than los[ing] a single life in any contest with those hordes of systematic savages.” It also blamed “imbecile and corrupt” Federalists for making Americans “base vassals” of Tripoli (“perhaps the most contemptible” naval power “in existence”).<sup>287</sup> These editorials took an extreme position and had little, if any, effect upon

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<sup>285</sup> *The Temple of Reason* (Philadelphia, PA), May 6, 1801.

<sup>286</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 10, 1801; *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), July 17, 1801.

<sup>287</sup> All were Democratic-Republican. *The Times; and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), June 11, 1801; *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), June 17, 1801; *The Carolina Gazette*

public opinion. As will be seen, throughout the Tripolitan War the public at large constantly called for total victory.

Throughout the Tripolitan War, diplomats and naval officers never shied away from giving Jefferson and Madison advice. They supported all-out war against Tripoli and called for a much more aggressive response than Jefferson was willing to implement. As consul to Algiers Richard O'Brien expressed to Madison in September, "I Must repeat we want More frigates in This Sea, and our system with Those states at war with The U. States Should be Severity. Any act of Lenity is Considered by Them as, an act of Timidity."<sup>288</sup> In an August letter to Robert Smith, Dale discussed how diplomatic efforts with the bashaw had failed and recommended launching bombs into the capital city (also called Tripoli) since "the more this Mr. Bey is Harrassed the sooner he will be glad to make peace, and it will have a good effect on the other two powers they will then see America is not to be trifled with."<sup>289</sup> Dale urged the Jefferson Administration to adopt a long-term strategy: a fierce assault on Tripoli would have the additional benefit of intimidating Algiers and Tunis. Cathcart likewise admonished Madison to think beyond resolving problems with Tripoli and to focus on how subduing Barbary piracy altogether. He advised that "to conclude an honorable & advantageous peace is not sufficient; no Sir, we must do more, we must harrass them untill they become sensible of their inferiority, we must establish a National Character in this River of theives....we must

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(Charleston, SC), June 25, 1801; *The Constitutional Telegrapher* (Boston, MA), June 20, 1801; *Stewart's Kentucky Herald* (Lexington, KY), July 14, 1801.

<sup>288</sup> O'Brien to Madison, September 26, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>289</sup> Dale to Smith, August 18, 1801, *Naval Documents* I: 553.



have considerably greater force in the Mediterranean.”<sup>290</sup> These officials admonished the Jefferson Administration to change its mentality, to go beyond a blockade, and to embrace the navy as a positive good that defended U.S. freedom.

The diplomats and naval officers also argued that more was at stake than subduing Tripoli: the United States was on a worldwide stage, being observed by European powers. Acting strong would enhance America’s reputation and credibility, while weakness would invite contempt. As Eaton admonished Madison, “we are combatting the commercial policy of all Europe. It is not only then in Barbary that we are about to fix a national character—it is in the *world!* Yield but in this instance and we are humbled perhaps for ages, and our European commercial rivals will exult not less in their intrigue than in our weakness.”<sup>291</sup> Cathcart similarly told Madison about his wish that the United States “will teach the old how to negotiate with Tyrants”<sup>292</sup> and he reminded Commodore Dale that “the eyes of all Europe is upon your little Squadron, & I am certain they will reflect honor upon the Country & justify the idea already formed of American valor & intrepidity.”<sup>293</sup> David Humphreys, the U.S. minister to Spain, used gendered rhetoric in trying to persuade Madison of the wisdom of a forceful policy towards the Barbary pirates: “the manliness of this conduct of nobly defending our commerce from piracy, so different from that which has been pursued by all the civilized nations towards these Barbarians, would raise the reputation of our nascent marine in our own judgment, at the same time that it would strike with astonishment those

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<sup>290</sup> Cathcart to Madison, July 2, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>291</sup> Eaton to Madison, August 23, 1802, Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Cathcart to Madison, December 28, 1801, Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Cathcart to Dale, September 7, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 572-573.

who for a succession of Ages have submitted to the most humiliating indignities wantonly inflicted upon them by a handful of Banditti; and you may rest assured that it would form, as it were, a new era in the naval history of Mankind.”<sup>294</sup> Humphreys saw an opportunity that paralleled the American Revolution: Americans could blaze a new trail in the Mediterranean and show Europeans a better way forward. All the diplomats believed that waging war against Tripoli had a deeper significance: it would show Europe that the United States refused to tolerate bigger European countries subsidizing the Barbary pirates’ predatory behavior.

Moreover, the consuls argued against forming an alliance with smaller European navies since they wanted the United States to gain all of the glory of destroying Barbary piracy. Cathcart informed Commodore Dale about his opposition to forming a coalition with Denmark and Sweden because it would “divid[e] the honor of setting an example to all Europe.”<sup>295</sup> He believed that “our aim is to establish a National character, which we must do, without the assistance of any of the powers of Europe.” Eaton gave similar advice to Madison: “what American can cheerfully admit the idea that the United States will think proper to divide with any nation whatever the honor and the advantages of chastising Tripoli: The object itself does not seem to require such a parade.”<sup>296</sup> Commodore Dale, however, disagreed and lamented that he had to decline an offer from Sweden to launch a joint attack on Tripoli since the Jefferson Administration had not authorized him such an assault.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> David Humphreys to Madison, April 14, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>295</sup> Cathcart to Dale, September 17, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 576.

<sup>296</sup> Eaton to Madison, December 13, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>297</sup> Dale to Robert Livingston, February 7, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 52-53. Dale also shared a detailed assault plan with a Swedish naval officer; Dale to Rear Admiral Soderstrom, February 2, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 45-46.

Jefferson also disagreed with the diplomats. He lacked their concern for national glory and saw advantages to forming an alliance with smaller European countries. In a November 1801 letter, Jefferson articulated a plan of “dividing the cruising season” with three or four other navies in order to “keep [the Mediterranean] under constant guard. a few years would destroy every vessel” belonging to the Barbary States and leave them permanently crippled because “they have no materials within themselves for building a single one.”<sup>298</sup> Of course, Jefferson’s plan would only work if other countries did not give warships as tribute (as the United States had done) or provide ship-building supplies.<sup>299</sup> Oddly, though, the Jefferson Administration declined an opportunity to form an official alliance. In June 1801, John Quincy Adams (writing from Hamburg) told Madison about the “proposal made by the king of Sweden about eighteen months ago, for an arrangement between the United States, Sweden and Denmark, mutually to protect their commerce in the Mediterranean.” John Adams had decided not to join, but the younger Adams hoped that Jefferson would: “the United States have since then experienced themselves how little reliance can be placed upon the faith of those Treaties, even when purchased at prices unusually burdensome. The expence of an armament like that proposed by the king of Sweden, would probably not be heavier than that of the tribute we have submitted to pay. It would be a more efficacious protection to our navigation in the mediterranean; and I presume, an expence infinitely more reconcileable to the feelings of every American.”<sup>300</sup> It is unclear why Jefferson never seriously pursued an alliance despite voicing rhetorical support for it. Regardless, the

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<sup>298</sup> Jefferson to Thomas Newton, November 9, 1801, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 35: 588.

<sup>299</sup> The United States presented Algiers with a thirty-four gun ship (the *Crescent*) in the 1790s.

<sup>300</sup> John Quincy Adams to Madison, June 25, 1801, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*.

opportunity evaporated in October 1802, when Sweden made peace with Tripoli for \$150,000 plus \$8,000 in annual tribute.<sup>301</sup>

Although given limited means, the diplomats and naval officers tried to make the best of it by attempting to capture the admiral of Tripoli's navy. By doing so, they hoped to deal a knockout blow to the bashaw, thinking he would quickly surrender. As Cathcart rhapsodized, "the Capture or sinking their Admiral is of such great importance that it will not only ensure us a permanent Peace upon our own terms but will probably effect a revolution in Tripoly favorable to our interest in the whole of the Barbary States."<sup>302</sup> Likewise, William Eaton emphasized the value of capturing him in a letter to Madison: "We must get *possession of him....once secured a stratagem may be used to decoy the Bashaw into an American Frigate and thus end the war.*"<sup>303</sup> Commodore Dale hoped not only to capture the Tripolitan Admiral, but "take him to America" as a war trophy.<sup>304</sup> Despite their best efforts, though, the Tripolitan Admiral evaded capture (although the U.S. Navy temporarily forced him to flee to Gibraltar).

The diplomats dreamt not only of naval victories, but also of a powerful land assault that would overthrow Yusuf. This expedition will be discussed at length in chapter 5 (it took four years to materialize), but in mid-1801 Cathcart and Eaton began to orchestrate plans to reinstall Hamet Karamanli (Yusuf's older brother) to the Tripolitan throne. Cathcart argued to Eaton that "we must establish a national character in Barbary by effecting a revolution in

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<sup>301</sup> Stephen Cathalan to Madison, October 25, 1802, Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Cathcart to Thomas Appleton, June 2, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 484.

<sup>303</sup> Eaton to Madison, May 25, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>304</sup> Dale to Cathcart, August 25, 1801, *Naval Documents I*: 561.

favor of Hamet...for so long as Joseph Bashaw lives, our commerce will not be secure.”<sup>305</sup>

Cathcart also shared his proposed plan with Madison in a July letter, contending that the United had nothing to lose. Even if the coup attempt failed, it would instill “such a panic” in Yusuf and he would cease to threaten American ships.<sup>306</sup> Eaton also tried to sell Madison on the idea. In a December letter the consul related a conversation with the Danish Commodore, who claimed that the Tripolitan people “almost unanimously desire the restoration of their rightful sovereign, who is a mild man of peaceable dispositions; and, if he were offered them with the appearance of determination, they would raise in mass to receive him.”<sup>307</sup> Eaton added that Hamet was interested in allying with the United States, but wanted assurance that he could “place any reliance on the operations of the Americans in his behalf.” Although Eaton and Cathcart were fully committed to the coup attempt, the Jefferson Administration and other Mediterranean personnel were not (as will be seen).

In the meantime, the diplomats adamantly opposed paying any money to Tripoli for peace since doing so would embolden the other Barbary powers to exploit the United States. As Richard O’Brien declared to Madison, “if we now Settle this business with Tripoli even with a little money, we are giving a bounty to Algiers and Tunis to make extra demands in proportion as They are great & Think Themselves So above Tripoli.”<sup>308</sup> O’Brien envisioned an escalation of egotism among North African rulers, with each insisting upon more tribute in order to reflect his perceived superiority. Similarly, Eaton warned Madison that “the

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<sup>305</sup> Cathcart to William Eaton, June 29, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 494.

<sup>306</sup> Cathcart to Madison, July 2, 1801, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*.

<sup>307</sup> Eaton to Madison, December 13, 1801, *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> O’Brien to Madison, September 26, 1801, *Ibid.*

moment we *pay* for peace again at Tripoli, Algiers will require *more substantial evidence of the President's veritable friendship*—Tunis next.”<sup>309</sup> The diplomats also emphasized that since paying money never resulted in a lasting peace, force was necessary to end the threat of Barbary piracy. As Eaton observed to Madison, “the mania of piracy is so blended with the System of these States that it cannot be cured but by Sovereign treatment....This piratical enthusiasm is as obstinate as religious bigotry, which yields to no force of reason nor sense of humanity.”<sup>310</sup> Cathcart admonished Dale to use force instead of diplomacy: “I solemnly declare that if a peace could be procured with the Regency of Tripoli for one hundred Dollars that it would be contrary to the interests of the United States to pay it.”<sup>311</sup> These diplomats were tired of the Barbary States exacting tribute and ransom payments and concluded that only overwhelming force (not a token squadron) could end this threat. Yet their advice fell on deaf ears.

Despite the Jefferson Administration’s desire to avoid conflict, a battle did occur between the *Enterprize* (the smallest of the four U.S. ships in the Mediterranean, with twelve guns) and a Tripolitan ship (the *Tripoli*, with fourteen guns) on August 1, 1801. As Lieutenant Andrew Sterett described, it lasted three hours and was a clear-cut victory for the United States. The Americans killed thirty Tripolitans and wounded thirty more, while, remarkably, none of the Americans were killed.<sup>312</sup> Since he lacked the authority to take prisoners, Sterett released the Tripolitans and let them keep their ship (after “dismatl[ing] her

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<sup>309</sup> Eaton to Madison, December 13, 1801, *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> Eaton to Madison, June 1, 1801, *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> Cathcart to Dale, September 7, 1801, *Naval Documents I: 572-573.*

<sup>312</sup> Lieutenant Andrew Sterett to Dale, August 6, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 537.

of every thing but an old sail and spar”). The bashaw was infuriated with this loss and publicly shamed the *Tripoli*’s captain (Rais Mahomet Rous). According to an *Enterprize* officer, the Tripolitan captain had to ride “on a mule with a halter round his neck...through the streets of Tripoli with a hangman by his side. They then crowned him with thorns, gave him 500 lashes, and dismissed him [from] the service. The poor fellow did not deserve it, for he stood firing at remarkably well. The bashaw vows vengeance against the schooner, and is fitting out gallies and gunboats to attack us in all quarters.”<sup>313</sup> The punishment strikingly resembles the last days of Jesus—his entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey, wearing a crown of thorns, and being flogged.<sup>314</sup> It could be coincidental, or perhaps the bashaw designed the punishment as a parody of Christianity. In any event, the defeat reinforced the bashaw’s commitment to war against the United States—he wanted revenge and was not interested in peace. The Tripolitan War was just beginning.

Upon learning of the *Enterprize*’s victory, the U.S. public rejoiced and Sterett became a national hero. More than two dozen newspapers (from both political parties) published an article that acclaimed the victory and declared [falsely] that it had crippled Tripoli’s will to fight: “so thunderstruck were the Tripolitans...that the sailors, then employed at Tripoli on board of cruisers that were fitting out by the government, all deserted them, and not a man could be procured to navigate them.”<sup>315</sup> A Democratic-Republican gathering at Paterson,

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<sup>313</sup> Letter from *Enterprize* officer to his friend in this city, August 28, 1801, *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 25, 1801; *The Providence Gazette* (Providence, RI), November 28, 1801; *The Providence Journal, and Town and Country Advertiser* (Providence, RI), December 2, 1801; *The Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), December 16, 1801.

<sup>314</sup> See the Gospel of John 12: 14-15 and 19: 1-2.

<sup>315</sup> *The National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), November 18, 1801; *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), November 20, 1801 [abridged version]; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), November 21, 1801 [abridged]; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 24, 1801; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 24, 1801; *The New-York Gazette and*

New Jersey wished “the fate of the Tripolitan Corsair who engaged with Sterret, to all the enemies of the rights of the commonality of this country.”<sup>316</sup> A year later, residents at Baltimore had the unique opportunity to observe, for free, a Tripolitan gun captured by the *Enterprize*. A local newspaper promoted it as “the curious *Turkish Swivel*, of brass, taken out of the *Tripolitan*, captured by the U.S. schooner *Enterprize*, capt. Sterret, and deposited at the Observatory” and noted that it “will be fired at intervals throughout the day and evening.”<sup>317</sup> Spectators could interact with an authentic Tripolitan weapon that had been recast as an entertainment object and as evidence of America’s superiority over Tripoli. No doubt Americans felt a surge of pride when observing it. Sterrett became the first hero of the Tripolitan War, leading Americans to believe that defeating Tripoli would be easy.

The federal government also contributed to the celebratory mood. Congress passed a resolution that commended “the gallant conduct of Lieutenant Sterret” and his crew, gave

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*General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 24, 1801; *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), November 25, 1801; *Bartgis’s Republican Gazette* (Frederick, MD), November 25, 1801; *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), November 26, 1801 [abridged]; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), November 30, 1801; *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Harrisburgh, PA), November 30, 1801; *The Independent Chronicle: and the United States Advertiser* (Boston, MA), November 30, 1801; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), December 1, 1801; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), December 1, 1801; *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), December 1, 1801 [abridged]; *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), December 1, 1801 [abridged]; *Spoooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), December 1, 1801; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina Weekly Advertiser* (Raleigh, NC), December 1, 1801; *The National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), December 2, 1801; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), December 2, 1801; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), December 3, 1801; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), December 3, 1801; *Columbian Courier* (New Bedford, MA), December 4, 1801 [abridged]; *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), December 5, 1801; *The Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), December 5, 1801; *The Eastern Herald & Maine Gazette* (Portland, ME) December 7, 1801; *The Salem Impartial Register* (Salem, MA), December 10, 1801 [abridged]; *Otsego Herald: or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), December 17, 1801 [abridged]; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), December 18, 1801 [abridged].

<sup>316</sup> *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), March 16, 1802.

<sup>317</sup> *Democratic Republican; and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), July 14, 1802.



them an extra month's pay, and awarded Sterett a commemorative sword.<sup>318</sup> Jefferson personally commended the lieutenant, writing him a warm letter that portrayed his victory as a watershed moment. The president declared that "too long, for the honour of nations, have those barbarians been suffered to trample on the sacred faith of treaties, on the rights & laws of human nature. you have shewn to your countrymen, that the enemy cannot meet bravery & skill united."<sup>319</sup> Notably, Jefferson stressed the importance of defending national honor, a topic he typically avoided in his private correspondence about Tripoli. The president may have personally dismissed concerns about national honor, but he knew that the *Enterprize's* victory called for a heavy dose of nationalism.

Now that a battle had occurred, Congress stepped in to officially sanction the war with Tripoli. In February 1802, it passed legislation that authorized the president to use force against Tripoli.<sup>320</sup> The "Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers" emphasized that Tripoli had initiated "a predatory warfare" against the United States and empowered the president "to equip, officer, man, and employ such of the armed vessels of the United States as may be judged requisite...for protecting effectually the commerce and seamen thereof on the Atlantic ocean, the Mediterranean and adjoining seas." It allowed naval vessels "to subdue, seize and make prize of all vessels, goods and effects, belonging to the Bey of Tripoli, or to his subjects...and also to cause to be done all such other acts of precaution or hostility as the

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<sup>318</sup> "Resolution Expressing the sense of Congress on the gallant conduct of Lieut. Sterret,—the officers and crew of the United States schooner *Enterprize*," February 3, 1802, *Statutes at Large*, 7<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 198.

<sup>319</sup> Jefferson to Sterett, December 1, 1801, "Founders Online," National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-36-02-0001>.

<sup>320</sup> "An Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers," February 6, 1802, *Statutes at Large*, 7<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 129-130.

state of war will justify, and may, in his opinion, require.” Congress acknowledged that a state of war already existed—thus there was no need to declare war against Tripoli—and delegated responsibility for decision-making to Jefferson. The president did not need to ask Congress for permission, but was granted the authority to run the Tripolitan War as he saw fit. The Jefferson Administration sent a circular to naval commanders informing them of this legislation and empowering them “to subdue, seize, and make prize, of all vessels, goods, and effects, belonging to the Bey of Tripoli, or to his subjects.”<sup>321</sup>

Any lingering constitutional questions had now been resolved, but despite the impressive *Enterprize* victory the Jefferson Administration still wanted to reach an agreement with the bashaw. Madison shared news of the legislation with Cathcart, but ordered him to broker a settlement with the bashaw as soon as possible.<sup>322</sup> Cathcart was to seek “some indemnification” from Tripoli to cover U.S. naval expenses, but could drop this request if the bashaw resisted. Madison also made it clear that the administration wanted to reduce naval expenses and avoid a protracted war in the Mediterranean. As he explained (in another letter to Cathcart), “however able [the United States] may be to carry on the war with effect, the expence and trouble of it, and the increased risk whilst at war with one of the Barbary powers, of getting into war with the others, are with the President just motives of solicitude for the success of your negotiation.”<sup>323</sup> The Jefferson Administration also sent a replacement squadron to the Mediterranean (the *Chesapeake*, *Constellation*, and *Adams*) and appointed Richard Morris to succeed Dale as commander.<sup>324</sup> The *Enterprize* would remain

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<sup>321</sup> Circular to Naval Commanders, February 18, 1802, Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition.

<sup>322</sup> Madison to Cathcart, February 6, 1802, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>323</sup> Madison to Cathcart, May 10, 1802, Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Smith to Richard Morris, April 1, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 99-100.

in the Mediterranean, but the other ships were to return to the United States.<sup>325</sup> For his part, Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin urged Jefferson to remain committed to shrinking the navy. In an August letter, he reminded the president that “our object must clearly be to put a speedy end to a contest, which unavailingly wastes our resources, and which we cannot, for any considerable time, pursue with vigor without relinquishing the accomplishment of the great & beneficial objects we have in view.”<sup>326</sup>

In the meantime, far from being cowed by the *Enterprize* victory the Tripolitan Navy continued to prowl for American merchant ships and captured the *Franklin* on June 17, 1802, taking the captain and crew of eight hostage. The ship’s captain, Andrew Morris, expressed his “disappointment” in the lack of naval protection in the Mediterranean—the Tripolitan ship remained at sea for a month and never encountered a U.S. warship.<sup>327</sup> The Tripolitans kept Morris and three crew members as hostages, but two others escaped to Malta (via a Greek ship) and three others were released to a British diplomat (since they were Irishmen).<sup>328</sup> Americans throughout the country learned about the *Franklin* incident through a widely published circular letter written by Richard O’Brien. It described his efforts to persuade the Dey of Algiers to intervene on behalf of the United States and called for a strong naval buildup: “I lament we have not a few more of our frigates and light cruisers in this sea, to be a fleet of reserve, and give more effectual security to our commerce and

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<sup>325</sup> Smith to John Gavino, April 1, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 102. The *Chesapeake* left in April, the *Constellation* in March, and the *Adams* in June; U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean, *Ibid.*, II: 136-138.

<sup>326</sup> Gallatin to Jefferson, August 16, 1802, Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition.

<sup>327</sup> Andrew Morris to Cathcart, July 22, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 177.

<sup>328</sup> Captain Alexander Murray to Eaton, August 18, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 239; Cathcart to Stephen Cathalan, Jr., August 18, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 259.

citizens, and to destroy this new system of the Corsairs of Tripoli, rendezvousing in the ports of Tunis and Algiers.”<sup>329</sup> If the *Enterprize*’s victory had not persuaded Jefferson to bolster naval strength, then perhaps O’Brien thought that this evidence of the blockade’s inadequacy would. Notably, mostly Federalist newspapers published O’Brien’s letter. Most Democratic-Republican editors chose not to print it, apparently preferring to keep readers ignorant rather than publish a text that criticized the president’s policies. William Eaton informed Philadelphia merchants (whose goods the *Franklin* was transporting) about the ship’s capture and lamented that Jefferson had disregarded advice to send more ships. He warned that “except more energy be thrown into our operations, we risque to play a farce” in the Mediterranean.<sup>330</sup> Clearly, the diplomats believed that the United States was not winning the Tripolitan War and that the government had failed to capitalize upon the momentum from last August’s victory.

Fortunately for the captive crew members of the *Franklin*, they were released a few months later. The Dey of Algiers, at Richard O’Brien’s request, asked the bashaw to set them free. The Dey also sent several items, including ten-thousand “Measures of wheat, A Gold Sheathed Sword, A pair of pistols,” a caftan worth \$125-\$150, a ring worth \$500, a

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<sup>329</sup> *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), September 30, 1802; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), September 30, 1802; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), October 1, 1802; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), October 2, 1802; *The Spectator* (New York, NY), October 2, 1802; *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* (Alexandria, VA), October 4, 1802; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), October 5, 1802; *American Telegraphe* (Bridgeport, CT), October 6, 1802; *Connecticut Gazette, and the Commercial Intelligencer* (New London, CT), October 6, 1802; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), October 7, 1802; *Columbian Courier* (New Bedford, MA), October 8, 1802; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina Weekly Advertiser* (Raleigh, NC), October 21, 1802; *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), October 13, 1802; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), October 14, 1802; *Otsego Herald; or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), October 14, 1802; *Vermont Centinel* (Burlington, VT), October 15, 1802; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), October 16, 1802; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), October 16, 1802; *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Harrisburgh, PA), October 18, 1802.

<sup>330</sup> Eaton to Summert & Brown, Merchants, July 9, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 196.

watch, and \$1,000.<sup>331</sup> But was the Dey acting altruistically? He claimed that he was and, in a letter to Jefferson, described his act as “a present” to the United States.<sup>332</sup> An Algerian official told Eaton that the Dey intervened out of gratitude for the *George Washington* transporting good to Constantinople two years earlier.<sup>333</sup> However, the Dey billed the United States for \$6,500!<sup>334</sup> The Dey was not really being altruistic, he simply saw an opportunity for profit. It was business as usual in North Africa, another example of a ruler slyly using the rhetoric of friendship while demanding payment. Several months later, the Dey tried this approach again, telling Jefferson that if he wanted to remain “my friend” and “preserve your treaty with me,” he needed to give Algiers “10 Guns Brass 24 pounders with Cariages & allso 5 Brass Guns 18 pounders with Cariages & —Guns long for Batteries.”<sup>335</sup> Throughout Jefferson’s presidency, North African policymakers outsmarted and outmaneuvered their American counterpoints. They excelled in brokering good deals for themselves, having had centuries of experience negotiating with Europe.

The Dey’s influence was not strictly necessary. William Eaton and other American officials had requested Yusuf to honor his pledge to release any future American captives as recompense for Commodore Dale setting free a Tripolitan officer and twenty soldiers in August 1801.<sup>336</sup> Yusuf initially refused to keep his promise (although he treated the captives

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<sup>331</sup> O’Brien to Madison, October 11, 1802, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition. The commas are not in the original, but have been added for clarity.

<sup>332</sup> Dey of Algiers to Jefferson, October 17, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 301.

<sup>333</sup> Eaton to Madison, August 5, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 224.

<sup>334</sup> Cathcart to Madison, January 25, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 348-349.

<sup>335</sup> Dey of Algiers to Jefferson, October 14, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 132.

<sup>336</sup> Dale to Nissen, August 31, 1801, *Ibid.*, I: 564-565. These soldiers were on board a Greek vessel that Dale’s ship stopped. Cathcart to Nissen, August 31, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 261; Cathcart to Morris, October 12, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 290; Eaton to Yusuf Karamanli, September 18, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 279-280. Jefferson mentioned this promise in

well), but he relented and released them in October.<sup>337</sup> Cathcart concluded that Yusuf would have freed the *Franklin* crew even if the Dey had not intervened and he considered any ransom money paid as “entirely thrown away.”<sup>338</sup> He suggested that the Dey’s mediation only expedited the release by two months.

And what about the \$6,500? The Dey insisted upon payment, which was received the following year. Tobias Lear, whom Jefferson appointed in July 1803 as Consul General at Algiers (the highest rank among North African diplomats), paid \$6,800 for the ransom.<sup>339</sup> Why the extra \$300? Regrettably, Lear did not provide a reason—but perhaps it was for tardiness. In any event, Madison confirmed this amount in a June 1804 report that summarized Lear’s expenses: “Capt Morris and his crews ransom 6,800.”<sup>340</sup> The *Franklin* incident revealed the shortcomings of Jefferson’s naval policies and foreshadowed the more momentous loss of the *Philadelphia* (in October 1803). The president’s flagrant dismissal of advice to send more ships jeopardized the lives of sailors and cost the United States ransom money (which directly hurt his goal of reducing naval expenses).

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his Second Annual Message to Congress, December 15, 1802, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29444>.

<sup>337</sup> Statement by O’Brien, October 13, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 293; Thomas Appleton to Madison, December 7, 1802, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition; Stephen Cathalan to Madison, December 10, 1802, *Ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> Cathcart to O’Brien, November 25, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 322.

<sup>339</sup> Madison to Tobias Lear, July 14, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition; Lear to Madison, December 2, 1803, *Naval Documents III*: 248. Lear took over for James Cathcart in Algiers.

<sup>340</sup> Madison to Lear, June 6, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

Surprisingly, many other works about the Tripolitan War have omitted the *Franklin* incident and the \$6,800 payment.<sup>341</sup> Some incorrectly state that the United States paid \$5,000 to Tripoli. Where did this \$5,000 figure come from? Frank Lambert's *The Barbary Wars* is the most recent book to make this claim and he cites a secondary source (Kola Folayan's *Tripoli during the Reign of Yusuf Pasha Qaramanli*), which in turn cites a secondary source from 1945 (Louis Wright and Julia Macleod's *The First Americans in North Africa*).<sup>342</sup> The latter states that O'Brien obtained the release of the captives "through the intercession of the Dey of Algiers and the payment of \$5,000 in ransom." The footnote for this information cites an October letter from O'Brien to Madison in which the diplomat says that he *offered* \$5,000 for the ransom.<sup>343</sup> O'Brien's letter does not say that he had already *paid* the money. Wright and MacLeod apparently misinterpreted O'Brien's letter and then Folayan perpetuated the error by citing their book and Lambert further perpetuated the mistake by citing Folayan.

Other authors have erroneously claimed that the United States paid \$6,500 to Algiers.<sup>344</sup> These works cite a January 1803 letter from Cathcart to Madison in which the diplomat states that the Dey demanded \$6,500 for the ransom.<sup>345</sup> Cathcart had not yet paid

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<sup>341</sup> Books that do not mention the *Franklin* incident include Timothy Marr's *Cultural Roots of American Islamism* and Parker's *Uncle Sam in Barbary*. Books that briefly mention the *Franklin* capture but omit the ransom payment are Allison's *Crescent Obscured*, 123 and Cogliano's *Emperor of Liberty*, 158.

<sup>342</sup> Lambert, 135; Folayan, 36; Wright and Macleod, *First Americans in North Africa*, 116. Lawrence Peskin's *Captives and Countrymen* rightly notes that O'Brien offered \$5,000 ransom, although it omits the eventual \$6,800 payment to Algiers, 145.

<sup>343</sup> O'Brien to Madison, October 11, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 289.

<sup>344</sup> Irwin, 118; Wheelan, 131; London, 111.

<sup>345</sup> Cathcart to Madison, January 25, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 348-349. London's *Victory in Tripoli* does not use citations, so I cannot confirm where he obtained the \$6,500 figure (but perhaps he read Cathcart's letter).

this sum—he wrote Madison to complain about the request. These authors apparently misinterpreted Cathcart’s letter and seem unfamiliar with the Tobias Lear letter cited above (which is easily accessible in *Naval Documents*), stating that \$6,800 was actually paid. To be fair, many contemporary newspapers were confused about the actual amount paid and listed the sum as \$6,500.<sup>346</sup>

Although newspaper editors of both parties had supported Jefferson at the beginning of the Tripolitan War, by late 1802 this unity fractured and they debated the effectiveness of the president’s Barbary policies. Several Federalist newspapers invoked the *Franklin* capture as evidence that Jefferson’s commitment to economy left the United States undermanned and unprepared in the Mediterranean. An article published in two states remarked that “the poor fellows captured in the brig *Franklin*, must curse that system of *economy* which lays up in dock our ships of war, while they are dragging the chains of slavery in Tripoli.”<sup>347</sup> Similarly, a New Jersey publication castigated Democratic-Republicans for letting “our innocent

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<sup>346</sup> *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), May 6, 1803; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), May 10, 1803; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 10, 1803; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), May 10, 1803; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 10, 1803; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), May 10, 1803; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), May 11, 1803; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), May 11, 1803; *The Spectator* (New York, NY), May 11, 1803; *Thomas’s Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), May 11, 1803; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), May 11, 1803; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 11, 1803; *United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), May 12, 1803; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 12, 1803; *Chronicle Express* (New York, NY), May 12, 1803; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), May 12, 1803; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), May 13, 1803; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), May 13, 1803; *The Olio* (Washington D.C.), May 13, 1803; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), May 14, 1803; *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), May 14, 1803; *Weekly Museum* (New York, NY), May 14, 1803; *The Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), May 16, 1803; *Republican; Or, Anti-Democrat* (Baltimore, MD), May 16, 1803; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), May 17, 1803; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NY), May 17, 1803; *The Visitor* (New Haven, CT), May 17, 1803; *Federal Republican* (Elizabethtown, NJ), May 17, 1803; *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), May 17, 1803; *The Maryland Herald and Eliza-beth Town Advertiser* (Hagers-Town, MD), May 18, 1803; *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), May 18, 1803; *Bargis’s Republican Gazette* (Frederick, MD), May 20, 1803; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), May 21, 1803; *The Patriot* (Utica, NY), May 23, 1803; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), May 25, 1803; *City-Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), May 30, 1803.

<sup>347</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), October 22, 1802; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 3, 1802.



seamen [be] carried in chains to the dungeons of Barbary—while our Navy is laid up and rotting within the Docks of the Potomack.”<sup>348</sup> Although the government had available ships, the president refused to use them to protect the lives of sailors. To these Federalist critics, the *Franklin* capture constituted irrefutable proof of the president’s irresponsibility. A Maine newspaper depicted Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin as an evil mastermind, blaming him for permitting warships to “rot in the dock” while ignoring “the groans, the sweat, the blood, of our brave seamen who might chance to fall into the hands of the Barbary pirates.”<sup>349</sup> A New Hampshire newspaper published a toast from a militia group celebration that criticized the government’s naval policies: “The Navy of the U.S. May it not rot in dock while our brave seamen are exposed to the corsairs of Barbary.”<sup>350</sup> Federalist newspapers in two states published poetry that skewered Jefferson and stressed that Tripoli did not fear the United States: “The sons of Tripoli refuse/ To let our ships their ocean use,/ And Jefferson, that they may see/ Of how small consequence they be,/ Calls our stout battle ships away,/ In soft Potowmac mud to lay.”<sup>351</sup> The bipartisan honeymoon had ended. Federalists had given Jefferson a chance to prove his ability to defend commerce and the lives of sailors, but they were unimpressed. From now on, Jefferson had a two-front war: against Tripoli in the Mediterranean and against Federalists at home.

Federalists made well-reasoned criticisms of the Jefferson Administration’s policies and questioned his decision to not send other available warships. However, Democratic-

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<sup>348</sup> *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), October 11, 1802.

<sup>349</sup> *Jenks’ Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), October 25, 1802.

<sup>350</sup> *United States Oracle, and Portsmouth Advertiser* (Portsmouth, NH), October 30, 1802.

<sup>351</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), January 1, 1803; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), January 1, 1803; *Farmer’s Museum, or Literary Gazette* (Walpole, NH), January 18, 1803.

Republican newspaper editors refused to actually address Federalist concerns. Instead, they resorted to partisan attacks that blamed Federalists for problems with Tripoli and accused their rivals of exaggerating the threat of Barbary piracy. A Massachusetts newspaper, for instance, insisted that “had Mr. Pickering [John Adams’s Secretary of State] regularly forwarded the stipulated payments to the Barbary powers, it is more than probable the Franklin would not have been captured.”<sup>352</sup> This accusation ignored the root of problems with Tripoli—Yusuf Karamanli complained that the United States did not treat him with the same level of respect as it did Algiers or Tunis. Moreover, Thomas Jefferson—not Timothy Pickering or John Adams—decided not to meet the bashaw’s new tribute demands. A Vermont newspaper dismissed Federalist descriptions of “the horrors of Barbarian slavery” as “filth.”<sup>353</sup> Another article considered the Tripolitan War a minor conflict and portrayed Federalists as unprincipled warmongers who threatened American liberty. It proclaimed that “the petty warfare existing between the United States and the insignificant state of Tripoli cannot in any just view be considered an important, or a general state of war” and warned readers that “some *restless* individuals” sought to persuade Congress “to commit some rash act, in the hope that a war may ensue.”<sup>354</sup> In seeking to protect the president and prevent the public from siding with the Federalists, these Democratic-Republican voices distorted history. These articles suggest that some Democratic-Republican newspaper editors felt desperate and feared that the public might turn against their party.

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<sup>352</sup> *The Salem Register* (Salem, MA), October 25, 1802. The *Trenton Federalist* rightly called this attempt to blame Pickering for problems with Tripoli “a most wicked calumny”; November 8, 1802.

<sup>353</sup> *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), November 22, 1802.

<sup>354</sup> *Republican Gazetteer* (Boston, MA), January 1, 1803 [see *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* Vol. 25 (Worcester: Davis Press, 1915), 284].

Despite the capture of the *Franklin*, Jefferson mostly continued to discount the naval officers' advice and considered them preoccupied with self-promotion and incapable of thinking objectively about the Barbary States. As he remarked to Madison in March 1803, "every officer in the navy, & every merchant" wanted him to "send more ships... because they see but one object, themselves."<sup>355</sup> Jefferson added that he opposed Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith's recommendation to send an additional ship and argued that the blockade would work if the naval officers offered fewer convoys. Smith had come to agree with the naval officers and diplomats that a stronger war effort was needed. In a March 17<sup>th</sup> letter to Jefferson, he stressed that "nothing but a formidable force will effect an honorable peace with Tripoli and repress the dispositions of the other Barbary powers to hostility" and advised sending a large warship (either the *Constitution* or the *Philadelphia*).<sup>356</sup> The president, however, remained committed to reducing naval expenses and considered the naval officers prone to self-aggrandizement. Frankly, he was being derelict in his duties as commander-in-chief. His obstinate disregard for the advice from naval officers and diplomats threatened the lives of sailors.

Jefferson was too smart a politician, though, to express his distrust of the naval officers in public addresses. His December 1802 annual message acknowledged the stagnancy of the Tripolitan War and shortcomings of the blockade—but he blamed topography instead of the naval officers. The president claimed that "the shallowness of [Tripoli's] coast and the want of smaller vessels on our part has permitted some cruisers to

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<sup>355</sup> Jefferson to Madison, March 22, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>356</sup> Smith to Jefferson, March 17, 1803, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 40: 82. In his response to Smith, Jefferson stated that he would not "approve a change of our plan without further facts, or considerations which have not yet occurred." Jefferson to Smith, March 29, 1803, *Ibid.*, 40: 115-116.

escape unobserved, and to one of these an American vessel unfortunately fell prey.” To that end, Jefferson called for “procuring some smaller vessels” although he reiterated his commitment to using only “the smallest force competent” to “restrain the Tripoline cruisers.”<sup>357</sup> The president had a fundamentally different goal from the naval officers and diplomats: he sought to reduce the navy to its bare bones, but they wanted a formidable navy that struck fear into foreign countries.

Jefferson persuaded Congress to think small regarding the Tripolitan War. In mid-January, the administration recommended that Congress pass legislation to fund the construction of “four small Vessels of War, not exceeding 16 guns each” and estimated the cost of each one at \$24,000.<sup>358</sup> A few weeks later, Smith sent another request for eight gun-boats.<sup>359</sup> Congress heeded these requests in late-February, authorizing the construction of four such vessels at a cost of \$96,000 and up to fifteen gun boats at a cost of \$50,000.<sup>360</sup> The funds were to come from “any monies in the treasury of the United States, not otherwise appropriated.” In a sense, Jefferson finally heeded the advice of the naval officers and diplomats to send more ships (although these new vessels lacked sufficient firepower). But just how serious was Jefferson about escalating the war effort?

Privately, Jefferson desperately wanted the Tripolitan War to end and had repudiated his earlier opposition to paying annual tribute. In April 1803, Madison instructed Cathcart to

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<sup>357</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Second Annual Message, December 15, 1802, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29444>.

<sup>358</sup> Smith to William Eustis, January 18, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 346.

<sup>359</sup> Smith to DeWitt Clinton, February 16, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 362.

<sup>360</sup> “An act to provide an additional armament for the protection for the seamen and commerce of the United States,” February 28, 1803, *Statutes at Large*, 7<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 206.

offer the bashaw a \$20,000 lump sum plus \$8,000 to \$10,000 in annual tribute.<sup>361</sup> He acknowledged receiving Cathcart's earlier letters (in which the diplomat called for more ships in the Mediterranean), but declined to engage him on that subject. Instead, Madison claimed that the window of opportunity to attack Tripoli had closed since its "domestic distresses" had calmed and European powers had "yielded to the customary terms of peace."<sup>362</sup> Continuing to fight would entail a "very great expence." The Secretary of State's admissions are astonishing—Jefferson had initially chosen war with Tripoli since he despised Europe's practice of paying tribute. Now, however, the Jefferson Administration viewed tribute as a precedent that should be upheld. Jefferson preferred to spend taxpayers' money on tribute to the Barbary States over augmenting the navy to protect American commerce and lives. In effect, he had reverted the views held by John Adams in the 1780s, when he argued that it was better to pay tribute than fight the Barbary States.

Fortunately for Jefferson and Madison, this letter's contents were not published in newspapers. Cathcart's keeping the letter private reflects highly on his character. Had knowledge of Jefferson's and Madison's willingness to pay tribute become public, it would have greatly embarrassed the administration and emboldened Federalist critics. After all, some Democratic-Republicans had criticized the Washington and Adams Administrations for paying tribute. Throughout his presidency, Jefferson benefited from numerous lucky breaks in his Barbary policy (as will be seen in chapters 5 and 6). In hindsight, it is astonishing that Jefferson's obstinacy in rejecting the advice of knowledgeable diplomats and naval officers did not result in political ramifications.

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<sup>361</sup> Madison to Cathcart, April 9, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>362</sup> A year earlier, Madison had learned that poor harvests in Tripoli had caused a famine and that the public had rebuffed Yusuf's attempt to collect taxes; Joseph Pulis to Madison, February 21, 1802, *Ibid.*

In any event, Jefferson's offer fell well below the bashaw's expectations. Cathcart learned from the Danish consul Nicholas Nissen that Yusuf wanted \$500,000 from the United States and was in no hurry to make peace since Tripoli had a "rich harvest... plenty of European goods," and a new influx of cash from the Sweden treaty.<sup>363</sup> The bashaw now enjoyed a financial flexibility that allowed him to "maintain his people & defray his expences." Moreover, Nissen considered U.S. strategy an utter failure, calling the blockade "useless" and "expensive" and he expressed regret "that the moment so favorable pass'd last year." Nissen did overestimate the cost of peace, however. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, Yusuf's Prime Minister met with Commodore Richard Morris onboard the *New York* to present terms of peace: the United States would pay a one-time sum of \$200,000, pay \$20,000 annual tribute, reimburse Tripoli for its war expenses, and provide annual presents of military and naval stores.<sup>364</sup> Clearly, Yusuf was not intimidated by the U.S. Navy or President Jefferson and thought that he had leverage in negotiations.

Two years of war had resulted in just one significant naval victory for the United States (by the *Enterprize*, in August 1801). Tripoli could also claim one naval victory (the capture of the *Franklin*). The Tripolitan War had stagnated into a draw. Jefferson had provided limited means to fight Tripoli, which had resulted in scant triumphs. Yet the very naval officers whom Jefferson distrusted helped turn around the Tripolitan War. In May 1803, the *John Adams* captured the Moroccan ship *Meshouda* when it tried to sneak through the blockade of Tripoli. According to Captain Morris, it carried "a considerable number of Guns Cutlashes

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<sup>363</sup> Nissen to Cathcart, June 4, 1803, *Naval Documents* II: 439-440.

<sup>364</sup> Journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, June 9, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 449.

Hemp & other contraband articles that were not on Board when she left Gibraltar, and not expressed in her Passports.”<sup>365</sup> The ship also had twenty Tripolitans on board. On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the *Enterprize* dealt another blow to Tripoli by destroying its “finest Cruizer” after a forty-five minute battle. Captain John Rodgers considered watching the ship explode as a sublime experience: “one of the Grandest Spectacles I ever beheld” with “a Tremendous Explosion... a Huge Column of smoke” and “a Pyramid of Fire darting Vertically through its Centre interspersed with Masts, Yards, Sails Riggings” and other parts of the ship.<sup>366</sup> Notably, Rodgers called it “a very fine vessel”; typically, American observers deemed North African ships shoddy.<sup>367</sup> For the first time in two years, the U.S. Navy had won a battle in the Mediterranean.

Additionally, the U.S. Navy inflicted damage on Tripolitan forces with hit-and-run tactics. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, a nighttime skirmish along the shoreline killed three Tripolitans and wounded five others (including the bashaw’s brother-in-law, who lost his right arm). As Midshipman Henry Wadsworth recorded in his journal, “it was a most elegant sight. the frequent flash & heavy report of the gun boats: the still more frequent broad Sides of our squadron form’d the most sublime scene you can imagine.”<sup>368</sup> He even invoked biblical imagery when indulging in fighting fantasies: if there had been “anyone on board who like

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<sup>365</sup> Morris to James Simpson, May 19, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 408-409.

<sup>366</sup> John Rodgers to Morris, June 30, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 465-466.

<sup>367</sup> For instance, Edward Preble described the Moroccan ship *Mirboka* as “such a miserable piece of naval architecture that I do not believe we have an Officer in our service that would be willing to attempt to cross the Atlantic in her for ten times her Value.” Preble to Smith, October 1, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 95-96.

<sup>368</sup> Journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, May 30, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 430. Later, Wadsworth expressed doubt over the veracity of these figures since they came from a Frenchman with a reputation for lying; May 31, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 432.

Joshua of Old could have commanded the sun to stand still” the Americans would have taken all of Tripoli’s gun boats and made the Tripolitan “people our Slaves.”<sup>369</sup> The following month, the *Constellation* destroyed two of Tripoli’s gun boats and killed twelve Tripolitans.<sup>370</sup> The naval officers and tars craved opportunities to fight—Wadsworth described his peers as “hot for Battle...The sight of a Turban soon enrages them.”<sup>371</sup> Had they known of the Jefferson Administration’s preference to pay tribute, they surely would have been livid.

Yet if the Navy’s success gave the United States some leverage over Tripoli, it threatened to plunge the United States into a second Mediterranean war, against Morocco. The United States had enjoyed good relations with Morocco since the late 1780s, but problems arose from early 1802 to late 1803 when consul James Simpson refused to provide passports for Moroccan ships that wanted to deliver wheat to Tripoli. As Simpson informed Madison, the emperor was concerned that Tripoli did not have enough food and had a “charitable disposition towards all Mussulmen in want.”<sup>372</sup> Understandably, however, the Americans did not want Morocco to aid their enemy. Being denied passports enraged the emperor, who kicked Simpson out of Morocco and threatened to set his ships loose on America’s merchant fleet. The diplomat recognized the gravity of this situation and issued a

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<sup>369</sup> Journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, May 27, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 425. He alludes to the story (in chapter 10 of the book of Joshua) of Joshua commanding the sun to stand still so that Israel’s army can defeat its enemies.

<sup>370</sup> Journal of the *Constellation*, Captain Andrew Murray, July 22, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 209 and September 9, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 270. The battle occurred on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Murray claimed that the bashaw’s “favorite General” was among the dead.

<sup>371</sup> Journal of Midshipman Henry Wadsworth, July 22, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 495.

<sup>372</sup> James Simpson to Madison, May 13, 1802, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition. The emperor of Morocco was now Muley Soliman. His father, who made the 1786 peace treaty with the United States, died in 1790.



circular letter to other consuls stating that Morocco had “declared War against the United States of America” and asking them to warn “all Masters of our Merchant Vessels to be very carefull.”<sup>373</sup> Additionally, in a letter to Madison, Simpson related how the emperor sought to mobilize his people through a public address in which he announced “War with the United States” and urged “the utmost expedition...in fitting out his Cruizers.”<sup>374</sup> Already unable to defeat Tripoli, the United States now faced the prospect of a second war in the Mediterranean.

Going to war against Morocco frightened many officials as well as the public. Commentators recognized that even though Morocco lacked a powerful navy, its strategic location near Gibraltar (the gateway to the Mediterranean) allowed it to prey easily upon American merchant ships. As Madison observed, although the emperor’s “naval force is so feeble, the position of his harbours, the use that might be made of them, by enemies on the Coast of Barbary, and the influence of his example on Algiers and Tunis, give great value to his neutrality.”<sup>375</sup> To Robert Smith, Commodore Dale had observed that the emperor “has it in his power to do our trade (going into & coming out the Miditerranean) more Injury than the other three Barbary Powers put together.”<sup>376</sup> Due to these tensions with Morocco, the government sent two more frigates in October 1802 (the *New York* and *John Adams*)—but it also ordered two or three of the frigates currently in the Mediterranean to return to the United

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<sup>373</sup> Circular letter to U.S. Consuls and Commercial Agents from James Simpson, June 25, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 183.

<sup>374</sup> Simpson to Madison, June 26, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 186.

<sup>375</sup> Madison to Simpson, April 20, 1802, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*.

<sup>376</sup> Dale to Smith, April 14, 1802, *Naval Documents* II: 117.

States.<sup>377</sup> On the home front, newspapers throughout the United States (and from both political parties) took the problems with Morocco seriously, running stories with headlines such as “Impending War”<sup>378</sup> or “War with Morocco.”<sup>379</sup> Despite being weaker than the other Barbary States, policymakers prioritized maintaining good relations with Morocco.

Problems with Morocco temporarily got better when Simpson relented and issued passports for two ships in September 1802.<sup>380</sup> He returned to Morocco and explained to Madison that it was necessary to yield, lest he “hazard the Emperours severest resentment.”<sup>381</sup> This lull only lasted until the following spring, though, as the May 1803 capture of the Moroccan ship *Meshouda* (discussed above) revived tensions. Simpson

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<sup>377</sup> Smith to Morris, August 27, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 257-258; Madison to Simpson, October 21, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 303-304; Smith to Morris, October 23, 1802, *Ibid.*, II: 306-307.

<sup>378</sup> *The Mercury and New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), August 6, 1802; *Republican Gazetteer* (Boston, MA), August 6, 1802; *The Salem Register* (Salem, MA), August, 9, 1802; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 10, 1802; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 11, 1802; *The New-York Gazette and General Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 11, 1802; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), August 11, 1802; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), August 11, 1802; *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), August 11, 1802; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), August 11, 1802; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), August 12, 1802; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), August 12, 1802; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), August 12, 1802; *Republican; Or, Anti-Democrat* (Baltimore, MD), August 16, 1802; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), August 17, 1802; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), August 17, 1802; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), August 17, 1802; *The Monitor* (Litchfield, CT), August 18, 1802; *The Olio* (Washington D.C.), August 19, 1802; *Otsego Herald: Or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), August 19, 1802; *The Maryland Gazette* (Baltimore, MD), August 19, 1802; *The Pittsburg Gazette* (Pittsburgh, PA), August 20, 1802; *South Carolina State Gazette, and Timothy's Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), August 24, 1802.

<sup>379</sup> *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), August 18, 1802; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), August 21, 1802; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), August 23, 1802; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia, PA), August 23, 1802; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), August 23, 1802; *Farmers' Museum, or Literary Gazette* (Walpole, NH), August 24, 1802; *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington, D.C.), August 25, 1802; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), August 25, 1802; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), August 25, 1802; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), August 26, 1802; *United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), August 26, 1802; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), August 28, 1802; *The Commercial Register* (Norfolk, VA), August 30, 1802; *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), September 1, 1802.

<sup>380</sup> Sidi Mohamet Ben Absalem Selawy to Simpson, September 20, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 280.

<sup>381</sup> Simpson to Madison, September 28, 1802, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*.

recommended returning the ship for two reasons: the emperor “disavowed” its captain’s behavior and releasing it would “make a strong impression on his Majesty’s mind of the Friendly intentions of the Government of the United States towards him.”<sup>382</sup> For now, though, the U.S. Navy would retain the ship. A more severe problem erupted in August, when Captain William Bainbridge (of the *Philadelphia*) apprehended a Moroccan ship (the *Mirboka*), which had captured an American merchant ship (the *Celia*) and had taken the crew hostage. It became clear that Morocco was actively targeting American ships. Bainbridge reported that “the Moors Confess that they came out aCruising for the sole purpose of Capturing Americans to be sent to Tanger. I have recd a paper from them written in Moorish wch they say is their authority from the Govr of Tanger for so doing...I believe the Govenour of Tanger is much disposed for Hostilities with the U.S., the Moorish Prisoners accuse him as the sole cause of their preset Cituation.”<sup>383</sup> This confrontation raised the question of the emperor of Morocco’s intentions. Were the Moroccan sailors telling the truth in blaming the governor of Tangier or did the emperor himself order the capture of American ships?

To find out, Commodore Edward Preble, now the ranking officer in the Mediterranean (he arrived in September 1803 to replace Morris), insisted upon meeting with the emperor at the beach at Tangiers in October 1803.<sup>384</sup> Doing so took courage, as the emperor has a military guard of 20,000 with him. As described in in his ship’s log book, “between one and two this after noon the Emperour marched down on the Beach

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<sup>382</sup> Simpson to Morris, June 20, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 456; Simpson to Madison, July 9, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>383</sup> William Bainbridge to Simpson, August 29, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 519.

<sup>384</sup> Preble’s squadron consisted of seven ships: the *Constitution* (44 guns); *Philadelphia* (38 guns); *Argus* (16 guns); *Siren* (12 guns); *Nautilus* (12 guns); *Vixen* (12 guns); *Enterprize* (12 guns); Smith to Preble, July 13, 1803, *Ibid.*, II: 474.

accompanied By his Court several persons of the first distinction and a Numerous crowd of spectatores... the hole shore was crowd[ed] with the inhabitance as fair as the Ey could Extend.”<sup>385</sup> The emperor presented the Americans with ten bullocks, twenty sheep, and four dozen fowls and his band “playd the march of Olestor/ which signifys peace and friendship.” Midshipman Ralph Izard had a much more negative impression of the emperor (whom he met that day). He described his encounter in a letter to his mother: “I had connected with the idea of Emperor of Morocco, something grand, but what was my disappointment at seeing a small man, wrapped up in a woollen *heik* or cloak sitting upon the stone steps of an old castle in the middle of the streets, surrounded by a guard of very ill looking blacks with their arms covered with cloth to prevent them rusting.”<sup>386</sup> Izard had associated royalty with height and strength; the emperor’s small physique underwhelmed him. Izard saw a man who (despite being in mid-thirties) seemed frail and needed protection from both inclement weather (hence the cloak) and potential enemies (hence the bodyguards). Yet even his bodyguards looked unwell and wielded weapons in poor condition. In any event, Izard reported that the emperor apologized for the conduct of the governor of Tangiers and promised to “punish him ‘more than to our satisfaction.’” As for the captain of the *Meshouda*, Simpson later noted that he was “severely bastinadoed and lodged in a dungeon loaded with Irons on his Legs and Neck.”<sup>387</sup>

Diplomacy worked, as the emperor declared peace and, in a letter to the U.S. government, officially reaffirmed the treaty made by his father.<sup>388</sup> Preble agreed to return the

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<sup>385</sup> Log book of the *Constitution*, October 8, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 120.

<sup>386</sup> Ralph Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard, Sr., October 11, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 126.

<sup>387</sup> Simpson to Madison, November 4, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>388</sup> Emperor of Morocco to Jefferson and U.S. Senate, October 11, 1803, *Naval Documents* III: 124-125.

two Moroccan ships captured by the navy (the *Meshouda* and *Mirboka*)<sup>389</sup> and Jefferson announced in December that all problems between Morocco and the United States “have been amicably adjusted, and the treaty of 1786... confirmed by the Emperor.”<sup>390</sup> Fortunately for the United States, the emperor genuinely wanted peace. Like the bashaw of Tripoli, he complained about not being respected enough (long promised gun carriages had not arrived), but unlike the bashaw, he preferred diplomatic resolution over war.<sup>391</sup>

The resolution of problems with Morocco generated a surge of national pride, especially among Democratic-Republican newspapers. These celebrated Jefferson’s leadership in Barbary affairs as superior to his Federalist predecessors’. An article published in six states praised the “promptness and vigor” of “our little squadron,” commended the “restoration of peace” with Morocco, and argued that Jefferson had proved wrong the critics who had called his administration “pusyanimous and altogether unqualified.”<sup>392</sup> It further lauded the president for not paying tribute (unlike “the illustrious Washington”) and for

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<sup>389</sup> Simpson to Madison, October 15, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition. Due to the delays in receiving mail from the Mediterranean (about six weeks), Jefferson did not learn about the return of the ships until after it happened. He would have agreed with it, though. Robert Smith issued orders to return the ships (not realizing it had already happened). Smith to Commanding Officer of U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean, November 8, 1803, *Naval Documents* III: 207-208.

<sup>390</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Special Message to Congress, December 5, 1803, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65837>.

<sup>391</sup> Lear to Madison, October 18, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>392</sup> Eight Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *National Intelligencer*, and *Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), December 7, 1803; *The Maryland Herald and Elizabeth-Town Weekly Advertiser* (Hagers-Town, MD), December 14, 1803; *Bartgis’s Republican Gazette* (Frederick, MD), December 16, 1803; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), December 19, 1803; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), December 20, 1803 [see T.J.C. Williams and Folger McKinsey, *History of Frederick County, Maryland*, vol. 1 (L.R. Titsworth & Co., 1910), 248-249.]; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), December 22, 1803; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), December 27, 1803; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), January 9, 1804. One Federalist newspaper published it: *The Newhampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), January 3, 1804. The *New-England Palladium* of December 20, 1803 offered a rebuttal, reminding readers that Adams was occupied opposing French aggression and that, during Washington’s Administration, “the population, wealth and resources were less then—and we had no navy.”

reducing the navy budget to \$650,000 (compared to \$10,215,000 from 1797 to 1801). This article hailed Jefferson as the ideal commander-in-chief: he subdued America's enemies at a fraction of the cost of the Quasi-War. Another tribute to Jefferson waxed poetic, extolling him for transcending the dishonorable Barbary policies of Washington and Adams: "In our infantile state under Washington's sway,/ We indented a Barbary tribute to pay,/ Under Adams our tribute and taxes enlarg'd/ Yet the tribute's withheld, and no debts are discharg'd/ But the æra of Jefferson beams on the sight,/ And th' evils & burthens recede from the light."<sup>393</sup> Democratic-Republican newspaper editors wanted the public to rejoice in Jefferson's accomplishment of humbling America's enemies without spending exorbitant sums.

The news of peace with Morocco engendered the opposite reaction among some Federalist newspaper editors—they feared that Jefferson's popularity among the public would increase. A New Hampshire publication argued that the president had nothing to do with pacifying the "hostility of Morocco."<sup>394</sup> Instead, it declared that Commodore Preble deserved the glory since "his decisive conduct forced the enemy to a settlement" and he courageously "dictated his own terms" of peace even though the emperor of Morocco had a formidable force of 20,000 to 30,000 men and "105 pieces of cannon." Another article took a different approach by downplaying the importance of good relations with Morocco. It dismissed the country as a non-threat to the United States, calling it the "weakest of all the Barbary states" and "the least disposed to piracy." The article tried to shift readers' attention to the ongoing conflict with Tripoli, condemning Jefferson for running "a *pacific* WAR" and

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<sup>393</sup> *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), January 24, 1804.

<sup>394</sup> *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), December 31, 1803.

asking the public a question: “but to be serious—are we sunk this low?”<sup>395</sup> Clearly, Federalists greatly feared that positive news from the Mediterranean would redound to Jefferson’s benefit. They countered the triumphalism of Democratic-Republican newspapers by arguing that the president had simply benefitted from other people’s competency or suggesting that obtaining peace with Morocco was not an impressive accomplishment.

Towards the end of October 1803, Mediterranean affairs had been a mixed bag for the United States. On the positive side, problems with Morocco had been permanently resolved (indeed, the treaty with Morocco is the United States’ longest unbroken treaty) and the U.S. Navy had won a handful of victories against Tripolitan forces. However, a sense of regret over missed opportunities to end the Tripolitan War on American terms tempered the mood. After reviewing a batch of correspondence, Madison reported to Jefferson that “in general our affairs were considered in [the] Mediteranean as tending the wrong way. All agree that peace with Tripoli was for a long time in our power & almost on our own terms; and lament that the crisis is probably past.”<sup>396</sup> Indeed, Jefferson was unwise to have ignored the advice from diplomats and naval officers to send a powerful force to crush Tripoli. Moreover, the president assumed that no further tragedies would befall American vessels and that Tripoli would not capture additional Americans and hold them hostage. The naivety of Jefferson’s policies would soon be exposed in dramatic fashion.

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<sup>395</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), February 9, 1804; *United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), March 8, 1804.

<sup>396</sup> Madison to Jefferson, March 17, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

## Chapter 4: Democratic-Republican Embarrassment, Federalist Opportunity

October 21, 1803. Bostonians finally had the chance to see the comic opera *Tripolitan Prize; Or, American Tars Triumphant*, which, according to *The Independent Chronicle*, had “never [been] Performed in Boston.”<sup>397</sup> The advertisement promised a dramatic victory by an American ship over a Tripolitan vessel and a hefty dose of patriotism. *Tripolitan Prize* had been performed on multiple occasions in New York the previous fall, but it apparently was not very good.<sup>398</sup> A local newspaper published a negative review, which stressed the play’s incoherence. The critic had hoped to “see a few of those Tripolitan scoundrels spitted like monkeys for our amusement”—but nothing of the sort happened.<sup>399</sup> Instead, the play spent too much time on a boring group “of village masters and misses taking a walk” and singing and “look[ing] pitiful enough.” The review also deemed the ending anticlimactic since the battle scene lacked excitement: it was “was conducted with proper decency and decorum, and the Tripolitan very politely gave in.” Despite its limited literary and technical skill, *Tripolitan Prize* offered a jolt of nationalism and suggested that the U.S. Navy would soon subdue the Barbary pirates. Little did Americans on the home

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<sup>397</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 20, 1803.

<sup>398</sup> It played on several dates in November and December 1802, although it apparently had a slightly different title at first—New York newspapers call it *Tripolitan Prize; Or, American Tars on an English Shore; American Citizen* (New York, NY), November 24, 1803; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 25, 1803; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), December 2, 1802; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), December 3, 1802. Philadelphians could see a similar play—*The Enterprize; Or a Wreath for American Tars* offered a reenactment of the “engagement between the Enterprize and the Tripolitan Corsair”; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 14, 1803.

<sup>399</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), December 1, 1802.



front know, however, that the Tripolitan War would soon start to go poorly for the United States.

The second phase of the conflict began on October 31, 1803, with the crash of the frigate *Philadelphia* on a sandbar while in pursuit of a Tripolitan vessel. Unable to free it and surrounded by Tripolitan ships, Captain William Bainbridge opted to surrender rather than fight.<sup>400</sup> Suddenly the bashaw, Yusuf Karamanli, gained the upper hand in the Tripolitan War and took the 307 officers and crew members hostage. For the first time, the United States was losing the conflict. Furthermore, within a few days the wind loosened the *Philadelphia* from the sandbar, making it a powerful new addition to Tripoli's navy.

The loss of the *Philadelphia* not only affected naval operations. It also influenced domestic affairs since the newspaper war between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans reached a new intensity. Federalist newspaper editors often ran articles about the *Philadelphia* hostages and argued that Jefferson deserved blame for their captivity and the loss of the frigate—he enabled the conditions that led to the incident by not sending a sufficient number of ships to the Mediterranean. They castigated the president as an incompetent leader and pointed to the stagnancy of the Tripolitan War as a reason for the public to repudiate Jefferson and support the Federalist Party (particularly in the 1804 elections). Democratic-Republican newspaper editors recognized the potential of the *Philadelphia* loss to hurt their party and began damage control. They generally ignored the substance of Federalist critiques and instead attacked their adversaries as unprincipled enemies of the national good. Moreover, Democratic-Republican newspapers printed pessimistic letters from the *Philadelphia* hostages less frequently than Federalist

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<sup>400</sup> Bainbridge to Smith, November 1, 1803, *Naval Documents III*: 171-173.

publications. This suggests that Democratic-Republican editors preferred to keep the public ignorant of news from the Mediterranean rather than risk turning voters against Jefferson.

Although the Tripolitan War exacerbated tensions between the two political parties, it remained very popular among the public. Many Americans joyfully toasted the navy at celebrations and flocked to cultural events that acclaimed the conflict. In contrast to Jefferson, they viewed the navy as a positive good and not as a necessary evil. They considered the war against Tripoli a seminal moment in their country's history and even compared current naval heroes to the heroes of the Revolutionary War. The Tripolitan War was seen as an extension of this earlier conflict, with the United States defending its freedom against a foreign aggressor.

Meanwhile in Tripoli, Captain William Bainbridge (who had previously endured humiliation in North Africa when the Dey of Algiers commandeered the *George Washington*) feared that his career in the navy would end. In a letter to Edward Preble, the ranking U.S. officer in the Mediterranean, he lamented having experienced an extraordinary amount of bad luck: "I have zealously served my Country and strenuously endeavored to guard against accidents, but in spite of every effort misfortune has attended me through my Naval life.—Gaudaloupe and Algiers have witnessed part of them, but Tripoli strikes the death blow to my future Prospects."<sup>401</sup> Writing to his wife, Bainbridge confessed his fear "that I may be censured by my countrymen" and suggested that it would have been better if the Tripolitans had killed him in battle. He feared being officially reprimanded by the Navy Department, remarking that this dishonor would "deprive me of the power of looking any of

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<sup>401</sup> Bainbridge to Edward Preble, November 12, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 174.

my race in the face.”<sup>402</sup> Recall (from the previous chapter) Bainbridge’s anxiety about how the *George Washington* incident would affect his reputation—he requested that *The Philadelphia Gazette & Daily Advertiser* print his correspondence. His inner turmoil is evidenced by his use of racial rhetoric. Bainbridge feared feeling unworthy to be white; more than a skin color, whiteness represented a high standard of conduct. He dreaded being stigmatized as a failure—to him, a censure would constitute a mark of shame equivalent to having darker skin.

How did the crew handle their newfound enslavement? Placed in a putrid dungeon, many panicked. Some seamen stole clothing from their fellow sailors to trade for liquor, while one-hundred-forty members petitioned British Admiral Lord Nelson to claim them as British subjects.<sup>403</sup> Nelson, however, rejected them and reportedly stated that he would prefer “to have the Rascals all hung.”<sup>404</sup> A few sailors embraced the only surefire means of escaping captivity: converting to Islam and becoming a part of North African society. By mid-December, four Americans had “turned Turk”: John Wilson, Lewis Hacksener, Thomas Prince, and Peter West.<sup>405</sup> In February 1805, Bainbridge wrote an updated list—a fifth sailor, Thomas Smith, had converted as well.<sup>406</sup> Bainbridge also recorded the rank of each apostate—Hacksener was a landsman, Prince a seaman, Smith a seaman, West a carpenter

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<sup>402</sup> Bainbridge to Susan Bainbridge, November 1, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 178.

<sup>403</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, November 25, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 176.

<sup>404</sup> Lieutenant John Johnson to Lieutenant Colonel Commandant William Burrows, January 24, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 357. As discussed in chapter 2, eleven American hostages in Algiers tried (unsuccessfully) to have King George III claim them as British subjects and free them from captivity.

<sup>405</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, December 13, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 269.

<sup>406</sup> Bainbridge to Smith, February 4, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 328. Presumably, Thomas Smith converted sometime between mid-December and mid-January; a January 14, 1804 letter from Bainbridge to Tobias Lear mentions that a fifth sailor had become apostate (but no name is given); *Ibid.*, III: 329.

crewman, and Wilson a quartermaster. None of them were officers. Prince was apparently rather young—Bainbridge referred to him as a “Boy.” Wilson was unique among the converts for seeking to add to the remaining *Philadelphia* prisoners’ miseries. He told the bashaw false stories of Bainbridge throwing gold over the ship, encouraged the Tripolitans to treat the Americans harshly, and became the prison’s overseer (a position that allowed him to use violence against his former peers).<sup>407</sup> Although converting to Islam enabled these five men to improve their own welfare, it jeopardized the livelihood of their family members back in the United States. As Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith declared, the Jefferson Administration would not pay a stipend to the “wives, parents and children” of captives who had “turned Turks.”<sup>408</sup> Although the apostates gained the enmity of their countrymen, they escaped hard labor and horrid living conditions and gained an opportunity for upward mobility. Nor were they the only Westerners to follow this course; the Tripolitan Admiral had defected from Scotland. Since none of these five sailors held a high rank in the U.S. Navy, “turning Turk” was arguably a rational decision that enabled them to create a new identity and to pursue new opportunities in North Africa.

Upon learning about the *Philadelphia* loss, American personnel in the Mediterranean recognized that it greatly hurt America’s war effort. News travelled slowly, though: it took more than three weeks for Captain Edward Preble to learn about it (from a British ship).<sup>409</sup> Preble did not receive Bainbridge’s first batch of letters for nearly a month.<sup>410</sup> Upon hearing

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<sup>407</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, November 15, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 223-224; Jonathan Cowdery, November 8, 1803, *American Captives in Tripoli*, in *White Slaves, African Masters*, 163-164.

<sup>408</sup> Smith to George Harrison, August 21, 1805, *Naval Documents* VI: 244.

<sup>409</sup> Preble diary, November 24, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 175.

<sup>410</sup> Preble diary, November 27, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 240.

about the *Philadelphia* disaster, he told Smith that it “distresses me beyond description, and very much deranges my plans of operation for the present. . . . we should have had peace with Tripoly in the Spring; but I have now no hopes of such an event.”<sup>411</sup> Moreover, Preble wished Bainbridge had gone down fighting instead of surrendering: “would to God, that the Officers and crew of the *Philadelphia*, had one and all, determined to prefer death to slavery.” He also requested two or three more ships in order to launch a more intensive blockade and informed Smith of his plan to destroy the *Philadelphia* so that Tripoli could not use it against the United States. He acknowledged that blowing it up would “undoubtedly cost us many lives,” but believed “it must be done.” Preble wanted the Jefferson Administration to understand that a new phase of the war had begun and that the United States needed to have a more assertive presence in the Mediterranean.

Although he expressed his disappointment in Bainbridge to the government, Preble sought to console the beleaguered captain. In a December letter, Preble declared that “I have not the smallest doubt, but that you have *all* done everything which you conceived could be done, to get the ship off. . . . You may rest assured, that in *me* you have a *friend*, whose exertions shall *never* be wanting in endeavours to relieve you.”<sup>412</sup> Preble had either reassessed the situation following his letter to Smith or wanted to avoid driving Bainbridge to despair. Like Preble, James Cathcart wished that Bainbridge had gone down fighting rather than surrendering and estimated the cost of ransom as “at least” \$300,000.<sup>413</sup> In a letter to Madison, the ex-diplomat exclaimed “how glorious it would have been to have perish’d with

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<sup>411</sup> Preble to Smith, December 10, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 256-258.

<sup>412</sup> Preble to Bainbridge, December 19, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 280.

<sup>413</sup> Cathcart to Madison, December 15, 1803, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

the Ship... a glorious death which would transmit our names to posterity and have establish'd a national character." Cathcart apparently cared more about America's reputation than the lives of the officers and crew. Richard O'Brien also informed Madison of the situation and once again called for a massive naval buildup: the United States needed to start acting like "a great Country" by building a powerful seventy-four gun ship, six "large" frigates, and twelve "light Corsairs."<sup>414</sup> American personnel in the Mediterranean recognized that the power dynamic between Tripoli and the United States had changed. The war was no longer a draw—Tripoli was winning.

Would America's allies be of help in the hostage situation? France and Russia promised to intercede, but their efforts accomplished nothing.<sup>415</sup> The emperor of Russia had good intentions and asked the sultan at Constantinople to order the bashaw to release the captives—but the emperor's letter had no impact.<sup>416</sup> The French consul in Tripoli, Boaventure Beaussier, made a poor impression upon American officials. Preble considered him (and the British and Swedish consuls) as devoted to "the Bashaw's Interest,"<sup>417</sup> while Bainbridge warned Preble not to trust any consul except Nicholas Nissen (the Danish consul).<sup>418</sup> Indeed, the French consul often took a patronizing tone with Preble and urged him to pay ransom instead of fighting Tripoli.<sup>419</sup> He claimed that attacks did more harm than

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<sup>414</sup> O'Brien to Madison, December 16, 1803, *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord to Edward Livingston, January 17, 1804, *Naval Documents III*: 335-336; Grand Chancellor of Russia to Levett Harris, January 25, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 358.

<sup>416</sup> Preble to Tobias Lear, June 19, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 207.

<sup>417</sup> Preble diary, March 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 544-545.

<sup>418</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, June 14, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 187.

<sup>419</sup> For instance, in a June 13, 1804 letter to Preble, Beaussier called a U.S. offer of \$40,000 for ransom "truly ridiculous and offensive"; *Ibid.*, IV: 184.

good since they “inflame[d] the mind of the Prince.”<sup>420</sup> Beaussier also stressed that Yusuf cared deeply about his reputation and wanted to impress Europe and Africa with his “strength & courage.”<sup>421</sup> Among the European diplomats in Tripoli, only Nissen provided much help (by procuring supplies, even with his own funds) and he earned the gratitude of the hostages and received official thanks from the U.S. government.<sup>422</sup> Ultimately, the United States could not rely upon European nations to help end the Tripolitan War—America would have to solve its own problems.

News of the *Philadelphia’s* capture and the enslavement of the officers and seamen reached the United States in spring 1804, prompting Jefferson to finally recognize the necessity of substantially augmenting the Mediterranean squadron. In a March 20<sup>th</sup> message to Congress, he called for legislation that would “increase our force and enlarge our expenses in the Mediterranean beyond what the last appropriation for the naval service contemplated. I recommend, therefore, to the consideration of Congress such an addition to that appropriation as they may think the exigency requires.”<sup>423</sup> Congress heeded Jefferson’s requests with a strong vote and, within a week, passed “An Act further to protect the commerce and seamen of the United States against the Barbary powers.”<sup>424</sup> Known as the

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<sup>420</sup> Beaussier to Preble, August 29, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 482.

<sup>421</sup> Beaussier to Preble, September 1, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 497.

<sup>422</sup> Bainbridge to Smith, February 12, 1806, *Ibid.*, 39-40. Congress passed a resolution on April 10, 1806 instructing Jefferson to inform Nissen of “the high sense entertained by Congress, of his disinterested and benevolent attentions, manifested to Captain Bainbridge, his officers, and crew, during the time of their captivity in Tripoli.” *Statutes at Large*, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 410. Also, Madison instructed Lear to present Nissen with a quality snuff-box depicting “the Arms of the United States”; Lear to Nicholas Nissen, June 4, 1804, *Naval Documents IV*: 148.

<sup>423</sup> Jefferson, Special Message to Congress, March 20, 1804, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65847>.

<sup>424</sup> “An Act further to protect the commerce and seamen of the United States against the Barbary powers,” March 26, 1804, *Statutes at Large*, 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 291-292. It passed unanimously in the House of

“Mediterranean Fund,” it established a duty of 2.5% on imported goods that would expire in three months “unless the United States should then be at war with any other of the Barbary powers.” The legislation also provided up to another \$1 million for expenses and authorized the president “to cause to be purchased or built, officered, manned and equipped, two vessels of war, to carry not more than sixteen guns each, and likewise to hire or accept or loan in the Mediterranean sea, as many gun boats as he may think proper.” The Jefferson Administration also decided to send four more frigates (the *President*, 44 guns; *Congress*, 36 guns; *Constellation*, 36 guns; and *Essex*, 32 guns) to the Mediterranean. As Smith explained to Preble, Jefferson wanted to dispatch “a force which would be able beyond the possibility of a doubt, to coerce the Enemy to a peace upon Terms compatible with our Honor and our Interest.”<sup>425</sup> Jefferson acknowledged the need for more firepower, but did he really have a change of heart?

Despite cultivating a more belligerent public image, privately the president thought that the significance of the *Philadelphia*'s loss had been exaggerated. In an April letter to Madison, Jefferson asserted that “I am mortified at the consternation which most of our public agents abroad have manifested at the loss of the *Philadelphia*. It seems as if they thought on the loss of one frigate, that every thing was lost.”<sup>426</sup> Jefferson's belief that he knew more about Mediterranean affairs than the naval officers and diplomats reveals that he had continued to largely reject their ideas. He acted as if Tripoli was not winning the war and, pointedly, ignored the fate of the 300 captives in this letter. Jefferson seemed most

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Representatives and 20 to 5 in the Senate; William Plumer, Everett Brown, ed., *William Plumer's Memorandum of Proceedings in the United States Senate, 1803-1807* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), March 26, 1804, 180.

<sup>425</sup> Smith to Preble, May 22, 1804, *Naval Documents IV*: 114-115.

<sup>426</sup> Jefferson to Madison, April 15, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.



concerned about how European countries would view the *Philadelphia* loss: “this must humble us in the eyes of Europe, and renders it the more indispensable to inflict on Tripoli the same chastisement of which the two most powerful nations of Europe have given the world repeated examples.” Yet despite such bold talk, Jefferson had no intention of authorizing an attack comparable to the abilities of the British or French fleets.<sup>427</sup> The president also broached the possibility of sending a ship to Constantinople to cultivate goodwill with the sultan. This idea did not materialize and, in any event, would probably not have worked since the emperor of Russia’s letter failed and Yusuf wanted the United States to take him seriously as a sovereign ruler. Jefferson acted begrudgingly in dispatching a new squadron, recognizing the need for more firepower but privately remaining scornful of the naval officers and diplomats.

In response, Madison concurred with the president and expressed disdain for the Mediterranean officials. He deemed their concern over the *Philadelphia* incident “remarkable” and thought that they were actually hurting the war effort. Madison believed that the diplomats and naval officers’ warnings “tend not only to sink us in the eyes of the European Govts. but may excite calculations in the Bashaw which will in some measure balance the advantage of the friendly interpositions with him.”<sup>428</sup> Also like Jefferson, Madison did not discuss the hostage situation. Rather than reconsider how their policies had left the American squadron vulnerable and had emboldened Yusuf, they continued to distrust and denigrate officials in the Mediterranean. The diplomats and naval officers rightly

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<sup>427</sup> Moreover, this invocation of Britain and France was odd since (as discussed in chapter 2) these two countries preferred to subsidize Barbary piracy. They liked the fact that the Barbary pirates harassed the United States and weaker European nations.

<sup>428</sup> Madison to Jefferson, April 19, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

worried that Jefferson's lackluster policies would embolden the Barbary pirates against the United States. A Tunisian official, for instance, bluntly told an American diplomat that the United States had utterly failed against Tripoli: "you have spent Millions & done nothing— You have lost a Frigate and her Crew. You are tired of the War and want peace."<sup>429</sup> As will be seen in chapter 6, after the Tripolitan War ended the Bey of Tunis confidently bossed American personnel around and ultimately negotiated a good financial deal for himself. Jefferson's policies bred contempt, not respect, among Barbary rulers. Not even the loss of one of the U.S. Navy's most formidable ships and the enslavement of its crew could motivate Jefferson to rethink his fundamental ideas. He was doing a poor job as commander-in-chief.

Federalist newspaper editors made precisely this point, arguing that the blame for the *Philadelphia* loss lay squarely with the Jefferson Administration. An article published in three states boasted the headline "*Loss of the Philadelphia Frigate, or, a practical lesson on Jefferson's economy*" and denied that the incident stemmed from "an accidental concurrence of circumstances." Instead, it identified the president as "the cause of this very serious national loss" due to his "miserable, starveling, niggardly species of economy" and his opposition to sending more ships. It suggested that the incident would not have happened if a second ship had travelled with the *Philadelphia* and been able to evacuate the crew members or free the ship.<sup>430</sup> The article also observed that the cost of ransoming the 300 prisoners would damage Jefferson's commitment to financial economy (it estimated at least

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<sup>429</sup> George Davis and Richard O'Brien's comments concerning Tunis, April 29, 1804, *Naval Documents IV*: 73-74.

<sup>430</sup> Seven Federalist newspapers published it: *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 21, 1804; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), March 24, 1804; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), March 30, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), March 30, 1804; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), April 3, 1804. *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), April 3, 1804 and *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), April 14, 1804 ran the article but omitted the headline.

\$1,500,000). An article published in several New York newspapers averred that the Tripolitan War should not have even lasted two-and-a-half years—the United States could have won quickly had Jefferson, at the beginning of the conflict, sent a powerful force to “destroy the very nest of these robbers.”<sup>431</sup> Doing so would have ultimately been less expensive and have had the additional benefit of instilling “a just terror of the American name” into North Africa and setting “the foundation for a permanent peace.” An article printed in Federalist papers in four states condemned Jefferson’s frugality and criticized him for not sending more ships to the Mediterranean—the paucity required the *Philadelphia* to sail “alone, contrary to the advice of an experienced officer of the navy.”<sup>432</sup> It also maliciously claimed that Jefferson perhaps preferred that the *Philadelphia* captives die in Tripoli so that the government could be spared the cost of ransom! Other newspapers also contended that a second ship could have helped free the *Philadelphia* or at least evacuated the crew to safety. A widely published article entitled “Modern Economy” condemned the president for forcing the Mediterranean squadron to “cruise separately” and for ignoring that “the chances and probabilities of losing each frigate would thereby be nearly doubled.”<sup>433</sup> It also blamed Jefferson’s “niggardly policy” for “the captivity of 307 of our citizens.” Ironically, the article argued, the president’s commitment to frugality in the Tripolitan War

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<sup>431</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 21, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), April 25, 1804; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), May 4, 1804.

<sup>432</sup> Five Federalist newspapers ran it: *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), March 26, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), April 4, 1804; *THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), April 4, 1804; *United States Chronicle* (Providence, RI), April 5, 1804; *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), April 10, 1804.

<sup>433</sup> Eight Federalist newspapers ran it: *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), April 12, 1804; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), April 14, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 24, 1804; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), May 3, 1804; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 4, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), May 8, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), May 9, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), May 23, 1804.

had resulted in Congress increasing naval expenses by \$1 million (plus interest) and implementing a new tax (the Mediterranean Fund). To Federalist critics, the flaws in Jefferson's policies were self-evident: he left American ships and sailors vulnerable in the Mediterranean and then increased taxes on citizens.

Federalist newspapers also depicted the *Philadelphia* loss as a monumental setback for the United States. Some articles made well-reasoned points, while others indulged in hyperbole. An article published in three states proclaimed that “a more severe calamity has not befallen the United States since the adoption of the present Constitution; what the effects will be on the other piratical Barbary powers, it is not easy to calculate; nor agreeable to dwell upon.”<sup>434</sup> Given the capture of hundreds of American merchant ships by France in the 1790s and the ongoing impressment of American sailors by the British navy, it is hard to take such a claim seriously. This article sought to rile up the Federalist base, not win over independents or Democratic-Republicans. In a similar vein, an editorial published in four states deemed “the prospect of peace more distant than ever” and invoked a classical quotation by Horace to illustrate the folly of Jefferson's policies: “*dum vitant stulti vitia in contraria currunt*” (“while fools try to avoid one error, they fall into its opposite”).<sup>435</sup> It defended the officers and seamen for “uniformly display[ing] a determined zeal,” while utilizing gendered rhetoric to castigate Jefferson. The president needed to “act with the spirit of a man, and the liberality which becomes the chief magistrate of a great nation” by sending

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<sup>434</sup> *Columbian Centinel & Massachusetts Federalist* (Boston, MA), March 28, 1804; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), March 31, 1804; *Political Calendar* (Newburyport, MA), April 2, 1804; *Columbian Minerva* (Dedham, MA), April 3, 1804; *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), April 3, 1804; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), April 17, 1804.

<sup>435</sup> Jon Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs, and Sayings* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

a squadron powerful enough “to reduce their town to ashes.”<sup>436</sup> To Federalists, the *Philadelphia* loss exposed what they had long suspected: Jefferson was as clueless and unqualified as a woman in running foreign policy. By prioritizing his Spartan economic policies, he enabled the conditions that led to the *Philadelphia* loss and helped Tripoli to obtain an advantage over the United States.

Other critics advanced a more inflammatory charge: accusing Jefferson of corruption in using federal funds intended for the Tripolitan War to pay for the Louisiana Purchase. Newspapers in four states took a populist approach by publishing an article with the headline “*New Taxes*,” which asserted that the “true” purpose of the Mediterranean Fund entailed raising money “to provide for paying interest on the Louisiana Debt...out of the pockets of the people without their knowing it.”<sup>437</sup> These Federalists portrayed themselves as public watchdogs unmasking Democratic-Republican deceptions. Similarly, a letter from “a gentleman at Washington to the Editor” asserted that although the Mediterranean Fund would raise \$1 million annually, less than half would go to the Tripolitan War—the majority would “pay the accruing interest on the Louisiana stock.”<sup>438</sup> Another widely published article claimed that the Mediterranean Fund really existed “to pay interest on the Louisiana debt” and predicted that this legislation would “reduce all merchants to poverty and ruin.”<sup>439</sup> Even

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<sup>436</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 24, 1804; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 4, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), May 9, 1804; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 11, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), May 12, 1804; *The Balance, and Columbia Repository* (Hudson, NY), May 15, 1804.

<sup>437</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), May 31, 1804; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), June 7, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), June 15, 1804; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), June 16, 1804; *Utica Patriot* (Utica, NY), June 25, 1804.

<sup>438</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), April 6, 1804; *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), April 10, 1804; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), April 14, 1804; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), April 18, 1804.

<sup>439</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 28, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), April 4, 1804; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), April 6, 1804; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), April 6,

some members of the public expressed concern that Jefferson's fondness for the Louisiana Purchase would compromise his ability to effectively lead the Tripolitan War. A Boston celebration in honor of Rufus King (the former U.S. minister to Britain) included a toast to "our brave tars suffering in Tripoli—Alas! We fear that in the *honeymoon* of our connection with Louisiana, our captive brethren are forgotten."<sup>440</sup> Many Federalists had opposed the Louisiana Purchase and clearly these newspaper editors remained hostile towards it. They hoped to generate public anger by arguing that Jefferson's obsession with the Louisiana Purchase would jeopardize America's ability to win the Tripolitan War.

Was there any truth in these allegations? Jefferson had considered how the Louisiana Purchase would affect the war against Tripoli. In an October 1803 letter to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, the president expressed his desire to avoid raising taxes to pay for the Louisiana Purchase and proposed reducing naval expenses and transferring such savings to the Louisiana Purchase interest payments. He asked Smith for advice about how best to cut the naval budget (including the Mediterranean squadron).<sup>441</sup> However, the *Philadelphia* incident disrupted Jefferson's plans and, as discussed above, he reversed course by supporting an increase in naval expenses. Federalists had no evidence to prove their inflammatory claims. Overall, allegations that Jefferson was using the Tripolitan War as a pretext to fund the Louisiana Purchase amounted to a partisan character attack designed to spur public distrust in the president.

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1804; *Jenks' Portland Gazette* (Portland, ME), April 14, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), May 9, 1804; *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Harrisburg, PA), May 12, 1804.

<sup>440</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), October 19, 1804.

<sup>441</sup> Jefferson to Smith, October 10, 1803, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 41: 502.

To be sure, not all Federalist newspaper editors responded with hostility—some praised Jefferson for now deciding to send additional ships. An article printed in five states considered it “*Better late than never*” and praised the president’s decision to undertake “measures more benefitting the character of a free and a brave people.”<sup>442</sup> It hoped that “the loss of the *Philadelphia*” would “become the means of our future glory, greatness, and security” and promised “to applaud” and “to support” the Jefferson Administration if it maintained its newfound belligerent course. These Federalists editors regarded partisanship as a necessary evil and wanted national unity as long as Jefferson appeared committed to victory in the Mediterranean. Another article, published in a New York newspaper, tried to brighten the public mood by using humor: it claimed that since the Tripolitans could not figure out how to sail the *Philadelphia* they “have offered to sell her to some maltese merchants.”<sup>443</sup> This article sought to reassure Americans that they had nothing to fear from such an incompetent enemy—the loss of the ship was but a temporary setback and did not spell doom. These conciliatory articles were the exception, though—most Federalist publications wanted to pummel Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans while they were vulnerable.

Indeed, some Federalist newspaper editors viewed the *Philadelphia* loss as a golden opportunity for their party to make gains in the 1804 elections. By stressing Tripoli’s recent success over the U.S. forces in the Mediterranean, they portrayed Jefferson as unfit for the presidency. A New York newspaper included the Tripolitan War among the reasons why

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<sup>442</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 4, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), May 5, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), May 11, 1804; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), May 17, 1804; *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), May 22, 1804; from the *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, SC), April 20, 1804.

<sup>443</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 4, 1804.

Jefferson was “very unfit to be the Chief Magistrate of the United States.” It asked readers to reflect upon these questions: “is not the conduct of the war with Tripoli expensive and disgraceful? Is not the nation defenceless, exposed to the insult and outrage of foreign vessels of war?”<sup>444</sup> Similarly, a lengthy address “To the FARMERS of the County of Kennebec” listed many reasons why people should oppose Jefferson’s reelection, including his running the Tripolitan War “with no great energy” and permitting “three hundred and seven brave fellows....to languish...with labor and in ill treatment” in Tripoli.<sup>445</sup> It called for a more vigorous assault upon Tripoli by “pay[ing] them in warlike stores—balls delivered from our cannons’ mouths, and no other way.” A lengthy open letter “To the People of Massachusetts” listed many criticisms of Jefferson, including his unwillingness to spend more on the Tripolitan War and the human cost of his policies. It asked voters if it was “true economy to attempt blockading the harbour of Tripoli with a *single ship*? Ask your brethren now *groaning* under the chains of Tripolitan slavery.”<sup>446</sup> These articles combined logical and emotional appeals to try to woo voters away from Jefferson. They stressed that he had failed to win the Tripolitan War on a shoestring budget and had done nothing to alleviate the suffering of the *Philadelphia* captives.<sup>447</sup> Did voters want four more years of presidential ineptitude?

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<sup>444</sup> *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), August 25, 1804.

<sup>445</sup> *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), October 25, 1804.

<sup>446</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 2, 1804.

<sup>447</sup> A Federalist newspaper in New York was more pessimistic, conceding that Jefferson “will probably be elected president for the next four years without much opposition.” Still, it criticized him for causing “the loss of the *Philadelphia* frigate” and for permitting the crew to remain in “chains of bondage.” *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), December 4, 1804.



Federalist newspapers not only aspired to unseat Jefferson—they also hoped that the lackluster state of the Tripolitan War would help their party in state and congressional elections. A March 1804 article in a Massachusetts newspaper, for instance, listed a slate of Federalist candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, and state senators and sarcastically accused Democratic-Republicans of blundering the Tripolitan War: “to what dignity have they raised us in the view of foreign nations—how all the Barbary powers, to whom the whole world has been tributary, tremble at an American frigate...in consequence of Mr. Jefferson’s being President.”<sup>448</sup> Even though these elected positions would have no direct impact upon U.S. foreign policy, this newspaper thought that these candidates could benefit from public disappointment in the Tripolitan War.<sup>449</sup> Similarly, a New York newspaper suggested that America’s vulnerability to Tripoli should disqualify all Democratic-Republicans from holding statewide offices: “how many Americans are now in Tripoli, loaded with the chains of bondage? Did the ‘*blessings of peace*’ throw those unfortunate men into slavery?”<sup>450</sup> Additionally, two New York newspapers ran an article that lampooned Democratic-Republican voters—a hypothetical one said: “I like much the notion of *economy*—Had there been more than one frigate before Tripoli, more might have been lost.”<sup>451</sup> Altogether, these article depicted Jefferson’s policies as catastrophic and portrayed Democratic-Republicans as utterly ignorant about how to win the Tripolitan War. The loss of the *Philadelphia* created an opportunity for Federalists. Knowing that the public

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<sup>448</sup> *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), March 27, 1804.

<sup>449</sup> Since state legislatures chose U.S. Senators, an indirect opportunity to influence Tripolitan War policies existed.

<sup>450</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), April 17, 1804.

<sup>451</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), July 5, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), July 7, 1804.

uniformly detested the Barbary pirates, Federalist newspaper editors hoped that voters who had previously voted Democratic-Republican would become disillusioned with Jefferson's leadership and return the Federalists to power.

Some Democratic-Republican newspapers responded to such attacks on their party and the president by portraying the *Philadelphia* loss as an unfortunate mishap and absolving Jefferson of any responsibility. A lengthy Massachusetts article reproached Federalists for engaging in “party malevolence” and making “malicious” and “despicable” allegations against Jefferson.<sup>452</sup> It argued that the *Philadelphia* loss was “a mere accident; an accident, which no man could possibly foresee, much less prevent. Do [Federalists] expect the President to insure our navy against the dangers of the sea, against rocks and quicksands, storms and tempests?” Notably, the article made it seem as if the United States was not actually at war with Tripoli—it described the purpose of the Mediterranean squadron as “to watch the harbor of Tripoli” and claimed (falsely) that one ship was “fully adequate” to do so. It ignored both the *Franklin* capture and the advice from naval officers and diplomats to send more ships. Another article made a blatantly false statement by asserting that it was “beyond question” that the United States had “a sufficient number of vessels...in the Mediterranean” because Tripoli had never captured an American ship.<sup>453</sup> The author apparently forgot (or hoped readers would forget) about Tripoli's capture of the *Franklin*.

Democratic-Republicans considered any criticism of the president as illegitimate and tried to turn public opinion against their rivals. An article published in two states castigated Federalists for making the *Philadelphia* loss “a party question” and “a high crime on the part

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<sup>452</sup> *Political Calendar* (Newburyport, MA), April 9, 1804.

<sup>453</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 14, 1804.

of the administration.” It ridiculed the argument that a second ship would have helped the *Philadelphia* crew escape as both “fallacious” and an insult to “the courage and seamanship of the officers of the Philadelphia”<sup>454</sup> A Massachusetts article likewise called the incident an “accident” that stemmed from poor weather and unfamiliar topography. Jefferson “could not control the winds or the waves...or point out the rocks and shoals which lay concealed under water, and which few, if any, charts had previously designated.”<sup>455</sup> Such flippant responses largely neglected the substance of Federalist criticism—that if more ships were in the Mediterranean, the *Philadelphia* could have received help and would not have needed to surrender. Federalists did not blame Jefferson for inclement weather or for the existence of the sandbar on which the *Philadelphia* crashed. They blamed him for implementing a naval strategy that did not provide for the possibility of disasters occurring.

Other Democratic-Republican publications attacked the Federalists as unprincipled opponents who would never support Jefferson under any conditions. These attacks ignored the bipartisan support that many Federalist newspapers gave Jefferson prior to the *Franklin* capture in June 1802 (as discussed in the previous chapter). A Philadelphia newspaper claimed that the Federalists did not really want victory over Tripoli and would complain “about the heavy expence” if Jefferson sent a formidable “force” to the Mediterranean.<sup>456</sup> Another article accused Federalists of “rejoic[ing] that the disaster has occurred” and “sport[ing] wantonly with the misfortunes of our brave but unfortunate countrymen” out of spite for Democratic-Republicans. Similarly, a different publication accused the Federalists

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<sup>454</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, March 28, 1804. A Federalist newspaper, *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), also published this article on April 10, 1804. This publication occasionally supported Jefferson’s Tripolitan War policies.

<sup>455</sup> *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), April 26, 1804.

<sup>456</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 14, 1804.

of hoping that Commodore Preble's ship would crash "on the same rocks" as the *Philadelphia* so that Jefferson's popularity would erode.<sup>457</sup> Instead of offering intelligent rebuttals to Federalist criticisms, these Democratic-Republican newspapers resorted to slander and name-calling. Their virulence suggests that they feared that the *Philadelphia* incident would boost the Federalists' popularity.

Some Democratic-Republican newspapers took an alternate approach by either downplaying the importance of the *Philadelphia* loss or redirecting readers' attention to the Jefferson Administration's accomplishments. An article printed in eight states utilized the Quasi-War slogan '*Millions for Defence, but not a Cent for Tribute*' as a headline and celebrated the Mediterranean Fund as evidence of the Jefferson Administration's "patriotism." It predicted that this legislation would "show the world, that while the wish of the American nation is peace, she will not hesitate for a moment, to make that power feel the vengeance of her arms, that dares, in violation of justice, to invade her."<sup>458</sup> Another article, published in two states, urged public confidence in Jefferson and reminded readers of the successful resolution of problems with Morocco. It promised that the president would take "prompt and vigorous" action in order "to make as forcible an impression on the barbarians

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<sup>457</sup> *Political Calendar* (Newburyport, MA), April 26, 1804.

<sup>458</sup> Sixteen Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 23, 1804; *The Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), March 27, 1804; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), March 27, 1804; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), March 29, 1804; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), March 31, 1804; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), April 4, 1804; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), April 4, 1804; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), April 5, 1804; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), April 6, 1804; *Republican Spy* (Springfield, MA), April 9, 1804; *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), April 11, 1804; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), April 12, 1804; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), April 13, 1804; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), April 16, 1804; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), April 23, 1804. *The Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), April 7, 1804 omitted the headline. Three Federalists newspapers published the article: *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), April 4, 1804; *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), April 10, 1804; and *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), April 10, 1804.

of Tripoli and their neighbours, as we lately made on those of Morocco.”<sup>459</sup> More audaciously, an editorial reassured Democratic-Republicans that the Tripolitan War would benefit their party instead of the Federalists: “the energy of our government to correct the procedure of the pirates of Tripoli, will make a more brilliant appearance, from its contrast with the black malignity, which issues from the presses falsely stiled Federal.” It also lauded the growth of the Democratic-Republican Party in Massachusetts and Connecticut and claimed that, in New Hampshire, Federalism was in “a swift decline.”<sup>460</sup> Altogether, these articles stubbornly defended Jefferson’s Barbary policies and urged Democratic-Republican readers not to concede any ground to Federalists. In their opinion, the *Philadelphia* loss amounted to a small speed bump on the road to the ultimate dominance of the Democratic-Republican Party.

In addition to either attacking or defending the Jefferson Administration, newspapers (most often Federalist) published letters written by *Philadelphia* captives that detailed their physical suffering and mental anguish. These sources combined factual material with emotional appeals and, by printing them, newspaper editors raised public awareness and pressured the government to free the hostages. In a widely published letter, one officer described the hectic boarding of the *Philadelphia* by the Tripolitans. He remarked that “I never saw or heard of such plunder as they made, they drove us into their boats without any clothes, but what we had on. I had to fight with two of them some time to secure my great coat, and by scuffling I saved my money and watch....Before we got on shore, we were

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<sup>459</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 24, 1804; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), March 27, 1804.

<sup>460</sup> *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), May 8, 1804; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), June 5, 1804.

treated most brutally.”<sup>461</sup> Another pessimistic letter, written by a midshipman, only appeared in Federalist newspapers. It stressed that the officers and crew had all “suffer[ed] the most horrid degradation—strip’d of Clothes, Money, Watches, and every thing valuable.”<sup>462</sup> By printing these letters, Federalist editors demonstrated humanitarian support and also implicitly reminded readers that the *Philadelphia* crew members and officers became hostages under a Democratic-Republican administration.

Other widely published letters described the difficulties of daily life in Tripoli for the ordinary seamen—they experienced both psychological torment and physical pain. One midshipman complained that the bashaw’s “subjects, as they pass our prison doors, mock and deride us; they laugh at the Christian’s sufferings, and in the most brutal manner, point the finger of scorn at us. To be the sport of such villains, MADDS me.”<sup>463</sup> The captives were powerless to fight back and had to endure such humiliation. When they weren’t doing hard

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<sup>461</sup> Letter from an officer on board the *Philadelphia* (undated). Ten Federalist newspapers printed it: *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 20, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), March 20, 1804; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), March 26, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), March 28, 1804; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), March 29, 1804; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), March 30, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), March 30, 1804; *Columbian Courier, OR WEEKLY MISCELLANY* (New Bedford, MA), March 30, 1804; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), March 30, 1804; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), April 3, 1804. Four Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 20, 1804; *The Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), March 20, 1804; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), March 31, 1804; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), April 9, 1804. One neutral newspaper ran it: *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), March 28, 1804.

<sup>462</sup> Letter by a midshipman of the *Philadelphia*, dated November 1, 1803. Three Federalist newspapers printed it: *Washington Federalist* (Washington, D.C.), April 11, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), April 17, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), April 25, 1804. It also ran in the politically neutral *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), May 2, 1804.

<sup>463</sup> Letter from a *Philadelphia* midshipman, February 11, 1804. Nine Federalist newspapers published it: *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), July 5, 1804; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), July 7, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), July 7, 1804; *Pennsylvania Correspondent, And Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), July 7, 1804; *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), July 11, 1804; *Thomas’s Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), July 18, 1804; *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), July 19, 1804; *Rutland Herald* (Rutland, VT), July 21, 1804; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), July 23, 1804. Three Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), July 6, 1804; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), July 14, 1804; *Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), July 14, 1804.

labor, they languished in a filthy dungeon. One officer penned an especially dismal description of the prison that held the crew: it was “the most dreary place imaginable...the walls were entirely black and dripping with unwholesome damp, and the vaulted ceiling hung with cobwebs—the ground broken and uneven afforded shelter to the innumerable vermin that infest the place...Stygian darkness reigned around...it reminded me of such as I have read of in old romances. This place more fit to be the abode of demons, than of mortals, was the habitation of our brave crew.”<sup>464</sup> Atypically, more Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it than Federalist ones. Readers must have marveled at how the crew members could stomach living in this hellhole, but they surely would have been disturbed to learn, from another letter, that some chose to escape captivity “by embracing the Mahometan religion and taking up arms against their country.”<sup>465</sup> The physical appearance of these men

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<sup>464</sup> Letter from a *Philadelphia* officer, December 6, 1803. Ten Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 9, 1804; *The Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), May 9, 1804; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), May 11, 1804; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), May 12, 1804; *Chronicle Express* (New York, NY), May 14, 1804; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), May 16, 1804; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), May 16, 1804; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), May 21, 1804; *Otsego Herald: or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), May 24, 1804; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), June 1, 1804. Six Federalist newspapers ran it: *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 10, 1804; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 11, 1804; *Utica Patriot* (Utica, NY), May 21, 1804; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), May 22, 1804; *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), May 22, 1804; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), June 4, 1804 (the *Opposition Press* list calls this newspaper possibly Federalist). The article also appeared in the politically indeterminable *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), May 22, 1804.

<sup>465</sup> Letter from a midshipman, November 22, 1803. Nineteen Federalist newspapers ran it: *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), May 17, 1804; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 17, 1804; *United States' Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), May 18, 1804; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), May 19, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), May 19, 1804; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), May 22, 1804; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), May 22, 1804; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), May 23, 1804; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), May 24, 1804; *Columbian Courier, Or, WEEKLY MISCELLANY* (New Bedford, MA), May 25, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), May 25, 1804; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), May 26, 1804; *Portsmouth Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), May 26, 1804; *Jenks' Portland Gazette* (Portland, ME), May 28, 1804; *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), May 28, 1804; *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), May 30, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), May 30, 1804; *The Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), June 2, 1804; *Rutland Herald* (Rutland, VT), June 2, 1804. Six Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), May 18, 1804; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), May 18, 1804; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), May 23, 1804; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), May 23, 1804; *Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), May 26, 1804; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), June 4, 1804. It also appeared in the

(kept anonymous) also changed in order to reflect their new identity as Muslims: they got “their heads shaved” and now wore “a Turkish habit.” More than two dozen newspapers (mostly Federalist) published this letter; one can understand why Democratic-Republican editors would want to avoid informing the public that, as a result of the *Philadelphia* incident, some sailors preferred to join the enemy and had renounced both their country and Christianity. Clearly, a pattern emerges in which Federalist newspapers tended to publish pessimistic letters from the captives more often than Democratic-Republican ones. This suggests that Democratic-Republican editors feared the potential of such letters to help the Federalist Party. While Democratic-Republican editors surely sympathized with the *Philadelphia* hostages, they preferred to keep readers ignorant of the captives’ experiences lest the depressing news turn voters away from their party.

In contrast to the seamen, the forty-three officers received better treatment and stayed in the house formerly belonging to the U.S. consul at Tripoli, James Cathcart.<sup>466</sup> The bashaw exempted them from hard labor, but Bainbridge insisted that the officers use their time productively by “study[ing] navigation, and read[ing] such books, as in our possession, which will improve their minds.”<sup>467</sup> Indeed, Bainbridge described their confinement as “a College of Students.”<sup>468</sup> The officers also enjoyed limited mobility around the capital city and found some things praiseworthy. One officer, for instance, rhapsodized about a beautiful garden owned by the bashaw: he visited “two or three times a week” and especially loved

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neutral *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), May 30, 1804 and the politically indeterminable *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), May 29, 1804.

<sup>466</sup> For a roster of the officers, see *Naval Documents* III: 183.

<sup>467</sup> William Bainbridge to David Porter, November 5, 1803, *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 16, 1804.

<sup>468</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, July 7, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 256.



the orange orchard—“it is delightful beyond what you can imagine and where we loll two or three hours under the shade; enjoying the cheerful fresh air and feasting upon the most delicious fruits.”<sup>469</sup> Another letter from an officer spoke positively about captivity, describing daily life as leisurely and delightful. He praised the house as “large, airy and commodious, with lengthy piazzas, in which we walk a great deal” and lauded the food as “extremely palatable and wholesome. Eggs and muffins, for breakfast and supper, and boiled beef, or mutton, with soup, for dinner and occasionally we indulge ourselves with tea....Altho this mode of living is so very different from what I have been accustomed to, yet it agrees with me extremely well. I never enjoyed better health in my life.”<sup>470</sup> Americans reading these letters might actually envy the officers’ living conditions and wonder if they really wanted to be rescued! Captivity seemed like a restful and restorative vacation. To be sure, not all the officers were happy. Midshipman James Renshaw complained that house arrest made him stir-crazy “beyond comprehension”—he referred to it as “Solitary imprisonment” and wished he could “have been put to hard labour” so that he “could feel the fresh air, which is so essential to human nature.”<sup>471</sup> Nevertheless, the officers had an entirely different captivity experience from the ordinary seamen because the bashaw honored European

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<sup>469</sup> Letter from a *Philadelphia* officer dated April 20, 1804. Eight Federalist newspapers published it: *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), October 2, 1804; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), October 2, 1804; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), October 3, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), October 5, 1804; *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), October 8, 1804; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), October 9, 1804; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), October 15, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), October 18, 1804. Three Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), October 4, 1804; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), October 9, 1804; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), October 15, 1804.

<sup>470</sup> Letter from a *Philadelphia* officer dated February 28, 1804. Four Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), July 26, 1804; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 1, 1804; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), August 7, 1804; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), August 9, 1804. It also appeared in two Federalist newspapers: *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), July 27, 1804 and *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), July 28, 1804.

<sup>471</sup> James Renshaw to John Rodgers, November 6, 1804, *Naval Documents V*: 125.

standards for the treatment of officers. Renshaw, for one, was surprised at the lack of brutality shown the officers; he did not anticipate “lenity...from a Barbary Prince.” Readers of the officers’ letters back in the United States must have been surprised to learn about their comfortable living situation since reports of captivity in Algiers in the 1780s and 1790s were mostly negative (as discussed in chapter 2).<sup>472</sup>

News of the *Philadelphia* loss and the hostage situation cast a slight pall upon the public. In Boston, a new theatrical production about the Tripolitan War lacked the triumphalist title of previous shows and acknowledged the vulnerability of U.S. forces in the Mediterranean: it was entitled “Jack in Distress; Or, Preparations for a Cruize against the *Tripolitans*.”<sup>473</sup> Toasts also changed from earlier years—now Americans seemed less confident about winning and ardently desired the liberation of the hostages. For instance, a Pennsylvania militia group toasted “our captive brethren in Tripoli—may they support with republican firmness the sufferings of a barbarian prison, and their sufferings be short.”<sup>474</sup> A Virginia group wished for a “speedy relief to our brethren now suffering in Tripolitan bondage,”<sup>475</sup> while attendees at a public dinner in Boston played the song “Galley Slave” in honor of “our brethren in captivity at Tripoli:—May their hopes lighten their hearts; and their country’s sympathy break their chains.”<sup>476</sup> A celebration in honor of the Louisiana Purchase (held in Pennsylvania) included a toast to “a speedy release to our fellow citizens prisoners at

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<sup>472</sup> Why the difference? In the 1780s and 1790s, the American captives in Algiers were members of the merchant community—there was no expectation to receive good treatment. The bashaw of Tripoli treated the *Philadelphia* naval officers as prisoners of war.

<sup>473</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), April 20, 1804.

<sup>474</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 23, 1804.

<sup>475</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), April 7, 1804.

<sup>476</sup> *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), April 26, 1804.

Tripoli.”<sup>477</sup> Americans throughout the country empathized with the *Philadelphia* captives and deemed their imprisonment a national calamity.

Yet the loss of the *Philadelphia* and the enslavement of the crew also redoubled the public’s commitment to the Tripolitan War—they wanted to annihilate the enemy and rescue the hostages (as opposed to paying ransom). In Charleston, a group toasted “the Navy of the United States—May the squadron about to be dispatched to the Mediterranean soon give the ‘*retort courteous*’ to the barbarians of Tripoli, and relieve our unfortunate brethren of the *Philadelphia* from captivity.”<sup>478</sup> A militia regiment in Pennsylvania drank to “our infant navy—may they convince the Bey of Tripoli, that American cannon balls, when used, are excellent negotiators”<sup>479</sup> Another group in Pennsylvania wanted the U.S. Navy’s “thundering cannon [to] hurl destruction on the savage Tripolitans,”<sup>480</sup> while a celebration in Boston included a toast to “the pirates of Tripoli—May their hostility be rewarded with the Naval *Stripes* of American Justice.”<sup>481</sup> These toasting Americans cared deeply about avenging national honor and hoped that their government would respond to the *Philadelphia* loss with overwhelming force.

Meanwhile in the Mediterranean, the Tripolitan War showed no sign of ending soon. In January 1804 Preble discussed terms with Yusuf, who was willing to trade the *Philadelphia*

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<sup>477</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 29, 1804.

<sup>478</sup> *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), May 14, 1804.

<sup>479</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 23, 1804.

<sup>480</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 23, 1804.

<sup>481</sup> *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), May 8, 1804.

for another ship and to sell the captives for \$500 each.<sup>482</sup> The bashaw also insisted upon annual tribute, however, which Preble adamantly rejected since he feared “it would stimulate the avarice of the other Barbary Powers and probably induce them to make War upon us.” Preble did gain some negotiating leverage, though, when he captured a Tripolitan ship carrying soldiers, slaves, and tribute to Constantinople. Preble kept the vessel as a prize (renaming it the *Intrepid*) and dropped off the forty-three black slaves and the rest of the crew (except for “Eight of the Principal Officers, who are of too much consequence to be trusted out of our sight”) at Syracuse.<sup>483</sup> Preble then received word from the bashaw’s agent at Malta that peace could be made if he traded a ship for the *Philadelphia*, exchanged the sixty Tripolitan hostages for an equal amount of *Philadelphia* captives, and paid \$100,000 in ransom for the rest of them.<sup>484</sup> No deal was made, though, and Preble feared that victory would only become more difficult to achieve. As he warned Smith, “the Barbary Powers are daily increasing their Naval force, and will soon become powerful, if not seasonably checked.”<sup>485</sup>

Since Yusuf was in no hurry to make peace, Preble and his Lieutenant Stephen Decatur conceived of a bold plan to rattle him: U.S. forces would destroy the *Philadelphia* in order to prevent the Tripolitans from outfitting it for their navy. Under the cover of night, Decatur and a crew of sixty would use the *Intrepid* to sail next to the *Philadelphia*, board the ship and light it on fire, and then escape. One officer who participated, Ralph Izard, wrote to

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<sup>482</sup> Preble to Smith, January 17, 1804, *Naval Documents* III: 337-338.

<sup>483</sup> Preble diary, January 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 371; Preble diary, January 30, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 374; Preble log book, January 30, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 374; Preble to Smith, March 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 485.

<sup>484</sup> Preble to Smith, February 3, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 385.

<sup>485</sup> Preble to Smith, March 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 487.

his mother shortly before the mission to express his hope that Yusuf would even die in the attack: “we shall astonish the Bashaws weak mind with the noise of shot falling about his ears. Perhaps some shot ‘more lucky than the rest may reach his heart’ & free our countrymen from Slavery.”<sup>486</sup> Notably, Izard quoted a line from Joseph Addison’s 1713 play *Cato* that was spoken by a character (Sempronius) who supports using military force against Caesar. Sempronius reflects upon the advantages of killing the leader: “Perhaps some arm, more lucky than the rest,/ May reach his heart, and free the world from bondage.”<sup>487</sup> Unless Izard took a copy of the play with him to the Mediterranean, he had memorized this quotation. *Cato*, as other scholars have discussed, was a popular play during the American Revolution and a personal favorite of George Washington’s.<sup>488</sup> American patriots celebrated its theme of resisting tyranny in order to defend republican values. Izard considered *Cato*’s message applicable to the Tripolitan War since the United States was opposing a ruler who held power over the lives of 300 American men and who rejected the notion of free trade in the Mediterranean.

U.S. forces had high hopes for the attack and it succeeded marvelously—the *Philadelphia* was set on fire and burned beyond repair. In a letter to his mother, Izard discussed the use of deception to gain the trust of the Tripolitan watchmen on board the *Philadelphia*: the *Intrepid* “hoisted English colors” and the Americans claimed they were

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<sup>486</sup> Ralph Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard, Sr., February 2, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 382.

<sup>487</sup> The quote is from Act II, scene 1, Joseph Addison, *Cato*, in Bliss Carman ed., *The World’s Best Poetry*, vol. 8, (Philadelphia: J.D. Morris and Company), <http://www.bartleby.com/360/8/104.html> (accessed December 16, 2015).

<sup>488</sup> See chapter two (“Cato and Company: A Genealogy of Performance”) of Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 30-65; *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 144; Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 229.

“from Malta & had been in a gale of wind & had lost our anchors.”<sup>489</sup> Once close enough, they boarded the *Philadelphia* and attacked: “about 20 [Tripolitans] were cut to pieces & the rest jumped overboard.... We have taken one poor creature who I am affraid will not recover.” Izard considered it “astonishing” that no Americans were hurt and a “miracle” that the *Intrepid* did not catch on fire. Preble, in a letter to a U.S. diplomat, mentioned that some of the Tripolitans “ran below & perished in the flames, but the greatest part jumped overboard.”<sup>490</sup> Both Izard and Preble depicted the Tripolitans as cowardly for preferring to try to swim to safety or to die by self-immolation. Izard pitied his enemies (viewing the hostage as a harmless “poor creature”) and both officers considered Tripolitans easily overmatched by superior American warriors.

Although the mission succeeded, the destruction of the *Philadelphia* failed to turn the tide of the war. Yusuf resolved to keep fighting and Preble vowed to oppose Tripoli to the best of his ability. As he declared to Robert Smith, “my heart is fixed on obliging [the bashaw] to sue for Peace.... I had rather spend my life in the Mediterranean than we should ever consent” to pay “a cent for Peace or Tribute.”<sup>491</sup> The U.S. Navy continued to target Tripolitan ships and, in April 1804, captured vessels that had attempted to sneak through the blockade. The *Nautilus* seized a ship with building supplies and eight Tripolitans, while the *Syren* took two vessels: a Greek ship with weapons, ammunition, and seventy-five Turkish soldiers and a Tripolitan ship with military supplies and 6,000 gallons of oil. Despite these accomplishments, though, Preble felt pessimistic about the state of the Tripolitan War. He

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<sup>489</sup> Ralph Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard, Sr., February 20, 1804, *Naval Documents* III: 417. The Americans set fires in the *Philadelphia*'s store rooms, gun room, cockpit, and birth deck. Stephen Decatur to Preble, February 17, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 414.

<sup>490</sup> Preble to John Gavino, February 18, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 422.

<sup>491</sup> Preble to Smith, February 19, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 439.

warned the Jefferson Administration that “the Bashaw is daily gaining strength—he has now 14 Gun-Boats—and a Gang of Carpenters from Spain are building him several more—He is also building several new Batteries to the East and West of the Town on which he employs all the Crew of the *Philadelphia*.”<sup>492</sup>

Despite the limited impact of the *Philadelphia*'s destruction, the American public deemed it a monumental accomplishment and one of their country's finest victories. News of it reached the United States in May and more than four dozen newspapers printed Preble's ecstatic February 7<sup>th</sup> letter that described the attack. The commodore stressed that it “was impossible” to have tried to tow the *Philadelphia* away and he showered praise upon Decatur—“in a gallant and officer-like manner, [he] boarded and carried her against all opposition....He had NONE killed, and only one wounded. The Tripolitans had between twenty and thirty men killed on the deck.”<sup>493</sup> Clearly, Democratic-Republican newspaper

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<sup>492</sup> Preble to Smith, April 19, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 41-42.

<sup>493</sup> Preble to Gavino, February 7, 1804. Twenty-one Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Philadelphia Evening Post* (Philadelphia, PA), May 16, 1804; *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 17, 1804; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), May 18, 1804; *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington, D.C.), May 18, 1804; *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), May 21, 1804; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), May 22, 1804; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), May 22, 1804; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), May 22, 1804; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), May 22, 1804; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), May 23, 1804; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), May 23, 1804; *The Maryland Herald, and Hager's-Town Weekly Advertiser* (Hagers-Town, MD), May 23, 1804; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), May 24, 1804; *Republican Advocate* (Frederick, MD), May 25, 1804; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), May 26, 1804; *Western Star* (Stockbridge, MA), May 26, 1804; *Republican Spy* (Springfield, MA), May 28, 1804; *Farmers' Register* (Troy, NY), May 29, 1804; *Otsego Herald: or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), May 31, 1804; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), June 1, 1804; *The Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, OH), June 4, 1804. Twenty-six Federalist newspapers ran it: *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), May 18, 1804; *United States' Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), May 18, 1804; *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), May 21, 1804; *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), May 21, 1804; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), May 22, 1804; *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), May 22, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), May 22, 1804; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), May 22, 1804; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, CT), May 23, 1804; *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), May 23, 1804; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), May 24, 1804; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), May 24, 1804; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), May 24, 1804; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), May 25, 1804; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), May 26, 1804; *The Oracle of Dauphin, and Harrisburgh Advertiser* (Harrisburg, PA), May 26, 1804; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), May 26, 1804; *The Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), May 26, 1804; *Jenks' Portland Gazette* (Portland, ME), May 28, 1804; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), May 29, 1804; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), May 29, 1804; *Spooner's Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), May 29, 1804; *New Hampshire*

editors would publish letters from the Mediterranean if they bore good news—they just preferred to ignore ones that could potentially make the Jefferson Administration look bad. Another letter (from an anonymous *Philadelphia* midshipman) that was published by newspapers in five states depicted the burning as “a grand, an awful sight....She burned a long time with great fury.”<sup>494</sup> He added that this bold action uplifted the *Philadelphia* crew’s spirits: it was “viewed by us with infinite delight, as it destroyed the hopes the Bashaw entertained, of [the *Philadelphia*] being a valuable acquisition to the navy.—Thank heaven, he has been disappointed!—Thus perish the hopes of the tyrant of Tripoli.” These first-hand accounts stressed extraordinary heroism and drama—the Americans had outsmarted and outfought their adversaries. Moreover, since newspapers from both parties published them, Americans throughout the country could easily learn about naval triumphs and rejoice in the navy.

Such reports led to an outpouring of patriotic sentiment in newspapers and at celebrations. A Maryland newspaper argued that the current batch of naval officers and seamen had proved themselves the equals of Revolutionary War soldiers. It exclaimed that “we feel a glow of pride to find that the sons of the heroes of our revolutionary war have

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*Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), May 29, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), May 30, 1804; *Rutland Herald* (Rutland, VT), June 2, 1804; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), June 4, 1804. Five politically neutral newspapers printed it: *Philadelphia Repository, and Weekly Register* (Philadelphia, PA), May 19, 1804; *Weekly Museum* (New York, NY), May 19, 1804; *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), May 29, 1804; *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), May 29, 1804; and *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), May 30, 1804. It also ran in the politically indeterminable *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), May 29, 1804.

<sup>494</sup> Letter from a midshipman, February 24, 1804. Four Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 3, 1804; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), July 10, 1804; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), July 10, 1804; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), July 10, 1804. Three Federalists newspapers printed it: *Pennsylvania Correspondent, And Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), July 7, 1804; *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), July 11, 1804; *The New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), July 17, 1804. It also appeared in the politically neutral *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), July 11, 1804.



proved themselves worthy of their sires.”<sup>495</sup> Newspapers in three states published an article that celebrated the *Philadelphia* burning and called for an extensive naval recruitment effort: the United States could cut “a splendid figure” and be “formidable...to the world” since “we have a host of brave DECATURS walking our streets, or shooting partridges, or idle and unemployed who would in a few years erect an insuperable barrier between us and the violence and injustice of the old world.”<sup>496</sup> This article suggested that Decatur was not unique, that other young men had the potential to achieve greatness if given the opportunity. In contrast to Jefferson’s views, these articles celebrated the navy as a positive good. Far from being a threat to civil liberties, it served as an ideal training ground for young men.

At Fourth of July celebrations, Americans hailed Decatur as the country’s greatest living naval hero while also remembering the suffering of the *Philadelphia* hostages. The Society of Cincinnati in Philadelphia prioritized the captives in their toasts, first drinking to “our brethren in Tripoli—A speedy deliverance to them from captivity upon honourable terms” and then to “Lieut. Decatur and his brave companions.—May their gallant conduct be duly appreciated.”<sup>497</sup> Similarly, a Philadelphia artillery group hoped that the hostages would “soon breathe the genial air of freedom” and hailed “Stephen Decatur, junr. and his brave companions” as “American heroes of the Tripolitan harbor.”<sup>498</sup> A party in Keene, New Hampshire first toasted “our brethren, prisoners in Tripoli—may they speedily be released from their captivity to painful to themselves, and so disgraceful to our country” before

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<sup>495</sup> *Republican Advocate* (Fredericktown, MD), May 25, 1804.

<sup>496</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), June 22, 1804; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 22, 1804. From the *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, SC).

<sup>497</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), July 5, 1804.

<sup>498</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 7, 1804.

drinking to “*the Navy*—too small even for *economy*—may it become powerful enough to protect our Commerce and Navigation.”<sup>499</sup> A gathering of mechanics in Baltimore offered a brief toast to “the army and navy of the United States” but gave a more elaborate one to “our unfortunate countrymen in captivity in Tripoli—may they soon be restored to their country and friends.”<sup>500</sup> A group of young men in Trenton, New Jersey waxed poetic in their toasts, drinking both to “Capt. Bainbridge and his captured crew—‘Your country’s gratitude shall twine around/ Your suffering brows bright honor’s laurel wreath,/ And make your recompence a glorious name’” and to “Liu. Decatur and his gallant comrades—‘Our country calls,/ We’ll plunge into the bosom of the deep,/ Or rush through fire, or face the hungry lion.’” This group also paused to remember a local man who was among the hostages: “our Townsman, Lieutenant Theodore Hunt—a captive in Tripoli—May he soon be restored to the arms of his Family and Country.”<sup>501</sup> Although overjoyed at the navy’s heroism, the public did not lose perspective—they bitterly lamented that Tripoli held 300 of their countrymen prisoner. Unlike most Democratic-Republican newspapers, participants at Fourth of July celebrations readily acknowledged the hostage situation.

A new surge of patriotic entertainments followed news of the *Philadelphia’s* destruction, which allowed audiences to vicariously experience the thrill of victory. A New York production entitled “HARLEQUIN VOLUNTEER, or, *Valor Rewarded*” offered a heavy dose of nationalism. It featured “*preparations for the Re-Capture of the Frigate PHILADELPHIA,*” a “procession in honor of the VICTORY gained by the *American*

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<sup>499</sup> *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), July 7, 1804.

<sup>500</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), July 9, 1804.

<sup>501</sup> *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), July 11, 1804.

*Seamen*, under the command of Capt. DECATUR, over the Tripolitan Corsairs,” and a finale consisting of “a new PATRIOTIC SONG and Chorus, By the gallant crew, bearing the *American Flag Triumphant*.”<sup>502</sup> Another show, in Boston, promised a visual extravaganza. Entitled “AMERICAN HEROISM, or—*Burning the Philadelphia Frigate*” and dedicated to “*Captain DECATUR, and his Gallant Crew*,” it featured “a distant view of Tripoli, and its Rocky Coast,” the “Bashaw’s Battery, Row Boats,” and other sites. It also reenacted “the Action of Boarding in the Ketch intrepid” and the “burning and destroying” of the *Philadelphia* “with Marches, Songs and Chorus.”<sup>503</sup> These hyper-patriotic performances offered attendees the opportunity to bond with fellow citizens through a joyous veneration of the U.S. Navy. Moreover, beyond commemorating the Tripolitan War, these plays reinforced the notion of the navy as a positive good—it brought glory to the country and did not threaten domestic liberties.

Celebrations also included musical interpretations of the Tripolitan War. In New York, an epic concert featured music that pondered the loss and destruction of the *Philadelphia* (figure 1).<sup>504</sup> With twelve songs, it was a well-thought-out piece designed to create emotional highs and lows among listeners. The abundance of cultural events reveals that public engagement with the Tripolitan War went beyond simply reading newspaper articles—Americans created and attended artistic representations of it. Since Americans rarely (if ever) travelled to North Africa for tourism, attending these events constituted the best means of approximating the experience of being in Tripoli. Paradoxically, the Tripolitan

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<sup>502</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), May 21, 1804.

<sup>503</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), June 2, 1804.

<sup>504</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 5, 1804.

War helped to bring communities together while increasing tension between the political parties.

Indeed, Democratic-Republicans and Federalists both believed that much was at stake with news of each naval victory or setback.

Regarding the *Philadelphia* destruction,

Democratic-Republican newspapers hailed it as a vindication of Jefferson's policies and evidence of his superiority to previous (Federalist) presidents.

A Boston newspaper contrasted the triumphs of the navy under the Jefferson Administration to its

shortcomings during the John Adams

Administration. "The late success" of the navy, it

claimed, "ought to silence those restless beings,

who are continually talking of the pusillanimity of

our government....We might look back to the

period when a much larger force had never effected such important enterprizes against the

mauarduers on those seas; and contrast *former* with *present* times."<sup>505</sup> The paper criticized

Adams for not sending the navy to the Mediterranean, but oddly made no mention of the

Quasi-War with France (which occupied the navy during his presidency). Likewise, an

article published in three states proclaimed Jefferson a more effective commander-in-chief

than his immediate predecessor: "The Navy is crumbling to *nothing*'—say the federalists,

altho' the present government are calling more of the ships into actual service than was

**CONCERT.**

**J** HEWITT respectfully acquaints his friends and the public, that his CONCERT will be on THURSDAY next, June 7th, at the Columbia (Corre's) Gardens, Battery.

*ACT I.*

Overture, Ladoiska,	Kreutzer.
Song, ( <i>The Siege</i> )	Mr. Shapter.
Quartello for French Horn, &c.	Messrs. Dupries, Hewitt,
Nicolas, and Nicolas, jun.	
Song, ( <i>As welcome as the Flowers in May</i> )	Mrs. Claude.
Minuetta,	Kozeluck.
Comic Song, ( <i>Bonaparte and the Mammoth</i> )	Mr. Johnson.
Presto,	Rosetti.
Song, ( <i>A bonny Soldier's Bride I'll be</i> )	Miss Dellinger.
Glee, ( <i>Blow, Warder, Blow!</i> )	Mrs. Claude, Messrs.
Overture D'Ephigene,	Johnson and Shapter.
	Gluck.

*ACT II.*

New Overture, representing the Loss and Burning of the Philadelphia Frigate.

- No. 1. Cruizing; Tripolitan ship heaves in sight.
- No. 2. Orders for chasing; firing at the enemy.
- No. 3. Gets among the rocks; she strikes.
- No. 4. Tripolitans attack and board the Philadelphia.
- No. 5. Grief of American Sailors.
- No. 6. Tripolitan March on landing Prisoners.
- No. 7. Orders from the Commodore to destroy the Frigate.
- No. 8. Officers take leave, and sail to fulfil the orders.
- No. 9. The Attack; the Philadelphia destroyed.
- No. 10. Rejoicing of the American Sailors, and return to their ships.
- No. 11. Hail Columbia.

Figure 1: from the *New-York Commercial Advertiser*. Courtesy NewsBank—Readex.

<sup>505</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), December 1, 1804.

contemplated by the naval peace establishment, adopted by Mr. Adams; are building more vessels and vigorously prosecuting the war against the piratical states of Barbary, thereby punishing their treachery, instead of rewarding of tribute.”<sup>506</sup> Similarly, a Maryland newspaper reminded “*the friends of the Constitution of the United States, and all concerned in the public welfare*” that Jefferson, unlike Washington and Adams, had chosen to “send a force into the Mediterranean, rather than to grant...another cent for tribute.”<sup>507</sup> An article published in several states claimed that although the naval officers were Federalist, they supported Jefferson since they “resent with indignation the calumnies cast on the administration” by Federalists in the United States.<sup>508</sup> This article distorted the truth somewhat—although the officers obeyed the instructions of the Jefferson Administration, some strongly disagreed with its Tripolitan War policies (as discussed above). Regardless, Democratic-Republican newspaper editors considered the *Philadelphia* destruction as a godsend—it allowed them to make positive comparisons between the leadership of Jefferson and his Federalist presidential predecessors and to distract the public from the ongoing hostage situation.

Other Democratic-Republican newspapers indulged in grandiose claims that the burning of the *Philadelphia* would signal the end of the war and that news would soon arrive about Tripoli’s surrender. A Boston newspaper exclaimed that “perhaps at this moment the town and harbor of Tripoli, are in our possession, and the crew of our captured frigates are

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<sup>506</sup> *Republican Spy* (Northampton, MA), July 24, 1804; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), July 31, 1804. From the *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI).

<sup>507</sup> *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), October 30, 1804.

<sup>508</sup> Four Democratic-Republican newspapers published it. *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), October 29, 1804; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), November 10, 1804; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), November 27, 1804; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), January 3, 1805. One Federalist newspaper ran it: *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), January 7, 1805.

liberated and congratulating each other upon an important victory gained over their enemies.”<sup>509</sup> A Philadelphia newspaper suggested that “the loss of the Tripolitans had been so great as to create hopes of an immediate termination of hostilities.”<sup>510</sup> Similarly, multiple publications praised Preble for “destroying nearly one half” of Tripoli’s navy (an exaggeration) and remarked that “every day’s mail may be expected to bring us intelligence of the full infliction of an adequate punishment on the Bey, of the restoration of peace, and, we hope, of the liberation of our captive citizens.”<sup>511</sup> In the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Nathaniel Morton gave a laudatory speech that portrayed the Tripolitan War as essentially over. He praised Jefferson for “a prompt and judicious disposition of our naval force” in order to “dictate terms of peace to some of the Barbary powers” and “render harmless the hostility of others.”<sup>512</sup> Notably, Morton omitted the troubling reality that the bashaw held 300 Americans hostage. Morton’s speech drew a stern rebuke by a Federalist newspaper editor who called it “*Barbarous*” and criticized it for ignoring both “*our poor brethren under the bastinado*” and that fact that Preble (“*a Federalist*”) made peace with Morocco, not Jefferson.<sup>513</sup> This premature celebrating by pro-Jefferson newspapers resembles President George W. Bush’s standing beneath a “Mission Accomplished” banner in May 2003 and announcing that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended.”<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), September 8, 1804.

<sup>510</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), December 3, 1804.

<sup>511</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), November 26, 1805; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), December 1, 1804; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), December 4, 1804.

<sup>512</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), June 18, 1804.

<sup>513</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), June 19, 1804.

<sup>514</sup> Jesse Rifkin, “‘Mission Accomplished’ was 12 Years Ago Today. What’s Been the Cost since Then?,” *Huffington Post*, May 1, 2015 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/01/iraq-war-mission-accomplished\\_n\\_7191382.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/01/iraq-war-mission-accomplished_n_7191382.html) (accessed December 7, 2015).

Democratic-Republican newspaper editors tried to spin the lengthy delays in receiving news to their party's advantage and encouraged Americans to celebrate as if total victory was imminent.

Democratic-Republican publications also utilized the *Philadelphia* destruction for partisan purposes by declaring that Federalist newspaper editors would not celebrate this triumph because of their hatred for President Jefferson. A Maryland newspaper predicted that Federalist publications would treat the event “with as much silence and in as much obscurity as a thief attempting to make his escape in the darkness of night, because the enterprize was atchieved under the administration of Thomas Jefferson. Men, however, who are really patriotic, will not view in this naval exploit any thing of *party*.”<sup>515</sup> Similarly, a Massachusetts newspaper claimed that Federalists rejoiced when Tripoli captured the *Philadelphia* (“they were pleased to honor [Jefferson] with their highest panegyrics, their most elaborate and unqualified encomiums”) but would refuse to celebrate Decatur's heroism: “not a word is uttered. All is hush as midnight.”<sup>516</sup> Such accusations were not quite true—Federalist newspapers did publish letters from the Mediterranean that celebrated the *Philadelphia's* destruction (as discussed above). Generally, Democratic-Republican newspaper editors were less concerned with accurate reporting than in wielding the Tripolitan War as a weapon to crush their rivals. The destruction of the *Philadelphia* revived the confidence and cockiness of Democratic-Republican newspaper editors and they sought to put Federalists on the defensive.

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<sup>515</sup> *Republican Advocate* (Fredericktown, MD), May 25, 1804.

<sup>516</sup> *Political Calendar* (Newburyport, MA), June 7, 1804.

Many Federalist publications refrained from printing effusive editorial commentary about the *Philadelphia's* destruction. Some editors struck a balance by praising the navy's heroism while remaining critical of Jefferson's overall handling of the Tripolitan War. A New York newspaper acclaimed the "parcel of young intrepid federalists" in the navy for destroying the *Philadelphia* while criticizing the president for the loss of the ship in the first place.<sup>517</sup> Shrewdly, the newspaper associated the heroic feat with the Federalist Party by asserting that the naval officers and crew members belonged to it. Another newspaper defended both Federalist publications (they did not omit "any merited eulogies from the brave officers & tars of our little navy) and the legitimacy of criticism of Jefferson's Tripolitan War policies.<sup>518</sup> "Good ground for high censure" existed, it argued, since the conflict had already cost "between two and three millions of money...the Philadelphia Frigate is lost," and "several hundreds of our brethren have long been in captivity." To be sure, not all Federalist newspapers applauded the navy—a Boston newspaper viewed the current state of the Tripolitan War pessimistically, contending that "the Barbary Rovers have part of our fleet....There is nothing known in the world so despicable and diminutive as our Navy....We rank below the Bashaw of Tripoli. His means are not great but his spirit is."<sup>519</sup>

Some Federalist publications sought to counter the triumphalism in Democratic-Republican newspapers by drawing attention to the ongoing hostage situation in Tripoli. An article published in two states declared that "the voice of our country, and humanity" demanded the "immediate" liberation of the captives. If it did not happen, "it is you alone

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<sup>517</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), June 12, 1804.

<sup>518</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), November 28, 1804.

<sup>519</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), October 9, 1804.



Mr. Jefferson who stands responsible for the miserable continuance in prisons and in chains of the officers and crew of the frigate *Philadelphia*.<sup>520</sup> This article resounded with righteous anger and portrayed Jefferson as not caring about the sailors, whose lives he put at risk in the Mediterranean. A Boston publication reminded readers that the U.S. Navy had “lost one of [its] best frigates” and that Tripoli held hundreds of Americans hostage (it erred by giving the number as 400).<sup>521</sup> Another article resembled Democratic-Republican comparisons of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, but spoke highly of the Federalist presidents. It declared that “it excites the sympathetic-feelings of our nature to reflect on the imprisonment of our citizens on the Barbary Coast. It is now many long months since they have been detained, and we do not learn of any efficient measures taken by our government to have them liberated. Had the policy of Washington and Adams been pursued, a navy of sufficient force in the Mediterranean would have prevented the capture—but a penny wise parsimony has brought about an event, to remedy which would perhaps defray the expense of a small but handsome addition to our sea forces.”<sup>522</sup> This article presented the Federalists as realists who would take the necessary steps to safeguard the lives of sailors against the Barbary pirates. It wanted to make readers nostalgic for the Washington and Adams years by recasting these presidents as devoted to robust national defense (it conveniently ignored the reality that both presidents paid tribute to the Barbary States).

The federal government concurred with the public about the praiseworthiness of the destruction of the *Philadelphia*. In November, Congress passed a resolution that authorized

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<sup>520</sup> *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), October 19, 1804. From the *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY).

<sup>521</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), October 30, 1804.

<sup>522</sup> *The Farmer's Museum* (Walpole, NH), September 22, 1804.

the president to give Decatur a commemorative sword and that provided two months' extra pay for Decatur and his crew.<sup>523</sup> The bill passed nearly unanimously in the House of Representatives (104 to 2), as both Federalists and Democratic-Republican politicians agreed about the propriety of celebrating their heroism.<sup>524</sup> The two congressmen who voted against the measure received the wrath of several newspaper editors—their names were printed (William Butler, a Democratic-Republican from South Carolina and Richard Stanford, a Democratic-Republican from South Carolina) and some slandered them as “democrats” or “Jacobins.”<sup>525</sup> Decatur also received a promotion, becoming a captain.<sup>526</sup> While the heroism of Decatur and his crew is self-evident, there was something odd about the extensive celebration of the *Philadelphia's* destruction. The navy's success meant that the United States had permanently lost a ship from its fleet—no efforts could be made to recapture or trade for it.

As for President Jefferson, his Annual Message in November 1804 touched on the Tripolitan War in a controversial manner. He noted the “reenforcements” (naval ships) sent

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<sup>523</sup> “Resolution expressive of the sense of Congress of the gallant conduct of Captain Stephen Decatur, the officers and crew of the United States ketch Intrepid, in attacking, in the harbor of Tripoli, and destroying a Tripolitan frigate of forty-four guns,” November 27, 1804, *Statutes at Large*, 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 346.

<sup>524</sup> *Proceedings and Debates of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, November 19, 1804, 691-692, Library of Congress, *American Memory*, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwaclink.html#anchor8>.

<sup>525</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 24, 1804; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), November 24, 1804; *The Maryland Herald, and Hager's-Town Weekly Advertiser* (Hagers-Town, MD), November 30, 1804; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), December 3, 1804; *Plebian* (Kingston, NY), December 3, 1804; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), December 5, 1804; *The Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), December 8, 1804; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), December 8, 1804; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), December 10, 1804; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), December 10, 1804; *Haverhill Museum* (Haverhill, MA), December 11, 1804; *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), December 11, 1804; *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), December 12, 1804; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), December 18, 1804. *The Hive* (Northampton, MA), December 4, 1804 and *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), December 11, 1804 identified them as “democrats.” *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), December 4, 1804 called them “Jacobins.”

<sup>526</sup> Smith to Preble, May 22, 1804, *Naval Documents III*: 427.

to the Mediterranean and hoped that the U.S. Navy would “reduce the barbarians of Tripoli to the desire of peace on proper terms.”<sup>527</sup> Notably, the president did not mention the ongoing hostage situation. Speaking on the eve of the 1804 elections, Jefferson wanted to inspire confidence in his leadership and not give voters a reason to oppose him. This omission did not pass unnoticed. In his diary, Senator William Plumer (Federalist—NH) expressed his disappointment in Jefferson: “why is the President altogether silent respecting our *brave seamen* who for a year have been close prisoners in Tripoli? Why has the crew of the *Philadelphia*, been suffered thus long to remain, not only in a state of captivity, but of *actual slavery*, with the barbarous Tripolitans? Not for the want of money to redeem them,—for we are told the treasury is full. Why are we amused with stories of wild land purchased of the Indians—of building gun-boats & no care, no attention paid to these suffering seamen?”<sup>528</sup> Plumer believed that Jefferson was either being dishonest with the public or had his priorities backwards. Instead of focusing on his pet issues, why wasn’t he ending the suffering of the hostages? If the government had the financial means, what was he waiting for?

Newspapers also attacked Jefferson for neglecting the *Philadelphia* captives in his annual message. Publications in two states deemed it “not a little extraordinary, that no notice is here taken of the imprisoned Americans in Tripoli” and criticized the president for not offering any specific “measures...to restore our enslaved brethren to the blessings of freedom.”<sup>529</sup> Similarly, A Virginia newspaper lambasted Jefferson for not including “a

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<sup>527</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Fourth Annual Message, November 8, 1804, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29446>.

<sup>528</sup> Plumer, November 8, 1804, 193.

<sup>529</sup> *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), November 14, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 15, 1804. From the *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY).

single word respecting our unfortunate fellow-citizens, who are pining in the prisons of Tripoli....not a syllable is given to the sufferings of our gallant seamen, not a ray of comfort....They may perish in captivity and their families may languish in want, without exciting the sympathy of an administration...whose ingratitude and fallacious economy protract their bondage.” The article depicted Jefferson as a materialist whose obsession with saving money made him callous to saving the hostages: he “neither appreciates their worth, nor commiserates their misfortune” and only cared about putting “*the political skeleton economy* in a dress that may captivate the crowd, and deceive the superficial observer—for to the eye of the discerning and independent citizen, this skeleton offers nothing but dissatisfaction and disgust.”<sup>530</sup> This article utilized gruesome gendered rhetoric in portraying the president as willfully deceiving the public—he trumpeted ideas that may sound beautiful, but led to a hideous reality. A Massachusetts newspaper criticized Jefferson for claiming that the United States was at ““peace with THE WORLD”” even though “many of our unfortunate countrymen are now held in chains of slavery by the barbarians of Tripoli.”<sup>531</sup> Newspapers in two states also chided the president for giving a misleading account of Barbary relations since “one of our finest frigates is lost, and her officers and crew shut up in dungeons by a contemptible but inhuman foe! lost to their friends and connections, and LOST IN THE MEMORY OF THE SYMPATHETIC JEFFERSON!”<sup>532</sup> By not addressing the ongoing hostage situation (which deeply resonated with the public), Jefferson provided an easy

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<sup>530</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), November 20, 1804.

<sup>531</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 20, 1804.

<sup>532</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), November 23, 1804; *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), December 4, 1804.

opening for Federalist attacks. To Federalists, the president's Annual Message constituted additional proof that he was insufficiently concerned with the Tripolitan War.

Evidence suggests that Jefferson intentionally omitted the hostage situation from his speech. Madison, in a "private" April 1804 letter, stated that the president wanted to avoid appearing too anxious to ransom the captives lest he embolden the Barbary States "to repeat their aggressions."<sup>533</sup> Being too eager to liberate the hostages would hurt "the public good." Instead, the Jefferson Administration preferred to rely on France to "interpose in their behalf." Madison would begrudgingly tolerate private ransom efforts, but he disliked them since they "have a tendency to protract the sufferings of those unhappy men." As discussed in chapter 2, Jefferson's strategy in the 1780s of appearing apathetic towards the captives in Algiers utterly failed to give the United States any leverage with the Dey of Algiers. Further, relying upon France for mediation with Algiers had failed as well. Why did Jefferson think that these two tactics would work now? Had he not learned from his previous experiences? Regardless, none of the *Philadelphia* captives were freed via private ransom efforts and the French consul provided little help (as discussed above).

Meanwhile in the Mediterranean, the U.S. Navy prepared for a large assault upon Tripoli in August 1804. Preble bolstered his squadron by procuring six gun boats, two bomb vessels, weapons, supplies, and ninety-six seamen from the King of Naples. These developments pleased Bainbridge greatly and he communicated sensitive intelligence to Preble via invisible

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<sup>533</sup> James Madison to Thomas FitzSimons, April 13, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition. FitzSimons had asked Madison if the Jefferson Administration would "pursue any measures for the relief of the Officers and crew of the Frigate Philadelphia, and whether anything can be pointed out as proper to be done by the friends of the prisoners."

ink (lime juice) that became readable when heated over fire.<sup>534</sup> Bainbridge loved the idea of bombarding the capital city, telling Preble that the populace would flee and that the bashaw “would be induced to come to moderate terms.”<sup>535</sup> However, Richard O’Brien (the longtime diplomat in North Africa) thought that defeating Tripoli would be difficult. In an August 1<sup>st</sup> letter to Madison, he listed Tripoli’s sizeable fleet (nineteen gunboats and six larger ships), noted that Tripoli had “very Strong and important Castles,” and warned that the bashaw believed that the United States would “finally get tired and give him the Extint of his demands.”<sup>536</sup>

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the U.S. squadron dealt Tripoli’s navy a resounding defeat: it captured three Tripolitan gun boats, sank a ship, killed forty-four Tripolitans, and took fifty-two prisoners (three of whom died).<sup>537</sup> Decatur once again excelled, taking the three gun boats and later remarking that “some of the Turks died like men, but much the greater number like women.”<sup>538</sup> Regrettably he did not specify what constituted dying like a woman, but judging from other battle accounts perhaps it entailed attempting to flee rather than engaging the Americans. Yet Decatur himself nearly died in hand-to-hand combat—he was pinned down and saved from a potentially lethal blow to his head when an American sailor thrust his own head forward to intercept the sword.<sup>539</sup> Remarkably, the U.S. Navy lost no

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<sup>534</sup> Preble to Smith, May 15, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 103; List of guns and ammunition received by Preble from Naples, *Ibid.*, IV: 104; Preble to John Broadbent, May 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 126.

<sup>535</sup> Bainbridge to Preble, June 22, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 214.

<sup>536</sup> O’Brien to Madison, August 1, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>537</sup> Preble diary, August 4, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 338.

<sup>538</sup> Decatur to Keith Spence, January 9, 1805, *Ibid.*, IV: 346.

<sup>539</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), March 12, 1805. Surgeons report of wounded, August 3, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 348.

ships, only thirteen Americans were wounded, and just one American died (James Decatur, the younger brother of Stephen). His death greatly angered the officers and seamen due to its circumstances— as Preble described, James Decatur was “treacherously shot through the head by the captain of the boat that had surrendered.”<sup>540</sup> In Tripoli, captive Jonathan Cowdery (a doctor) aided the war effort. “Ordered to dress the wound” of an injured Tripolitan, Cowdery “amputated all his fingers but one, with a dull knife, and dressed them in a bungling manner, in hopes of losing my credit as a surgeon...for I expected to have my hands full of wounded Turks in consequence of the exploits of my brave countryman.”<sup>541</sup> Although the U.S. Navy had clearly overwhelmed Tripoli’ forces, the victory offered no lasting significance. Yusuf did not surrender.

For Preble, this victory was bittersweet since he learned of his dismissal by the Jefferson Administration. As Smith explained, because only captains could command frigates “we of necessity have been obliged to send out two Gentlemen senior to yourself in Commission” in the new squadron (which arrived in September).<sup>542</sup> In replacing Preble with Samuel Barron, Jefferson did a great service to Tripoli—Preble was the most aggressive of the American commodores who led the squadron in the Tripolitan War.<sup>543</sup> Preble expressed his sorrow in his diary: “how much my feelings are lacerated by this supercedure at the

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<sup>540</sup> Preble to Smith, August 3, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 295.

<sup>541</sup> Cowdery, August 5, 1804, 171.

<sup>542</sup> Smith to Preble, May 22, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 115. The two senior captains sent to the Mediterranean in the new squadron were Samuel Barron and John Rodgers.

<sup>543</sup> The title of “commodore” referred to a captain who commanded two or more ships in a squadron or had extraordinary duties to fulfill. According to the U.S. Navy, the designation of commodore was “an honorary title” and not an official rank. Naval History and Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/organization-and-administration/ranks/naval-traditions-names-of-rank/officer/commodore.html> (accessed December 17, 2015).

moment of Victory cannot be described and can be felt only by an Officer placed in my mortifying situation.”<sup>544</sup> To Bainbridge, Preble confessed his dejection at not “liberat[ing] yourself, Officers & Crew while in command; be assured no exertion on my part has been wanting which our Government, and the forces under my command would justify.”<sup>545</sup> Yet Preble was also proud of what he had accomplished, averring to a British official that “these Barbarians never have suffered more from any Christian power.”<sup>546</sup> He wished, however, that the federal government had provided more ships. As he told Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, “our naval establishment is so limited as to deprive me of the means and glory of completely subduing the haughty tyrant of Tripoli.”<sup>547</sup> Before he returned to the United States, Preble made a final earnest effort to negotiate a peace treaty, offering \$100,000 for ransom, a \$10,000 consular present, and a \$10,000 gift for the Prime Minister and Tripolitan officers.<sup>548</sup> The bashaw, however, declined. Yusuf was fighting to prove a point: America needed to show him respect. The United States would either have to pay a larger sum or continue to fight.

Preble’s recall flabbergasted observers—many wrote him to express their condolences and admiration. Fifty-three U.S. naval officers signed a warm letter that stressed “the very high estimation in which we hold you as an officer and commander” and

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<sup>544</sup> Preble diary, August 8, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 377.

<sup>545</sup> Preble to Bainbridge, October 25, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 97.

<sup>546</sup> Preble to Sir John Acton, September 6, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 523.

<sup>547</sup> Preble to Smith, August 9, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 301.

<sup>548</sup> Preble to Monsieur Beaussier, French chargé d’affaires in Tripoli, August 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 397; Preble to Beaussier, August 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 398.



their “deep regret” at his “supercedure.”<sup>549</sup> Also, European officials thought very highly of Preble—under his leadership, the reputation of the U.S. Navy soared. The British Governor of Malta, Sir Alexander Ball, expressed his personal “regret” at Preble’s recall and praised him for “setting so distinguished an example to your countrymen whose bravery and enterprize cannot fail to mark the character of a great & rising nation.”<sup>550</sup> Pope Pius VII lionized Preble, proclaiming that “with a small force and in a short space of time, [he] has done more for the cause of Christianity than the most powerful nations of Christendom have done for ages!”<sup>551</sup> The eminent British Admiral Lord Nelson lauded the burning of the *Philadelphia* as the “the most bold and daring act of the age,”<sup>552</sup> while the governor of Syracuse told Preble that the Court “manifests the highest gratification...on account of your success.”<sup>553</sup>

Before relinquishing command, Preble launched further attacks on Tripoli—with mixed success. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, the navy sunk two Tripolitan gunboats and one galliott.<sup>554</sup> Four days later, the navy sunk another gunboat, although three Americans were killed and another severely wounded in this attack.<sup>555</sup> Two *Philadelphia* captives reported that the August 28<sup>th</sup> attacks damaged “a grate Many houses,” “killed several” Tripolitans, and “drove

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<sup>549</sup> Officers of U.S. Squadron in the Mediterranean to Preble, November 4, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 118.

<sup>550</sup> Sir Alexander Ball to Preble, August 30, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 488; Ball to Preble, September 20, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 43.

<sup>551</sup> Eaton to Colonel Dwight, September 20, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 42.

<sup>552</sup> Quoted in Lambert, 144.

<sup>553</sup> Marcello de Gregorio to Preble, September 19, 1804, *Naval Documents* V: 40.

<sup>554</sup> F. Cornelius deKraft journal, August 24, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 456.

<sup>555</sup> Nathaniel Haraden log book, August 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 473; Preble to Smith, August 28, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 333-334.

them entirely out of three” batteries.<sup>556</sup> Cowdery concurred that “the damage done to the town was considerable....Many men were killed and wounded.”<sup>557</sup> However, the attacks inflicted no lasting damage on Tripoli’s navy—a Turkish ambassador informed Preble that the three sunk shups had been repaired.<sup>558</sup> Another attack failed in spectacular fashion—on September 4<sup>th</sup>, thirteen Americans tried to sneak into Tripoli’s harbor on the *Intrepid*, light the ship on fire (it was loaded with about one-hundred barrels of powder and one-hundred-fifty shells), and then escape on two rowboats.<sup>559</sup> However, the *Intrepid* exploded prematurely, killing all on board, damaging three Tripolitan gun-boats, and sinking another. The cause of the explosion will never be fully known. Perhaps the explosives combusted accidentally, but Preble and others suspected that the crew had noticed some Tripolitan vessels approaching and blew themselves up deliberately since they had vowed to avoid being captured and enslaved.<sup>560</sup> Although the mission technically failed, the *Intrepid* crew’s courage greatly impressed their peers (as one remarked, “What a Noble Death”<sup>561</sup>) and, as will be seen, the public lionized them as heroic martyrs.

Although Preble’s attacks on the town appeared impressive, they accomplished little. Nicholas Nissen, the Danish consul in Tripoli, observed that “all the attacks” except those of August 3<sup>rd</sup> “have had very little effect & the damage done is absolutely of no

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<sup>556</sup> Joseph Douglass and William Godby to Preble, August 29, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 479-480.

<sup>557</sup> Cowdery, August 28, 1804, 145.

<sup>558</sup> Preble to Smith, September 2, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 304.

<sup>559</sup> Preble to Smith, *Ibid.*, IV: 305-307.

<sup>560</sup> As Preble observed, they “prefer[red] *death* and the *destruction of the enemy* to *captivity* and *torturing slavery*.” Preble to Smith, *Ibid.*, September 4, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 306.

<sup>561</sup> Robert Spence to Mrs. Keith Spence, November 12, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 353.

consequence.”<sup>562</sup> Nissen considered bombarding the town pointless because the bashaw did not “care much about his Town or his Subjects’ life” and believed that Preble’s combination of negotiating and attacking simply made Yusuf “more obstinate.”<sup>563</sup> Bainbridge remarked to Commodore Barron about the difficulty of destroying the city of Tripoli: since the houses were made of “stone and mud and badly furnished... the damage in Bombarding cannot be as great as if it was otherwise.”<sup>564</sup> The attacks on the town actually made life more miserable for the *Philadelphia* captives—while taking a morning walk, Cowdery saw them “chained to a cart loaded with stones which they were dragging through the town to repair the fortifications.”<sup>565</sup> In his journal, Cowdery also discussed an August meeting with Yusuf, in which he mocked the U.S. Navy. The bashaw boasted “that for two dollars he could repair all the damages that the bombardment did to his town; that but one man was hurt by the shells; that what he had been offered for the American prisoners was but fifty dollars per man; that he would make them earn that sum in two months.”<sup>566</sup> Although the bashaw surely exaggerated to some extent and adopted an air of bravado, he clearly was not ready to capitulate and he slept safely in “his bomb proof room.”<sup>567</sup> Cowdery emphasized that the August 24<sup>th</sup> attacks particularly emboldened Tripolitan resistance—shells fired by U.S. ships “all fell short of the mark. Such attempts served rather to encourage than to intimidate the

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<sup>562</sup> Nissen to George Davis, September 30, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 59.

<sup>563</sup> Nissen to Davis, September 1, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 495.

<sup>564</sup> Bainbridge to Samuel Barron, March 16, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 417.

<sup>565</sup> Cowdery to Dr. Mitchell, November 24, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 159.

<sup>566</sup> Cowdery, August 11, 1804, 172.

<sup>567</sup> Cowdery, August 17, 1804, 173.

Tripolitans; and the Bashaw was in high spirits on the occasion.”<sup>568</sup> Clearly, Tripoli was easy to damage, but hard to defeat.

Nevertheless, upon returning to the United States Preble received a hero’s welcome. In March, Philadelphians threw him “a sumptuous entertainment...at Mrs. Hardy’s hotel” that “upwards of sixty gentlemen” attended. The company offered several Tripolitan War toasts, hailing Preble as “our gallant Guest—he reaps the grateful reward of his honorable services, in the esteem and affection of his country” and remembering both those “who have fallen in the Tripolitan War” and “our brave Tars, prisoners in Tripoli.”<sup>569</sup> Bostonians threw him a dinner that featured an all-star guest list, including ex-president John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and Roger Dana (the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court). A toast at this celebration declared Preble the shining star of the U.S. Navy: “our Hero before Tripoli; may the laurels he has gained in the Old World, be long the pride of the New.”<sup>570</sup> Congress was equally impressed with Preble’s accomplishments, passing a resolution in March 1805 that awarded him a gold medal as a commendation for “the several attacks on the town, batteries and naval force of Tripoli.”<sup>571</sup>

Despite Preble’s glowing reception, newspapers praised the August attacks less effusively than they had previous naval triumphs because Yusuf still had not surrendered. Since Commodore Barron would not attack during the winter (due to the roughness of the

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<sup>568</sup> Cowdery, August 24, 1804, 173.

<sup>569</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), March 27, 1805.

<sup>570</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), April 13, 1805.

<sup>571</sup> “Resolution expressive of the sense of Congress of the gallant conduct of Commodore Edwards Preble, the officers, seamen and marines of his squadron,” March 3, 1805, *Statutes at Large*, 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 346-347. The resolution also awarded swords “to each of the commissioned officers and midshipmen who have distinguished themselves in the several attacks” and an extra month’s pay “to all the petty officers, seamen and marines of the squadron.”

Mediterranean Sea), the public knew that the Tripolitan War would drag on for at least another year.<sup>572</sup> Also, the fact that several U.S. naval officers had died in the summer 1804 attacks (unlike previous victories) tempered public enthusiasm. Many Federalist newspapers published mournful tributes to the officers, including an article that appeared in five states which urged Americans to remember the fallen heroes of the Tripolitan War and not just the living ones:

While we exult in recording the achievements of our gallant seamen, we sincerely sympathise with the friends and relatives of those young heroes, who have perished in the conflict...for them is reserved the proud, the heartfelt consolation, that their sons and brothers have lately done their duty, in dying for their country.

The names of *Decatur*, *Caldwell*, and *Dorsey*, will be dear to posterity, and the remembrance of their worth shall excite an emulation honorable to our youth, and advantageous to our nation.<sup>573</sup>

Similarly, the pro-Federalist *Boston Gazette* lamented the deaths of James Decatur and James Caldwell, calling them “young men of great personal merit” who “promised to become conspicuous characters in the naval annals of our country.”<sup>574</sup> Another pro-Federalist publication “hope[d]” that “the blood of these intrepid Americans, has not been shed in vain” and declared that “the American public are still willing to pay millions for honorable warfare,

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<sup>572</sup> As one Connecticut publication bemoaned, “our unhappy countrymen must still wear the chains of slavery another year.” *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), January 17, 1805. Barron told Cathcart that “the season is too far advanced” for attacks, September 7, 1804, *Naval Documents* V: 2. Regarding the roughness of the Mediterranean Sea, one officer remarked that stated, “nothing decisive against Tripoli, I imagine, will be done this fall; as the weather has become too boisterous for the gun-boats to keep the sea, and they have returned to Messina.” Letter from a *Constellation* officer, October 11, 1804, in *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), January 19, 1805.

<sup>573</sup> *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), December 10, 1804; *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), December 12, 1804; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), December 14, 1804; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), December 14, 1804; *The Providence Gazette* (Providence, RI), December 15, 1804; *The New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), December 18, 1804; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), December 20, 1804; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), December 26, 1804.

<sup>574</sup> *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), December 10, 1804.

before a cent in tribute.”<sup>575</sup> Notably, lamenting the deaths of these promising officers in a sorrowful manner was a predominantly Federalist activity. As will be seen, Democratic-Republican newspapers published many tributes to the fallen officers, but these generally had a more upbeat tone.

Yet newspaper editors of both parties concurred that the *Intrepid* incident, far from being a tragedy, revealed the exceptional nature of American society. An article published in six states proclaimed that “the valour of our men shone so conspicuously,” praised the crew for “embrac[ing] so glorious a death,” and declared that “the event...was never excelled” in human history because, in the United States, men were not “trained from their childhood in the field of warfare.”<sup>576</sup> The article had a utopian undercurrent, implying (dubiously) that violence and war did not constitute an important part of American culture. It considered American men unique, claiming that they could summon courage to defend their country’s honor, yet not be dominated by violent impulses. Similarly, a Boston newspaper proclaimed that the valor of the *Intrepid* crew exceeded anything ever achieved by Britain or France: “in what period of their history could they produce...men more heroic than Israel, Somers, and Wadsworth?”<sup>577</sup> A poetic tribute published in nine states portrayed the *Intrepid* crew as conquering heroes. It urged readers to “Mourn, mourn the glorious brave!/ Who gave

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<sup>575</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), December 12, 1804.

<sup>576</sup> Eight Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 10, 1805; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), January 17, 1805; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), January 23, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), January 23, 1805; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), January 24, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), January 28, 1805; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), January 28, 1805; *The Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), January 28, 1805; Four Federalist newspapers ran it: *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), January 12, 1805; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), January 18, 1805; *The Post-Boy, and Vermont & New-Hampshire Federal Courier* (Windsor, VT), January 22, 1805; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), January 22, 1805. It also appeared in the politically neutral *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), January 30, 1805.

<sup>577</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), September 21, 1805.

themselves to death!” and claimed that the boat’s explosion killed one-hundred Tripolitans. Shortly before blowing up the *Intrepid*, Wadsworth exclaimed “Our countrymen will know,/ How merrily we died,/ T’avenge them on the foe”—and then the detonation launched “twice fifty pirates bold...shrieking in the air!”<sup>578</sup> While it is impossible to determine how many Tripolitans died in the *Intrepid* explosion, the number probably was less than one-hundred.<sup>579</sup> Notably, Cowdery reported that the “the Bashaw and his people had a thanksgiving to Mahomet on the occasion”—the Tripolitans clearly interpreted the *Intrepid* explosion as a victory and not a defeat.<sup>580</sup> Regardless, American newspapers extolled the *Intrepid* crew as martyrs to a just war and as embodiments of the finest American ideals.

Newspapers also argued that the navy (especially the *Intrepid* crew) had demonstrated a courage on par with the heroes of the Revolutionary War. As one New York newspaper editorialized, “as our revolution brought into notice many great men, whose characters were not before known, so did the shores of Tripoli, and so will every time of difficulty and danger.” It also portrayed the Tripolitan War as breaking new military ground

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<sup>578</sup> Twelve Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), January 15, 1805; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), January 22, 1805; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), January 22, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), January 23, 1805; *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), January 26, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), February 1, 1805; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), February 5, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), February 9, 1805; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), February 11, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Northampton, MA), February 12, 1805; *Otsego Herald: or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), February 28, 1805; *Farmers’ Register* (Troy, NY), March 12, 1805. Ten Federalist newspapers printed it: *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 17, 1805; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), January 24, 1805; *Pennsylvania Correspondent, and Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), February 5, 1805; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), February 7, 1805; *The New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), February 12, 1805; *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), February 12, 1805; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), February 16, 1805; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), February 21, 1805; *Rutland Herald* (Rutland, VT), February 23, 1805; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), February 25, 1805. It also ran in the politically neutral *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), February 12, 1805.

<sup>579</sup> Midshipman Robert Spence stated that one-hundred Tripolitans were killed (“two Gun Boats, 50 men each”) in a November 12, 1804 letter to his mother; *Naval Documents* IV: 353. Neither Dr. Jonathan Cowdery (in his journal) nor Preble (in his report to the Jefferson Administration) estimated the number of Tripolitans killed; Preble to Smith, September 4, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 306-307.

<sup>580</sup> Cowdery, September 3, 1804, 176.

for American men: “it is the first time they conducted a war in a foreign country, and the first time, since the revolution, that they had an opportunity of signaling themselves in so great an undertaking.”<sup>581</sup> A Connecticut group of Fourth of July revelers linked Tripolitan War heroics to the Revolutionary War: they drank to “*American Bravery*—Its birth was honorable at Bunkers hill. Its manhood Glorious in the Mediterranean.”<sup>582</sup> Some publications glorified the *Intrepid* crew by associating them with Patrick Henry’s popular American Revolution speech “Give me liberty, or give me death!” An article in three newspapers ruminated that “perhaps the blood of their fathers was at that moment rushing through their veins, crying LIBERTY or DEATH. Heroic Somers, Wadsworth Izard and crew, though your forms may be blown to atoms, still shall your actions live, and your bravery be instilled in the hearts of your countrymen. It is for all men to die! you have died! and this shall be your motto: DEATH BEFORE SLAVERY!—To mourn your loss is natural, but it is for the surviving world to imitate your firmness.”<sup>583</sup> Similarly, a poem published in six states indulged in creative license in recreating the *Intrepid* mission. Among its thirteen stanzas (one for each of the thirteen martyred crew members) was one that imagined the crew’s decision to commit suicide: “And now, behold the match apply’d,/ The mingled foe the welkin ride:/ Whirling aloft, brave SOMERS cry’d/ A glorious death or liberty!”<sup>584</sup> Clearly, many Americans viewed the Tripolitan War as a seminal event in their

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<sup>581</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 16, 1805.

<sup>582</sup> *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), July 10, 1805.

<sup>583</sup> It appeared in two Democratic-Republican newspapers [*The Democrat* (Boston, MA), January 23, 1805 and *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), January 26, 1805] and one Federalist newspaper [*THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, Or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), January 23, 1805]. Also, it erroneously stated that Izard died in the explosion—he did not participate in the *Intrepid* mission

<sup>584</sup> Eight Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *Plebian* (New York, NY), March 18, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Northampton, MA), March 19, 1805; *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), April 13, 1805;



young country's history and as a coda to the American Revolution. It provided a training ground for young American men and allowed them to join the pantheon of American military and naval heroes. The public refused to see the *Intrepid* mission as a failure. Instead, they widely celebrated it as a defining moment of the early republic.

The public at large also lionized those who died in the *Intrepid* explosion, especially the three officers (Captain Richard Somers, Lieutenant Henry Wadsworth, and Lieutenant Joseph Israel). Toasts hailed them as martyrs who courageously chose death over enslavement. A gathering in Richmond drank to “Israel, Somers, and Wadsworth—their memories dear to their country; their examples stimulative of the noblest deeds of heroism.”<sup>585</sup> In Philadelphia, a Democratic-Republican group remembered “Somers, Wadsworth and Israel, who with more than Spartan heroism sacrificed their lives for their country—may glory and gratitude, sanctify their names till time shall be no more.”<sup>586</sup> A Boston group toasted “the Memory of *Somers, Wadsworth, Israel*, and their brave companions, *self devoted victims to patriotism; their glory is precious to their country.*”<sup>587</sup> Several groups invoked Roman history. A Charleston assembly, for instance, drank to “the Memory of the gallant Somers and his brave associates, the American Decii, who voluntarily sacrificed themselves to promote the cause of liberty and their country.”<sup>588</sup> The Decii were a

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*The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), April 18, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), May 24, 1805; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), May 31, 1805; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), June 28, 1805. From the *Republican Advocate* (Frederick, MD). It also appeared in the politically neutral *The Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), April 30, 1805.

<sup>585</sup> *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), September 27, 1805.

<sup>586</sup> *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), March 29, 1805.

<sup>587</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), April 13, 1805.

<sup>588</sup> *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), July 12, 1805. Other toasts that compared them to the Decii occurred in Portland, Maine [*Portland Gazette* (Portland, ME), April 22, 1805], and Richmond, Virginia [*New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), September 24, 1805].

Roman clan known for their willingness to sacrifice their lives in battle.<sup>589</sup> Americans could even purchase artwork that commemorated the *Intrepid* explosion. In late 1805, a New York newspaper ran an advertisement for “a handsome Engraving, of the blowing up of the fireship *Intrepid*, capt. Somers, in the harbor of Tripoli.”<sup>590</sup> An adoring public could relive the experience of the *Intrepid* again and again in their own homes with this conversation piece. Clearly, the public at large deemed the *Intrepid* crew extraordinarily heroic and cast their death in an overwhelmingly positive light. In holding them up as ideal role models, the public reflected a genuine reverence for the navy—an attitude that President Jefferson surely would have found disconcerting.

Even congressmen considered the officers of the *Intrepid* crew remarkable, passing a resolution instructing President Jefferson “to communicate to the parents or other near relatives of Captain Richard Somers, lieutenants Henry Wadsworth, James Decatur, James R. Caldwell, Joseph Israel, and midshipman John Sword Dorsey, the deep regret which Congress feel for the loss of those gallant men, whose names ought to live in the recollection and affection of a grateful country, and whose conduct ought to be regarded as an example to future generations.”<sup>591</sup> Americans ignored the fact that the *Intrepid* mission failed and instead transformed it into evidence of American exceptionalism.

However, the massive public glorification of the *Intrepid* crew for choosing death over captivity angered one commentator. An article published in six states argued that

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<sup>589</sup> Jeremy Armstrong, Decii, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, Wiley Online Library, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah20049/pdf> (accessed December 17, 2015).

<sup>590</sup> *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), October 8, 1805.

<sup>591</sup> “Resolution expressive of the sense of Congress of the gallant conduct of Commodore Edward Preble, the officers, seamen and marines of his squadron,” March 3, 1805, *Statutes at Large*, 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 347.

Americans should condemn them for transgressing God's laws by committing suicide.<sup>592</sup> Instead of viewing Somers as a role model, it urged Americans to "deplore" his decision to blow the *Intrepid* up and argued that "religion and humanity forbid his example to be emulated." The article conceded that dying in battle is "a less heroic death," but stressed that Somers violated "divine commandments" in his desire to avoid capture by the Tripolitans. Although widely published, this article apparently had little impact since the vast majority of commentary about the *Intrepid* crew was positive.

The public also celebrated the August 1804 attacks with new plays and songs. In March 1805, Philadelphians could hear "a new patriotic song in praise of the GALLANT COMMODORE PREBLE, AND HIS BRAVE TARS, Who so gloriously distinguished themselves in the different attacks on Tripoli."<sup>593</sup> Philadelphians could also watch "a new farce called AMERICAN TARS IN TRIPOLI" that featured "A Grand Panorama of the exact situation of the engagement with the Tripolitans," based on information provided by naval officers.<sup>594</sup> This play evidently had impressive set pieces—an article stressed their lifelike character: "we become spectators of the combat; we join in the shout of victory, or mingle our groans with those of the heroes who nobly offer up their lives in the service of their country, What American can view scenes like these without interest? Who is there, that

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<sup>592</sup> Four Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), May 1, 1805; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), May 14, 1805; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), June 15, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), May 18, 1805. Five Federalist newspapers published it: *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), May 3, 1805; *Portsmouth Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), May 11, 1805; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), May 15, 1805; *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), May 28, 1805. From the *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, SC). It also ran in the politically neutral *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), May 8, 1805 and *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), May 15, 1805 and in the politically indeterminable *Oracle Post* (Portsmouth, NH), May 14, 1805.

<sup>593</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 13, 1805.

<sup>594</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 26, 1805.

can witness the glorious struggles of his gallant countrymen without emotion?”<sup>595</sup> On July 4<sup>th</sup>, residents of northern Virginia could attend “a Grand Representation of the Bombarding of Tripoli being in Honor of the *Brave Columbian Tars* who Fell in that GLORIOUS ACTION.”<sup>596</sup> This extravaganza promised “*an exact movement of the sea...The approach of the AMERICAN FRIGATES AND GUNBOATS*” and “*on the Back Ground A rich Piece of Machinery, Representing the TOWN OF TRIPOLI.*” The advertisement proudly billed it as “the most brilliant spectacle of the kind ever displayed in this country.” Similarly, an August event in New York promised that “no expense has been spared” to recreate “the Nautical Exploits of the *AMERICAN SQUADRON* in the Mediterranean.” This show took place on a sixty-five foot long stage in the New Vauxhall gardens and theater and featured a “*VIEW OF THE BASHAW’S CASTLE*, And part of the Fortifications of the city of *TRIPOLI*...in front the *FRIGATE PHILADELPHIA* at anchor, partly dismantled.”<sup>597</sup> On top of all this, the show also included fireworks. The revelry of sound and sight surely captivated audiences and would simulate the noise and sights of battle. Altogether, these elaborate productions offered patrons the opportunity to vicariously experience participating in the Tripolitan War. The conflict inspired American artists to create entertainment extravaganzas that pushed the boundaries of technological ingenuity and offered immersive experiences to attendees.

Another exhibit (in Boston’s Columbian Museum) offered a unique interactive experience. Called the “The Fantasmagora,” it featured more than “*SIXTY MOVING*

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<sup>595</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), March 27, 1805.

<sup>596</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), July 2, 1805.

<sup>597</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 2, 1805.

*FIGURES*, large as life,” including the Dey of Algiers and the Bashaw of Tripoli.<sup>598</sup>

Showtimes were at 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. One wonders what attendees felt when they looked upon these reproductions of America’s Barbary foes. Disgust? Anger? Triumph? One also wonders what the representations of the Dey and the bashaw looked like. Were they dark or light skinned? Were they bearing weapons? Did they appear menacing or friendly? Were they overweight or lean? Regardless, the exhibit’s creators clearly considered the Barbary conflicts as a crucial part of American history and anticipated good profits due to strong public interest in the Tripolitan War.

While the public reveled in a plethora of entertainment options and joyously toasted the latest batch of naval heroes, newspaper editors waged fierce editorial battles over the current state of the Tripolitan War. Democratic-Republican newspapers adamantly defended the Jefferson Administration’s policies and revived their earlier predictions (made after the burning of the *Philadelphia*) that the war would end imminently. A Vermont newspaper hailed the Tripolitan War as an unquestionable triumph for the United States: “on the tripolitan coast, the terror of her arms is exemplified, and the tyranny of Barbarian pirates humbled.” It predicted that the recent attacks would “probably soon induce them to seek for peace on equal terms, and bow to justice from enforced chastisement.”<sup>599</sup> Another article (published in two states) portrayed Tripoli as tittering on the precipice of self-destruction. It alleged that “the commerce of Tripoli is almost annihilated,” the bashaw’s “town is falling into ruins besides him; and the shrieks of its dying inhabitants assail his ears.”<sup>600</sup> It also

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<sup>598</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), May 11, 1805. The other luminaries mentioned in the ad were the British Admiral Lord Nelson, General James Abercrombie, the King of Prussia, and “the beautiful *Mary Queen of Scots*.”

<sup>599</sup> *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), December 31, 1804.

<sup>600</sup> *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), March 8, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), March 28, 1805.

predicted (falsely as it would turn out) that the squadron would free “our captive countrymen without a *ransom*” and “mak[e] a peace on *our own* terms.” A New York newspaper admonished Americans to feel “the liveliest emotions of joy and pride” towards the Navy and “hope[d] soon to hear that this piratical enemy is brought to a sense of his insignificance, and the American flag liberated from the degrading exertions to which it has been so long subject.”<sup>601</sup> Unlike Jefferson, these Democratic-Republicans viewed the navy as an inherently positive institution—they encouraged public trust in naval officials. Some newspapers also wanted to give Jefferson equal credit for the summer 1804 attacks. An article published in five states mocked European nations for “tamely submitt[ing] to... the petty powers of Barbary” and vaunted that “the American flag is now proudly triumphant in the Mediterranean, and the thunder of the American cannon has proclaimed on the shores of Africa, that a free people will not suffer themselves to be insulted with impunity. The names of Preble, Sterrett and Decatur, will not soon be forgotten by the Tripolines.... Much credit is due to our wise and just administration, for the prudent and energetic measures pursued by it on this occasion.”<sup>602</sup> In their eagerness to praise the navy and/or to give credit to Jefferson, these articles overlooked the limitations of Preble’s attacks and downplayed (or omitted) the ongoing hostage crisis. These articles are best understood as propaganda that expressed the Democratic-Republicans’ fondest hopes for the war—they undervalued Yusuf’s tenacity and determination to resist the United States.

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<sup>601</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), December 5, 1804.

<sup>602</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), December 3, 1804; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), December 4, 1804; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), December 13, 1804; from the *Freeman’s Journal* (this Federalist publication was typically referred to as the *New-Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, NH). The article also appeared in the politically neutral *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), December 12, 1804.

By contrast, some Federalist newspaper editors viewed the latest developments in the Mediterranean more realistically and reminded readers that, despite the navy's valiant efforts, Tripoli had yet to surrender. One lengthy criticism combined humor with sober political analysis in contrasting the naval policies of the Adams and Jefferson Administrations. In "nearly four years," it argued, the United States lacked even "one solitary instance of advantage." The navy had acted bravely, but the bombardments simply "frightened some of the eunuchs and women of the seraglios, damaged some of their vessels, lost some of our own, and sacrificed the lives of several of our gallant officers and seamen." It contrasted John Adams's effective naval policies in the Quasi-War against a powerful enemy (France) to the Jefferson Administration's stumbling against the "poor dependency" of Tripoli. Jefferson, it argued, only knew how "to conduct a domestic war between parties" and could not run foreign affairs.<sup>603</sup> Another article, published in two states, lamented that the "poor fellows" of the *Philadelphia* would continue to "drag out a miserable existence, in the worst of slavery" and regretted that "before another season for active operations arrives, the Tripolitans will prepare themselves for any force; and we may ultimately be obliged to buy peace on their own terms."<sup>604</sup> This article implicitly questioned why the public was acting so triumphantly—looking at the big picture, what exactly was worth celebrating? Similarly, a Massachusetts newspaper bitterly observed "that disasters have taken place which are likely to protract this disgraceful war to an incalculable period" and declared that the Jefferson Administration faced a choice: it "must either relinquish the war, or relinquish that *economical* system which has hitherto prevented them from employing the proper means to

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<sup>603</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), February 25, 1805. From the *Public Ledger* (Norfolk, VA).

<sup>604</sup> *Connecticut Gazette, and the Commercial Intelligencer* (New London, CT), January 16, 1805; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), January 25, 1805.

bring it to an end.”<sup>605</sup> Although these articles had a partisan axe to grind, they made legitimate criticisms. The Tripolitan War was becoming increasingly expensive, naval personnel were dying in battle, and the *Philadelphia* crew remained in captivity.

Other Federalist publications utilized poetry in order to make emotional appeals to the public regarding the captives’ sufferings and to critique Democratic-Republican policies. An especially morbid poem entitled “The Tripoline Captive” appeared in four states and explored themes of isolation and despair.<sup>606</sup> About an individual “son of *Columbia*” held hostage in Tripoli, it stressed his unhealthy appearance (a “countenance hollow and pale”) and his anger at the United States for allowing him to rot in captivity. He angrily cried out: “At a distance, you hear not our cries,/ You know not the anguish we bear;/ Or else when our death-shrieks arise,/ Columbia would sure drop a tear.” The poem ends with the captive’s suicide: “Then quickly the poniard he drew,/ And plunging it deep in his side,/ Like the lily depress’d by the dew,/ He sunk on his mantle and died.” This poem sought to temper public infatuation with naval heroics by reminding readers that that the *Philadelphia* crew suffered in Tripoli. It also implied that the public would bear some responsibility for any of their deaths unless they made efforts to free them. Similarly, in a poem entitled “The American Captive” (published in three states), a hostage expressed his disappointment in his countrymen and doubted that he would ever return to the United States. ““Sleeps my country?’ he cried, ‘shall I ne’er visit it more/ The land of my fathers and freedom enjoy?...Where now are those heroes that led the bold fight;/ And the eagle and stars bore to

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<sup>605</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), January 11, 1805.

<sup>606</sup> Three Federalist newspapers published it: *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), April 4, 1805; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), April 25, 1805. From the *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT). One Democratic-Republican newspaper ran it: *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), May 6, 1805.



Tripoli's wall?"<sup>607</sup> These poems argued that succumbing to despair constituted a bigger threat to the captives' lives than the Tripolitans. They made emotional appeals to the public (and to the government) to prioritize the restoration of the hostages over defeating Tripoli.

Another poem about captivity in Tripoli took a much more inflammatory approach by stressing sectional issues—it blamed southern elites for the perpetuation of the *Philadelphia* crew's captivity. It castigated "The proud Virginian, who by slaves grows great;/ The Carolinian, rich in ricy fields;/ [and] The Georgan too that rides in ample state" for caring more about increasing their own wealth than the welfare of naval personnel (who "bravely fought" to ensure "trade's support").<sup>608</sup> The poem argued that rich southern men's apathy should be unsurprising because they considered slavery an acceptable state of existence for some peoples—they were "despots" who suppressed the voices of sympathetic New Englanders and New Yorkers. It declared: "But from New-England's sons who slav'ry dread,/ Who fear nor Tripoli's or Barbary's shore;/ From these you'd have relief, if they were heard,/ You'd then behold your native land once more....Fair Hudson's stream would likewise pour her sons,/ To free their brethren from their sad disgrace." This poem has abolitionist undertones and waxes conspiratorial by suggesting that southern elites had an iron grip upon the federal government and drowned out voices from other regions (perhaps the "proud Virginian" line refers to Jefferson). It resembles John Jay's and John Adams's anger at southern elites in the 1780s for not caring about protecting American trade in the

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<sup>607</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), July 23, 1805; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), August 2, 1805; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), August 10, 1805.

<sup>608</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), August 6, 1805; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), August 9, 1805; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), August 14, 1805; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), August 15, 1805; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), August 16, 1805.

Mediterranean (discussed in chapter 2) and foreshadows northern fears of a “Slave Power Conspiracy” that developed in the antebellum era.

Federalist pieces on the suffering of the captives concerned many Democratic-Republican newspaper editors—they feared the issue’s potential to generate negative attitudes towards Jefferson and their party. A widely published article made a bizarre assertion (based on an anonymous source) that the *Philadelphia* captives adamantly refused to allow Preble to ransom them. Instead, they supported “the independent and manly course” of the government and wanted “to obtain their liberty at the hands of their brother soldiers off Tripoli.”<sup>609</sup> This claim is entirely false. As we have seen, the captives (especially the non-officers) craved their freedom and wanted to be ransomed. Would any readers actually believe this article? It lacks a credible source and is best viewed as propaganda intended to reassure Democratic-Republican supporters that Jefferson did not deserve censure for the ongoing hostage situation.

Another strategy of deflecting blame from the Jefferson Administration involved attacking Federalists as hypocrites and as not genuinely concerned about the welfare of the *Philadelphia* crew. Some newspapers asked why Federalists were unconcerned with the ongoing British impressment of American sailors. An article printed in two states blasted “federal prints” for “deploring the captivity of the crew of the *Philadelphia* frigate” while

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<sup>609</sup> Nine Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), March 8, 1805; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), April 2, 1805; *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), April 6, 1805; *Plebian* (Kingston, NY), April 8, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Easton, MD), April 9, 1805; *Otsego Herald; or, Western Advertiser* (Cooperstown, NY), April 11, 1805; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), April 18, 1805; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), May 6, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), May 17, 1805. Three Federalist newspapers ran it: *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), April 1, 1805; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), April 4, 1805. *The Post-Boy, and Vermont & New-Hampshire Federal Courier* (Windsor, VT), April 16, 1805 ran an abridged version of this article. It also appeared in the politically neutral *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), April 30, 1805.

ignoring the “*fifteen hundred men* forcibly detained in British ships.”<sup>610</sup> Similarly, another article denied that Federalist concern about “the miserable situation of our fellow-citizens in Tripoli” stemmed “from laudable motives.” It accused Federalists of simply wanting “to calumniate the President in any and every possible shape as the cause of their sufferings” and challenged them to show some “sympathy...for our seamen impressed by the British, whose situation...is equally deplorable with Tripolitan captivity.”<sup>611</sup> Some Democratic-Republican newspapers lashed out at the public for not expressing more outrage over Britain’s treatment of Americans. An editorial published in three states observed that “‘Freedom and health to the captives in Tripoli’ has recently been drank as a toast in all parts of the continent—but not one sympathetic sentiment expressed, of eight times the number of captives on board the British navy.”<sup>612</sup> These Democratic-Republican newspapers made valid counterpoints: the Federalists were selective in drawing public attention to the plight of Americans held captive by a foreign power and were generally unwilling to confront Britain over impressment.<sup>613</sup>

By the beginning of 1805, the Tripolitan War showed no sign of ending. Preble had attacked Tripoli more aggressively than his predecessors, but his efforts were not enough to compel the bashaw to surrender. Yusuf believed warring against the United States had great significance for his country—he wanted to impress Europe and Africa with his power.

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<sup>610</sup> *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), February 14, 1805. From the *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA).

<sup>611</sup> *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), September 3, 1805; *Hornet* (Fredericktown, MD), September 17, 1805.

<sup>612</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 30, 1805; *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), August 10, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), August 16, 1805.

<sup>613</sup> A rare Federalist exception was the *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH). On November 26, 1805 it criticized Federalist printers for drawing “daily” attention to “the distresses and hardships” of the *Philadelphia* crew while ignoring “another class of our citizens whose sufferings have been equally great...for whom federal sympathy but seldom drops the tear.—We allude to about 2000 of our citizens who have been impressed on board British prison ships, or vessels of war.”

Unless the United States met his financial demands, it would have to find another way to win the conflict. Naval officers and seamen were anxious to resume attacks in the spring, but ultimately naval efforts would not end the conflict.<sup>614</sup> Instead, a bold plan led by William Eaton (a former diplomat in North Africa, a Revolutionary War veteran, and a Federalist) would cause Yusuf to tremble for the first time in the Tripolitan War.

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<sup>614</sup> In November, Captain John Rodgers observed that “a General Enthusiasm appears to pervade among all ranks, and nothing that the Bashaw can do, will, I conceive, prevent his destruction in the most complete manner, without he offers Terms the most humiliating to himself.” John Rodgers to Smith, November 6, 1804, *Naval Documents V*: 124.

## Chapter 5: The Unexpected End of the Tripolitan War

As the Tripolitan War entered its fourth year, who knew what to expect? What Americans had hoped would be a swift, decisive victory over Barbary piracy had turned into a stalemate even though the Mediterranean squadron had expanded substantially. Americans had conceived of the Tripolitan War as a naval affair and kept hoping that the fleet would bombard the bashaw into submission. However, the conflict ended very differently than anyone had anticipated, with an unexpectedly robust land assault that sought to overthrow Yusuf and replace him with his brother, Hamet. What began as a naval conflict intended to safeguard U.S. commerce in the Mediterranean threatened to become something much bigger: a war to bring regime change in Tripoli.

And when the war finally did end, in June 1805, government officials, editors, and the public at large were left to ponder several important questions. Despite spending millions of dollars on the Tripolitan War, what had the United States accomplished? Had Tripoli been subdued? Were the other Barbary States impressed by America's performance in the Tripolitan War? Would the Federalist Party be able to gain politically? What was the legacy of Jefferson's Barbary policies? After fighting ended in the Mediterranean, the Tripolitan War generated intense debate on the home front. Federalist and Democratic-Republicans both believed that the conflict had big implications for U.S. foreign policy, but disagreed about whether these were positive or negative.

American diplomats proposed regime change at the beginning of the Tripolitan War, after learning that Yusuf had seized power from middle brother, Hamet, in 1795 (Yusuf killed his eldest brother and his father in his quest for power). Hamet remained the rightful

heir to the Tripolitan throne, but lived in exile in Tunis. James Cathcart, the consul to Tripoli, wrote Madison in July 1801 to propose a plan to “obtain a permanent & honorable peace” through “dethroning the present Bashaw & effecting a revolution in favor of his Brother.”<sup>615</sup> He stressed that success would “insure the United States the gratitude of [Hamet] & his Successors” and warned that “for so long as Juseph the Bashaw lives our commerce will not be secure.” Cathcart emphasized that only a regime change could guarantee lasting peace with Tripoli and, in another letter, claimed that the Tripolitan public “held [Yusuf] in the greatest degree of horror imaginable” and “great[ly] desire[d] that Hamet... should again assume the reigns of government.”<sup>616</sup> More grandly, consul to Tunis William Eaton promised Madison that the coup not only would ensure “perpetual peace,” but would “save the United States more than a million of dollars and many lives.”<sup>617</sup> Surely he calculatingly appealed to the Jefferson Administration’s desire to reduce government expenses. Eaton also contended that the Tripolitan people would help the United States restore Hamet to power: they “are very discontented and ripe for revolt; they want nothing but confidence in the prospect of success.”<sup>618</sup> A few months later Eaton reiterated his belief in the potential for an indigenous uprising, claiming that the public “almost unanimously desire the restoration of their rightful sovereign, who is a mild man of peaceable dispositions; and, if he were offered them with the appearance of determination, they would raise in mass

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<sup>615</sup> Cathcart to Madison, July 2, 1801, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>616</sup> Cathcart to Madison, August 25, 1802, Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Eaton to Madison, June 8, 1802, Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Eaton to Madison, September 5, 1801, Ibid.

to receive him.”<sup>619</sup> Eaton made the coup attempt seem like a cakewalk and, together with Cathcart, suggested that restoring Hamet would serve the best interests of both the United States and the Tripolitan public.<sup>620</sup>

What did the Jefferson Administration think of the coup attempt? Madison responded at length to Eaton in an August 1802 letter, observing that “altho’ it does not accord with the general sentiments or views of the United States to intermeddle in the domestic contests of other countries,” in this instance the Jefferson Administration would support restoring Hamet to power because the Tripolitan War was “a just war.”<sup>621</sup> If the coup attempt failed, Madison promised that the government would “treat [Hamet’s] misfortune with the utmost tenderness” and “restore him as nearly as may be to the situation from which he was drawn.” The Secretary of State expressed a humanitarian concern for the ex-bashaw and would not abandon him to his brother’s vengeance, promising that instructions “will be conveyed to Commodore Morris, and Mr. Cathcart, with a suggestion that in the event of a peace with the ruling Bashaw, an attempt should be made to insert some provision favourable to his Brother.” Madison acknowledged that the distance between North Africa and Washington D.C. rendered it difficult to give and receive instructions, but the Jefferson Administration saw potential in the coup attempt and encouraged its undertaking. By no means, however, did they consider success inevitable and they still retained the right to make peace with Yusuf. That same month, Secretary of the Navy Smith sent a more cautious letter to Captain

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<sup>619</sup> Eaton to Madison, December 13, 1801, *Ibid.* Hamet had only been in power for five months before being overthrown. He then went to Tunis for seven years before returning to Tripoli in April 1802; see Hamet Karamanli to Thomas Jefferson, January 20, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 347.

<sup>620</sup> For a negative assessment of Hamet’s leadership abilities, see Folayan, 21. Folayan also contends, in contrast to Cathcart’s and Eaton’s claims, that the Tripolitan public preferred Yusuf to Hamet.

<sup>621</sup> Madison to Eaton, August 22, 1802, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.*

Richard Morris which emphasized that making peace with Yusuf remained the top priority. He declared that Hamet's welfare "is not to be considered by you of sufficient magnitude to prevent or even to retard a final settlement" with Yusuf.<sup>622</sup> Moreover, Smith stated that Eaton "in this affair cannot be considered an authorized agent of the Government." The Jefferson Administration viewed Hamet as a means to ending the Tripolitan War—restoring him to power was not the main goal. Eaton would err in reading too much into Madison's letter, but Madison should have been more forthcoming by including the unequivocal directives found in the letter to Morris.

Despite the qualified confidence from the Jefferson Administration, the coup attempt stalled for two years due to Hamet's unwillingness to commit to it. He even temporarily made amends with his brother in April 1802 by accepting an offer to become the governor of Tripoli's Derne province.<sup>623</sup> Yet Hamet continued to express interest in overthrowing Yusuf, personally soliciting help from President Jefferson in a January 1803 letter. In it, he complained that his brother had not fulfilled a promise to release his family (Hamet's wife and five children were being held hostage) and requested "Forty thousand Spanish Dollars" and weapons in order to raise an army of 100,000 men (he promised to reimburse the United States).<sup>624</sup> Jefferson apparently never responded to Hamet's letter because several months later he received another one that repeated the request.<sup>625</sup> In any event, Hamet fled to Alexandria in late 1803 out of fear that his brother would kill him.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Smith to Morris, August 27, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 257.

<sup>623</sup> Cathcart to Madison, August 25, 1802, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>624</sup> Hamet Karamanli to Jefferson, January 20, 1803, *Naval Documents II*: 347.

<sup>625</sup> Richard Farquhar to Jefferson, November 15, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 222.

<sup>626</sup> Joseph Pulis to Preble, November 26, 1803, *Ibid.*, III: 236.



Meanwhile, Eaton and Cathcart's efforts received a vital boost with the September 1803 arrival of Edward Preble. The new commander of the Mediterranean squadron enthusiastically supported the proposed expedition and thought it could meet with success within two months. He also informed the Jefferson Administration in January 1804 that he had met with a representative of Hamet's and he "wish[ed] earlier notice had been taken of [Hamet] and his views."<sup>627</sup> However, Preble thought that he could not afford to spare a ship to retrieve Hamet and chided the Jefferson Administration for being "too economical with our Naval force."<sup>628</sup> Still, Preble arranged for letter of introductions for Eaton, who had been appointed U.S. Navy Agent for the Barbary Regencies and now headed to Egypt to find Hamet.<sup>629</sup> In February 1805, Eaton and Hamet made a formal agreement, called the "Convention between the United States of America and his Highness, Hamet, Caramanly, Bashaw of Tripoli." It proclaimed "a firm and perpetual Peace and free intercourse between the Government of the United States of America and his Highness Hamet Caramanly" and promised that the U.S. government "shall use their utmost exertions, so far as comports with their own honor and interest...to reestablish the said Hamet Bashaw in the possession of his Sovereignty of Tripoli."<sup>630</sup> Clearly, this treaty went beyond Madison's instructions—Eaton considered anything less than reinstalling Hamet a failure. Yet Eaton did not expect the

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<sup>627</sup> Preble to Smith, January 17, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 339.

<sup>628</sup> Preble to Smith, March 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 486.

<sup>629</sup> Preble asked the British Governor of Malta, Sir Alexander Ball, for letters of introduction on behalf of Eaton. Ball happily complied and sent Eaton letters of introduction to the British Pro Consul at Alexandria and the British Resident at Cairo. Preble to Ball, November 13, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 140; Ball to Eaton, November 16, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 144. Eaton left his position as consul to Tunis in early 1803, arriving in the United States in May to settle his reimbursement claims. He received the new title of Navy Agent in spring 1804 and returned to the Mediterranean that summer; Navy Department to William Eaton, May 30, 1804, *Ibid.*, IV: 120.

<sup>630</sup> Convention between the United States of America and his Highness, Hamet, Caramanly, Bashaw of Tripoli, February 23, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 367-368. Eaton forwarded the Convention to Madison in a March 4, 1805 letter; *Ibid.*, V: 367.

United States to lose money on this alliance. In exchange for being restored to power, Hamet promised to free “without ransom, all American prisoners” held by Yusuf and to reimburse the American government the cost of the expedition’s expenses through tribute money exacted from Denmark, Sweden, and the Batavian Republic. Notably, Eaton did not want to end Tripolitan piracy altogether—he just wanted it stopped against the United States and the subjects of the King of the Two Sicilies. Article VII of the Convention stipulated that Tripoli would neither require tribute from nor attack Sicilian ships—this exemption was Eaton’s way of thanking the King of the Two Sicilies for contributing gunboats and men to the U.S. Navy’s August 1804 attacks. However, Eaton apparently was unaware (or unappreciative) of all the help provided by the Danish consul Nicholas Nissen—Eaton still expected Denmark to pay tribute. Because of Eaton’s persistence, the coup attempt had become a reality. But how aware were Americans on the home front?

The expedition eventually dominated discussion about the Tripolitan War, but the public knew little about it until after it happened. Newspapers rarely discussed it and Americans did not raise toasts to Eaton at parties. Prior to fall 1805, newspapers occasionally broached the potential benefits and morality of launching a coup attempt in Tripoli. An editorial published in two Federalist newspapers in summer 1803 endorsed the coup attempt as the quickest way to end the Tripolitan War, to reduce expenses, and to ensure lasting peace. Had it been implemented earlier, the editorial argued, “we should then have had a friend upon the throne of Tripoli, bound to us by the ties of gratitude.”<sup>631</sup> The United States could have guaranteed Hamet’s good behavior by holding Yusuf and his family hostage and threatening to release them if Hamet mistreated the United States. Moreover,

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<sup>631</sup> *Republican or, Anti-Democrat* (Baltimore, MD), August 10, 1803. A slightly abridged version ran in the *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), August 19, 1803.

America would have saved a tremendous amount of money: “the expence of all this would have been a mere trifle when compared with that of maintaining an inactive navy; and supporting a nominal war, which may probably end in a *tribute*...if our navy is to be always managed as it has been.” Not all press was so positive, though, as the public circulation of Madison’s and Smith’s August 1802 letters (which offered limited support for the coup attempt) generated some backlash. A lengthy letter to the editor (written by “An American”) published in four Federalist newspapers condemned the coup attempt as “immoral” and suspected that Hamet was “play[ing] a double game” against America—he planned to get Morocco and Tunis to declare war against the United States.<sup>632</sup> Similarly, an article in the *Washington Federalist* accused Madison of creating a “new morality” and (falsely) castigated Hamet as “a Pretender to his Brother’s throne” instead of the rightful heir.<sup>633</sup> Notably, these critical pieces only appeared in Federalist newspapers. At this stage, some Federalists supported the coup attempt while others derided it as foolhardy. Eventually (and hypocritically), though, some of these negative Federalist publications would embrace it and lambast Democratic-Republicans for not appreciating it enough.

Some Democratic-Republican newspapers defended the coup attempt against Federalist critics. The *National Intelligencer*, and *Washington Advertiser* responded to the “An American” letter, stressing that because Hamet was “the *elder* brother, and was expelled from the throne by *fraud*,” helping him regain power would “restore rights founded in justice.”<sup>634</sup> Nevertheless, it considered the expedition “comparatively so unimportant” and

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<sup>632</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), November 21, 1805; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), November 24, 1804; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 28, 1804; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), December 7, 1804.

<sup>633</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), November 28, 1804.

<sup>634</sup> *National Intelligencer*, and *Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), December 5, 1804.

predicted (falsely) that “the public will trouble themselves little about it.” Another article, printed by two New York newspapers, defended the coup attempt as just because a state of war already existed between the United States and Tripoli. America “had a right to embrace whatever favorable circumstances might offer.”<sup>635</sup> These newspapers did not want Federalists to shape the public’s understanding of the coup attempt, yet they doubted that it would actually make an impact. Overall, prior to fall 1805, newspapers and the public conceived of the Tripolitan War as fundamentally a naval affair and, at best, considered Eaton’s expedition a quixotic endeavor.

The Jefferson Administration shared this view as well, as evidenced by instructions to diplomat Tobias Lear and Commodore Samuel Barron (who would relieve Preble of command of the Mediterranean squadron). Madison’s June 1804 letter to Lear, who had been appointed to broker a treaty with Yusuf, urged “less reliance” upon Hamet and authorized only \$20,000 for the expedition.<sup>636</sup> Madison considered the enlarged U.S. fleet (following to the *Philadelphia* loss) “sufficient for any exercise of coercion” against Tripoli. As for Barron, Smith stated that he was expected to “coerc[e] Tripoli to a Treaty upon our own Terms” and that the decision to support the coup attempt “is committed entirely to your discretion.”<sup>637</sup> The Jefferson Administration had not learned the shortcomings of their strategy—naval bombardments against Tripoli were ineffective.

Eaton would become very frustrated with Lear and Barron, as they lacked Preble’s enthusiasm for the coup attempt. Lear despised it, belittling Hamet as “a man [lacking] any

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<sup>635</sup> *American Citizen* (New York, NY), December 13, 1804; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), December 15, 1804.

<sup>636</sup> Madison to Lear, June 6, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>637</sup> Smith to Barron, June 6, 1804, *Naval Documents* IV: 152-154.

force or influence” and deeming it “very doubtful whether he has it in his power, with any reasonable pecuniary assistance we might give, to render us service.”<sup>638</sup> Like Eaton, Lear wanted to achieve long-term peace with Tripoli, but he thought it more likely with a chastised Yusuf than with a restored Hamet: “Indeed I shd. place much more confidence in the continuance of a peace with the present Bashaw, if he is well beaten into it, than I shd. have with the other, if he should be placed on the throne by our means.” As for Barron, he initially promised full support for the coup attempt. In September 1804, he instructed the captain of the *Argus*, Isaac Hull, to tell Hamet that he could trust Barron to provide “the most effectual measures with the forces under my Command for co-operating with him against the usurper, his brother; and for re-establishing him in the regency of Tripoli.”<sup>639</sup> Barron’s orders fulfilled Eaton’s wishes, but would the Commodore follow through on his promises?

Meanwhile, Eaton and Hamet created an attack plan. They decided to capture the town of Derne (in the northeastern part of Tripoli along the Mediterranean Sea) and began the five-hundred mile march from Egypt in early March.<sup>640</sup> In a March 8<sup>th</sup> diary entry, Eaton estimated that they had four-hundred men—mostly followers of Hamet, but also thirty-eight Greeks, twenty-five cannoniers, and nine Americans.<sup>641</sup> By early April, the force had increased to six-hundred to seven-hundred fighting men (with 1,200 other followers and Bedouin family members).<sup>642</sup> Eaton detailed the many hardships experienced by the group in

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<sup>638</sup> Lear to Madison, November 3, 1804, Papers of James Madison Digital Edition.

<sup>639</sup> Verbal orders of Barron to Captain Isaac Hull and Eaton, September 15, 1804, *Naval Documents* V: 20.

<sup>640</sup> For a map of the expedition, see the insert between pages 398 and 399 of *Naval Documents* V.

<sup>641</sup> Eaton journal, March 8, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 398-399. Eaton also listed 107 camels “and a few asses.”

<sup>642</sup> Eaton journal, April 2, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 478.

his journal. For instance, in late March he wrote that some fled after a report circulated that hundreds of cavalry and footmen loyal to Yusuf would arrive at Derne before the rebels.<sup>643</sup> Also, at one point they went twenty-five days without meat, fifteen without bread, and were living off rice.<sup>644</sup> Further, in mid-April, Hamet perceptively began to doubt the reliability of America's commitment to him. As Eaton reported, he suspected that "we aim only to use him for the purpose of obtaining a peace with his brother."<sup>645</sup> Some of Hamet's followers also began to doubt Eaton's promise of U.S. naval support and became mutinous. Thankfully, in mid-April they saw the *Argus* and the *Hornet*.<sup>646</sup> Reassured of American support and restocked with fresh supplies, the expedition continued. Although the group bravely overcame many excruciating physical and mental trials, Eaton nevertheless expressed Orientalist contempt for his Arab allies—he did not appreciate that they risked their lives in trying to overthrow their country's ruler. For instance, in one diary entry he averred that the Arabs "have no sense of patriotism, truth nor honor; and no attachment where they have no prospect of gain, except to their religion...Poverty makes them thieves; and practice renders them adroit in stealing."<sup>647</sup> Eaton clearly inspired Hamet and his followers (they trusted him with their lives), but the American adventurer privately viewed them with contempt.

Perhaps because he doubted the maturity his Arab allies, Eaton took his leadership role very seriously. In an apparent nod to George Washington, he assumed the rank of

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<sup>643</sup> Eaton journal, March 26, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 456.

<sup>644</sup> Eaton to Barron, April 29, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 553.

<sup>645</sup> Eaton journal, April 10, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 499.

<sup>646</sup> Eaton journal, April 16 and 17, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 512.

<sup>647</sup> Eaton journal, March 30, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 472

“General, and Commander in Chief” and insisted that Hamet’s followers “shall respect and obey him as such.”<sup>648</sup> This self-aggrandizement was especially audacious because Eaton had only risen to the rank of captain in the U.S. Army.<sup>649</sup> A contemporaneous woodcut (figure 2) captures Eaton’s invocation of Washington: his extended sword, confident pose, and focused stare all convey the impression of a man of action.<sup>650</sup> Moreover, it captures the power balance of the Eaton-Hamet relationship: the aspiring bashaw glances toward the American as if seeking guidance. Altogether, the woodcut portrays the coup attempt very favorably and argues that just as Washington led the American army to victory over Britian, so Eaton was guiding the Tripolitans to their own glorious destiny.



*Figure 2: Gen. William Eaton and Hamet Caramelli, On the Desert of Barca, Approaching Derne. Courtesy New-York Historical Society.*

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<sup>648</sup> Convention, *Ibid.*, V: 368.

<sup>649</sup> A sergeant in the Revolutionary War, Eaton became a Captain in the U.S. Army in 1792.

<sup>650</sup> Gen. William Eaton and Hamet Caramelli, *On the Desert of Barca, Approaching Derne*; woodcut from *Memories of a Hundred Years*, by Edward Everett Hale, 1902; pg. 60; call #E173 .H16 v. 1; Collection of the New-York Historical Society. It is also reproduced in between pages 422 and 423 of *Naval Documents V*. Also see William Parker, *A Concise History of the United States Marine Corps, 1775-1969* (Washington D.C.: United States Marine Corps, 1970), 9.

Eaton also tried to mobilize a popular uprising by issuing a proclamation in late March that portrayed Christians and Muslims as natural allies with a shared religious heritage. He emphasized “that the God of the Americans and of the Mahometans is the same; the one true and omnipotent God” and that Americans accepted “the revelations which he made through Abraham and Israel and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes.”<sup>651</sup> Further, Eaton stressed that the United States was not at war with the Tripolitan people, but only with the bashaw, whom he called “the traitor, usurper of the throne of Tripoli, a bloodthirsty scoundrel.” Yet Eaton also appealed to baser instincts by invoking anti-Semitism. In an attempt to discredit Yusuf, he claimed that the bashaw favored the livelihoods of various Jewish political and economic figures over the welfare of (Muslim) Tripolitans. As he declared, Yusuf has “all[ied] himself with infidel Jews to despoil you of your possessions” and “turned over to them all the trade and commerce of your country, thereby depriving you of all honest means whereby you could earn money.” Evidently, Eaton thought that appealing to the public’s sense of justice (to restore Hamet) would not suffice—he wanted to generate outrage against Yusuf by fanning the flames of religious bigotry. He also urged the public to put their trust in him, ending the proclamation with “and I shall be always with you until the end of the war.” This statement probably alludes to the final verse in the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus reassures the disciples by saying “and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>652</sup> While the Tripolitans likely would not have understood this reference, it gives excellent insight into Eaton’s mentality. This self-anointed vessel of

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<sup>651</sup> Proclamation of William Eaton to the Inhabitants of Tripoli, *Naval Documents* V: 468-470.

<sup>652</sup> Matthew 28:20 (King James Version).



the Almighty saw himself as a divinely inspired prophet who would overthrow an oppressive ruler and lead Hamet to the promised land of the Tripolitan throne.

The group completed the first step of the expedition on April 25<sup>th</sup> by arriving outside the city of Derne. Its governor had about 800 troops, rejected Hamet and Eaton's request for safe passage, and dismissed Hamet's promise that he could retain his position if the coup attempt succeeded.<sup>653</sup> The governor welcomed battle, succinctly replying to Eaton's letter with "My head or yours."<sup>654</sup> Fighting began the next day at 2:00 p.m. Three American ships (the *Argus*, *Hornet*, and *Nautilus*) fired upon the town and gun batteries, which returned fire for an hour. At 3:30 p.m., a group led by marine Presley O'Bannon and Midshipman George Mann stormed Derne, overtook the battery guns (turning them upon the town), and raised the American flag. With Hamet and his forces attacking from the rear, the battle ended by 4:00 p.m.<sup>655</sup> Master Commandant Isaac Hull of the *Argus* listed the casualties for the American and European fighters: one death (John Wilton, a U.S. Marine) and thirteen wounded (including Eaton, a bullet hit his left wrist). Altogether, the battle of Derne was an enormous success for Eaton and Hamet's forces—they took full control of the city and demonstrated that their revolt needed to be taken seriously.

However, shortly after victory Eaton inadvertently crippled the expedition's ability to press on to the capital city. In a letter to Commodore Barron, Eaton portrayed his Arab allies as unreliable. Although their number had increased to 2,000, they were more like "a rabble than an Army" and needed more "military talent & firmness."<sup>656</sup> Eaton also criticized their

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<sup>653</sup> Eaton journal, April 25, 1805, *Naval Documents* V: 541.

<sup>654</sup> Eaton to Governor of Derne, April 26, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 542.

<sup>655</sup> Hull to Barron, April 28, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 547-448.

<sup>656</sup> Eaton to Barron, April 29 and May 1, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 551-552.

fighting style. Instead of boldly attacking the enemy, they took “safe positions...until the doors of the Enemy were open’d for plunder”—only then were they “brave, & impetuous.” While Eaton believed that the coup would work with further U.S. support, Hull doubted that it could succeed. In his journal, he observed that Hamet “appeared very much distressed” and needed money to purchase the loyalty of “arab chiefs that were daily coming over to his side.”<sup>657</sup> Hull also contacted Barron, estimating that 300 to 400 more Americans or Europeans were needed to march to the capital city and attempt to overthrow Yusuf.<sup>658</sup> Hull did not offer any suggestions about how to procure such a large amount of men. Where would they be found? How much would it cost and how long would it take to procure European mercenaries? Was it wise to send American sailors on shore to fight? What if they died in battle? Would ships with small crews be vulnerable to capture by the Tripolitan Navy?

Without reinforcements, the coup attempt stalled following the victory at Derne. Although able to repulse occasional counterattacks by forces loyal to Yusuf (which had grown to 550-600 cavalry and 300 footmen), Eaton conceded to Barron that his group was “too weak” to initiate attacks.<sup>659</sup> In order to march on to Tripoli and topple the bashaw, Hamet and Eaton needed a massive popular uprising to materialize. But Derne was isolated, about 800 miles from the capital city. No mass exodus of Tripolitan men arrived to help Hamet carry on his fight. And how could they? They would have to march across the desert to Derne and overcome the hundreds of troops loyal to Yusuf that encamped around that city.

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<sup>657</sup> Hull journal, May 19, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 27; Hull journal, May 20, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 28.

<sup>658</sup> Hull to Barron, April 29, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 556.

<sup>659</sup> Eaton to Barron, May 15, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 15.

Essentially, unless Barron ordered naval personnel to fight on land or hired hundreds of European mercenaries, it was logistically impossible for Eaton and Hamet to continue. They had conquered Derne, but were now trapped in it.<sup>660</sup>

Even prior to Derne, Commodore Barron had increasingly questioned the capabilities of the coup attempt and wanted Eaton to lower his expectations for assistance. In a March 22, 1805 letter, Barron praised his “energy and perseverance,” but confessed to having “feelings of doubt and uneasiness.”<sup>661</sup> He warned Eaton that “I must withhold my sanction to any convention or agreement committing the United States or tending to impress upon Hamet Bashaw a conviction that *we have bound ourselves to place* him on the throne.” Further, the Commodore asserted that if Hamet was “found deficient” in “energy, courage & talent...he must be held as an unfit subject for further support or co-operation.” Eaton eventually received this letter—he referenced it in his April 29<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup> letter to Barron (discussed above). Since Eaton had candidly discussed the expedition’s weaknesses, he should not have been surprised when Barron withdrew support after Derne.

Barron correctly ascertained that Derne had turned into a stalemate situation. He informed Lear that Eaton’s letters had caused him to reassess the coup attempt’s prospects for success—Hamet was “no longer a fit subject for our support and Cooperation” because he lacked “sufficient energy address & Courage, and cannot command sufficient means to move

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<sup>660</sup> A few authors have argued that the expedition would have toppled Yusuf if it had received further support. Wright and Macleod call Eaton’s plan “sound and practicable” and assert that, with naval cooperation, it “might easily have conquered Tripoli” (*First Americans in North Africa*, 197-198). Parker declares that “one cannot help feeling sorry for Eaton, who was deprived of the glory that would have been his if his expedition had been completed successfully...as coup leader he was outstanding” (165-166). Allison, however, rightly observes that no mass uprising of Tripolitans occurred to support Hamet (196). Most academic works on the Tripolitan War do not take a position about the potential of the coup attempt to continue following the Derne victory: Folayan, 38-40; Lambert, 152-154; Marr, 64-65; Peskin, 152-153; Cogliano, 167-168.

<sup>661</sup> Barron to Eaton, March 22, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 439-440.

on.”<sup>662</sup> Barron also expressed concern about the cost to complete the coup attempt—“a Sum far exceeding both the recourses placed at my disposal and the powers Vested in me” (Madison had authorized spending up to \$20,000).<sup>663</sup> The Commodore (correctly) viewed his decision as reflecting the Jefferson Administration’s wishes. Still, he did not consider the coup attempt a failure. Barron thought that “it has had a powerful effect upon the reigning Bashaw” and would “dispose him to moderate his pretensions and to think seriously of Peace.” He urged Lear to use Yusuf’s fears of Hamet regaining power to America’s advantage in negotiations.<sup>664</sup> Although Barron resigned due to poor health (John Rodgers would take over as the head of the Mediterranean squadron), his judgment was not adversely affected.<sup>665</sup> He made a rational decision to withdraw support from the coup attempt based on reports from Eaton and Hull.

Eaton, however, was livid with Barron’s decision. In an irate letter, he accused the Commodore of violating “principles of honor and justice,” defended Hamet’s character, and argued that “*to abandon him here is not to cooperate with him, but with his rival!*”<sup>666</sup> Eaton’s defensiveness is understandable—he had been planning the coup attempt for years and had risked his life on the desert trek and in battle against Yusuf’s forces. Yet his zeal for fame and glory overrode his rationality. Eaton had criticized Hamet’s forces to Barron—

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<sup>662</sup> Barron to Lear, May 18, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 22-23.

<sup>663</sup> Madison to Lear, June 6, 1804, *Papers of James Madison Digital Edition*.

<sup>664</sup> Barron wrote a similar letter to Eaton two days later: the coup attempt had become “too expensive & burthensome & too little pregnant with Hope or advantage to justify its further prosecution...I feel that I have already gone to the full extent of my authority”; May 19, 1805, *Naval Documents* VI: 25.

<sup>665</sup> Barron to Lear, May 18, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 22. He lamented “the debilitated and declining state of my Health,” which stemmed from “long and severe illness.”

<sup>666</sup> Eaton to Barron, June 2 and 11, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 59-60, 63.

what did he expect would happen? Further, if Eaton and Hamet could not defeat the bashaw's forces encamped outside Derne how could he realistically expect to capture the fortified capital city and overthrow Yusuf? He also obstinately refused to acknowledge the Jefferson Administration's position that the coup attempt was simply "a means" of obtaining peace with Tripoli and not "*an end*" unto itself.<sup>667</sup> Frankly, Eaton did not have the right to feel betrayed.

As for Yusuf, the prospect of being overthrown terrified him much more than did any naval attacks on his fleet or capital city. The diary of Jonathan Cowdery, the *Philadelphia* captive and doctor who had close access to the bashaw, depicts a nervous ruler and a city vulnerable to conquest. According to Cowdery, Yusuf learned about Eaton and Hamet's expedition in mid-March, although he had an exaggerated sense of its size and misunderstood its location. He thought that U.S. forces, together with Hamet and four thousand Egyptians, had gone to Syracuse and intended to attack Tripoli's capital.<sup>668</sup> Cowdery "perceived many private councils and long faces amongst the Turks" and noted that the bashaw took the precaution of holding "the sons and nearest relations of [his] officers...whom it appears, he was afraid to trust, least [sic] they might join the rebellion." Yusuf also took "several of the sons and dearest friends of his chiefs in the country...as hostages for their fidelity."<sup>669</sup> Clearly, the bashaw feared for his safety and deemed it likely that some of Tripoli's leaders would defect and support Hamet. Yusuf struggled to raise adequate defenses as well. Cowdery reported that Yusuf's son-in-law "had been sent into the country to collect troops to

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<sup>667</sup> Barron to Eaton, March 22, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 439.

<sup>668</sup> Cowdery, March 17 and 19, 1805, 179-180.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, March 21, 1805, 180.

protect Tripoli” but “returned without success. The people refused to fight for the Bashaw, because he had made unusual demands for money, and even had stripped their wives of their jewels.”<sup>670</sup> Cowdery also suggested that Yusuf bluffed regarding the size of his forces. Rumors that 10,000 of them would gather on the beach proved hollow—“I prepared myself to see these troops; but to my disappointment not one of them appeared.”<sup>671</sup> Cowdery tried to help the expedition by greatly exaggerating the size of America’s armed forces—he told Yusuf that the United States had 10,000 marines, 80,000 troops, and 1 million militia members “ready to fight for the liberty and rights of their countrymen! At this, his highness assumed a very serious look.”<sup>672</sup> Surely Yusuf would have expected some embellishment, but this report could only add to his unease.

Despite his growing anxiety, Yusuf recognized that he held some leverage over the Americans—the *Philadelphia* officers and crew remained his prisoners. He began to threaten to execute them if the coup attempt continued. In mid-April, for instance, Cowdery reported that the “the Bashaw declared, that if the Americans drove him to extremities, or attacked his town, he would put every American prisoner to death.”<sup>673</sup> Yusuf reiterated this threat the following month, vowing “by the prophet of Mecca, that if the Americans brought his brother against him, he would burn to death all the American prisoners except Cowdery” (because he “saved the life” of one of Yusuf’s children).<sup>674</sup> According to Cowdery, the

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., March 22, 1805, 180.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., April 19, 1805, 180.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., April 13-16, 1805, 180.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., May 14, 1805, 181.

bashaw learned about the loss of Derne on May 22<sup>nd</sup> through a letter and “did not wish to let his people know it.”<sup>675</sup> That same day, he “called a council of his chiefs, and proposed to put all the American prisoners to death” (but they decided “to postpone this measure”). Despite the seriousness of the situation, Cowdery refrained from sharing his personal thoughts about the matter. Did he view Yusuf’s threats as bluster and not take them seriously?

The Derne loss made Yusuf even more anxious—he genuinely feared being overthrown. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, he proclaimed that “if it was in his power now to make peace and give up the American prisoners, he would gladly do it, without the consideration of money.”<sup>676</sup> Cowdery also noted that the bashaw was running out of funds (the steward had to borrow money to procure food), that rations for the bashaw’s court had been cut to one meal per day, and that Yusuf “heartedly repented for not accepting the terms of peace last offered by our country.” His diary portrays the capital city as very vulnerable: Yusuf was disliked by much of his populace, growing weaker by the day, and consumed with fear. The bashaw likely thought that his rule would come to an end when American ships appeared before Tripoli on May 28<sup>th</sup>. According to Cowdery, Yusuf “shewed the greatest anxiety for peace. He was sensible of the danger he was in from the lowness of his funds and the disaffection of his people.”<sup>677</sup> Imagine the bashaw’s immense relief when he learned that, far from seeking to overthrow him, diplomat Tobias Lear had come to make peace and pay ransom money!

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<sup>675</sup> Ibid., May 22, 1805, 182.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., May 24, 1805, 183.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., May 28, 1805, 183.

Just how serious was Yusuf's threat to kill the *Philadelphia* captives? This question eventually became heavily debated by policymakers and the public, but only Cowdery (and perhaps Bainbridge) had ever broached it while the coup attempt was underway. Bainbridge made a cryptic statement in a January letter, condemning Eaton's expedition as "very vaste" and claiming that it would "sacrifice [the *Philadelphia*] prisoners in case of success."<sup>678</sup> Bainbridge did not define what "sacrifice" meant—possibly it referred to putting the captives in harm's way by leaving them exposed to American fire, or perhaps he warned about a mass execution. Regardless, it is noteworthy that Bainbridge's many letters to U.S. diplomats and naval officers did not broach the possibility of being executed. Since Bainbridge constantly wrote letters, surely he would have urged the abandonment of the coup attempt (especially since he thought poorly of Hamet) if its continuance jeopardized the American hostages' lives.<sup>679</sup> As for other personnel in the Mediterranean, Commodore Barron never expressed any concern that Yusuf would execute the *Philadelphia* captives, even in his letters to Lear and Eaton that explained his reasons for withdrawing support from the coup attempt. Similarly, in his lengthy recap of the negotiations, Dutch consul Nicholas Nissen never mentioned any threat of execution.<sup>680</sup> Commodore John Rodgers (Barron's successor as commander of the Mediterranean squadron) declared that "I never thought myself that the Lives of the American Prisoners were in any danger."<sup>681</sup> Moreover, the Jefferson

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<sup>678</sup> Bainbridge to Davis, January 27, 1805, *Naval Documents* V: 312.

<sup>679</sup> In a letter to Lear, Bainbridge disparaged Hamet as a "poor effeminate fugitive...who had not spirit enough to retain his situation when placed in it." November 11, 1804, *Ibid.*, V: 137.

<sup>680</sup> Report of Nicholas Nissen, June 10, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 103-105.

<sup>681</sup> John Rodgers to Smith, June 8, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 99.



Administration never even considered the possibility that Yusuf would execute the captives—the June 1804 instructions to Barron and Lear did not broach this scenario.

However, other naval officers evidently took the bashaw's threats seriously. In September 1805, Secretary of the Navy Smith reported to Jefferson that several of the *Philadelphia* officers had told him “that if Lear had persisted in not giving a Ransom for them, peace would not have been made at all and that the Bashaw had made up his mind to massacre them while our forces were laying waste his town.”<sup>682</sup> Yusuf feared being “murdered by his own people...[if] he deliver[ed] up the prisoners without ransom” and “again & again was heard to say that having killed his father and a brother he would not have any scruples in killing a few infidels.”<sup>683</sup> Regrettably, Smith did not identify the naval officers who spoke with him. As will be discussed later in this chapter, senators and newspaper editors later debated the seriousness of Yusuf's threat to kill the captives. We will never know the bashaw's true intentions, but I am inclined to doubt that he would have actually executed the hostages. A shrewd ruler, Yusuf surely recognized that if he murdered the *Philadelphia* captives the United States would have retaliated by overthrowing and killing him. Even Jefferson would not have allowed the bashaw to get away with mass murder. Massacring the *Philadelphia* captives would have been tantamount to Yusuf signing his own death warrant—and Yusuf was too smart for that.

Regardless, the bashaw regained his composure and outwitted Lear (they negotiated via letters). The American diplomat acted unprofessionally and against the best interests of his country by allowing his personal animosity towards Eaton and Hamet's expedition to

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<sup>682</sup> Smith to Jefferson, September 19, 1805, Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Papers, text-fiche, Reel 55.

<sup>683</sup> Smith wrote a very similar letter to Preble; September 18, 1805, *Naval Documents* VI: 284.

affect his negotiating. Lear rebuffed Barron's instructions to use the coup attempt as leverage, telling him that it would not make "any impression favourable" on Yusuf. What made Lear so sure about this assessment?<sup>684</sup> As we know from Cowdery's journal, Lear was gravely mistaken—Yusuf was terrified at the prospect of being overthrown. Back in April, Yusuf had offered peace and ransom for \$200,000 (with the United States freeing its Tripolitan hostages and "mak[ing] full restitution of the[ir] property").<sup>685</sup> Now Yusuf sought \$130,000 for ransom—a high figure, given that in February 1804 Yusuf was willing to make peace with Preble for \$100,000 in ransom, a consular present, and a schooner to trade for the *Philadelphia*.<sup>686</sup> Then, the United States only had sixty Tripolitan prisoners as leverage. Now, the United States held a Tripolitan city, had 100 Tripolitan prisoners, and could threaten to continue the coup attempt. Lear perhaps felt overawed by Yusuf's demand and countered with \$60,000 for ransom. Why this sum? After exchanging captives on a one-for-one basis, a balance of 200 Americans was left. At the rate of \$300 per man, the total came to \$60,000. Unfathomably, Lear did not use the United States' capture of Derne as leverage. Surely he could have insisted that the United States would not relinquish the town until Yusuf released all of the *Philadelphia* hostages (recall Cowdery's report that Yusuf was willing to free them without ransom). The bashaw also apparently prohibited Cowdery from communicating with Lear, as the former's diary contains no details about negotiations and Lear's letters do not mention the doctor. Yusuf was shrewd to prevent Cowdery from sharing his valuable intelligence. Lear did not push hard enough in negotiations and acted as

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<sup>684</sup> Lear to Barron, May 19, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 24.

<sup>685</sup> Lear to Madison, July 5, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 160. Lear received a letter (from the Spanish consul) discussing the \$200,000 offer on April 21<sup>st</sup> and ignored it on the grounds that the proposed terms were "completely inadmissible." Also see Lear to Davis, *Ibid.*, VI: 535.

<sup>686</sup> Preble to Smith, February 3, 1804, *Ibid.*, III: 385.

if Yusuf held most of the leverage. His job was to obtain the best possible terms for the United States and he failed at this task by not using Derne as leverage. Yusuf skillfully exacted \$60,000 and a small consular present from the United States even though he faced popular unrest, a desperate financial situation, and had lost one of principal cities.<sup>687</sup>

As for Hamet, Lear shamefully made but a token effort to ensure his welfare. The third article of the peace treaty appeared to provide for Hamet by requiring Yusuf to return his wife and children after U.S. forces withdrew and Hamet left Tripoli.<sup>688</sup> However, Lear and Yusuf made a secret alteration to the treaty (which Lear concealed and Jefferson and Madison did not learn about until 1807).<sup>689</sup> This clause granted the bashaw up to four years to return Hamet's family—this window of time ensured that Hamet would “give evident proofs of his peaceful disposition towards the Bashaw, and of his determination not to disturb the internal tranquility of his dominions.”<sup>690</sup> Lear claimed to Eaton that demanding better treatment for Hamet would have endangered the *Philadelphia* captives by pushing Yusuf to adopt “measures which might prove fatal to our countrymen in his power.”<sup>691</sup> Lear also lied about the treaty's provision for Hamet, claiming that if he “withdraws himself quietly” from Tripoli “his wife and family should be restored to him. To Lear, Hamet's welfare was irrelevant—what mattered was brokering a lasting peace with Yusuf.

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<sup>687</sup> The \$60,000 was paid on June 19<sup>th</sup>; *Ibid.*, VI: 81. Lear explained to Madison that the consular present (not to “exceed 6,000 Dollars”) was not mentioned in the treaty but was still expected; July 5, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 163.

<sup>688</sup> Treaty of Peace and Amity, June 4, 1805, *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/bar1805t.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/bar1805t.asp).

<sup>689</sup> The Jefferson Administration learned about it via consul to Tunis George Davis's December 27, 1806 letter to Madison; *Naval Documents* VI: 496.

<sup>690</sup> The text of this secret clause is printed in *Ibid.*, VI: 82. Nicolas Nissen, the helpful Danish consul, supported this arrangement; Report of Nicholas Nissen, June 10, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 105.

<sup>691</sup> Lear to Eaton, June 6, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 92.

Moreover, Lear's letters to Eaton and Madison suggest that he worried about how the treaty would be received—he crafted different versions of events. The diplomat insincerely flattered Eaton by declaring that “the heroic bravery...at Derne and the idea that we had a large force and immense supplies at that place, had made a deep impression on the Bashaw.”<sup>692</sup> To Madison, however, Lear reiterated his opposition to the coup attempt instead of crediting it: “I have always been opposed to the Egyptian & Derne expedition” and “shall say nothing on that subject.”<sup>693</sup> Instead, Lear suggested that Commodore Rodgers's “manly firmness and evident wish to continue the war” helped during negotiations.<sup>694</sup> Lear further embellished Rodgers's role in a subsequent letter to Madison, contending that the naval officer “made so powerfull an impression on the mind of the Bashaw, that the negotiation afterwards became easy and unembarrassed.”<sup>695</sup> Claiming that Yusuf feared further naval battles against the United States was preposterous. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bainbridge, Cowdery, and Nissen believed that Preble's August 1804 bombardments of the capital city accomplished little and Yusuf himself simply took refuge in a bomb-proof shelter. Lear's personal animosity towards the coup attempt (and perhaps to Eaton personally) led him to craft a narrative about the treaty that made him and Rodgers appear heroic and made Eaton and Hamet appear irrelevant.

Among U.S. officials in the Mediterranean, the reaction towards the treaty was favorable. Commodore Rodgers issued a circular letter that hailed it as “most honorable &

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> Lear to Madison, July 5, 1805, Ibid., VI: 163.

<sup>694</sup> Lear to Madison, July 5, 1805, Ibid., VI: 162.

<sup>695</sup> Lear to Madison, September 1, 1805, Ibid., VI: 265.

advantageous to the U. States.”<sup>696</sup> The long-sought release of the *Philadelphia* hostages had finally happened and they celebrated with a drunken revelry. Lear remarked that “the intoxication of Liberty & Liquor has deranged the faculties as well as the dresses of many of the Sailors” so much that they would not be ready to board U.S. ships until the afternoon (Bainbridge insisted that everyone needed to be “quite clean”).<sup>697</sup> Surprisingly, even Eaton initially praised the treaty, calling it “certainly more favorable” and “more honorable than any peace obtained by any Christian nation” with a Barbary State over the past 100 years.<sup>698</sup> Within a week, however, he became more critical. To a domestic correspondent, Eaton called the treaty “honorable but...not to be boasted of” and claimed that the \$60,000 paid to Yusuf would have been sufficient to continue the expedition, overthrow “the usurper from his Capital,” and “*wrest* our captives from his chains.”<sup>699</sup> Eaton’s August letter to Smith was downright livid. He depicted Lear as a villain who made “needless concessions” and knew less about military matters “than a spinster.”<sup>700</sup> Eaton found it unfathomable that Lear paid ransom money when the United States held Derne and its population of 12,000-15,000—why not trade them for the *Philadelphia* captives? The adventurer contended that “Tripoli was in our power” and lamented that Hamet’s “cause of Liberty” had been abandoned.

Hamet took the news of the peace treaty and the abandonment of the coup attempt well. He, thirty-six of his followers, Eaton, and the American marines fled Derne the night

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<sup>696</sup> Circular letter from John Rodgers, June 8, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 99.

<sup>697</sup> Lear to Rodgers, June 4, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 82.

<sup>698</sup> Eaton to Rodgers, June 13, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 117.

<sup>699</sup> Eaton to Thomas Dwight, June 17, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 122.

<sup>700</sup> Eaton to Smith, *Ibid.*, VI: 217, 218.

of June 12<sup>th</sup> and went to Syracuse.<sup>701</sup> The ex-bashaw thanked Eaton for his “generous and many exertions in my behalf” and acknowledged his personal shortcomings—“my own means were small” and “did not answer your reasonable expectations.”<sup>702</sup> He declared himself resigned “to the will of God” and simply wanted his family and a “small” stipend so that he could retire to another country and “spend the residue of my Days in Peace.”

Hamet’s plight attracted the pity of Rodgers, who called him an “unfortunate and helpless Man” and arranged for a stipend of two-hundred Spanish dollars per month.<sup>703</sup> Rodgers also tried to persuade Hamet to come to the United States, but he declined. Hamet soon became unhappy, though, and appealed to Jefferson for help. In August, he complained that Yusuf refused to return his family and described his current state as immensely depressing: “I find myself in this country [Syracuse], with the small pension of two hundred dollars per month...to support myself with a number of people....the weight of my misfortune has only increased, and for the first time, am completely abandoned, and by a great nation; I therefore fling myself on the mercy of your excellency, who, under the influence of just laws, will not fail to render me that justice which oppression and misfortune entitle me to.”<sup>704</sup> As will be seen, the question of America’s obligations to Hamet would become hotly contested in newspapers and in Congress over the next year.

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<sup>701</sup> Report of the Troops from Derne, July 3, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 153; Eaton to Rodgers, June 13, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 116.

<sup>702</sup> Hamet Karamanli to Eaton, June 29, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 144.

<sup>703</sup> Rodgers to Smith, August 23, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 246; Rodgers to George Dyson, U.S. Naval Agent at Syracuse, July 12, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 178.

<sup>704</sup> Hamet Karamanli to Jefferson, August 5, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 210.

In the United States, the conclusion of the Tripolitan War took everyone by surprise. Jefferson had expected the Tripolitan War to last at least until the summer and perhaps drag on indefinitely. In a March letter about the conflict's status, the president did not even mention the coup attempt—he apparently thought so little about its potential that it did not factor into his decision-making. Instead, he expressed his weariness with the war and his preference to deescalate the conflict. In a letter to Judge John Tyler, Jefferson remarked that if the navy “cannot produce peace” by the end of this summer “we shall recall our force, except one frigate and two small vessels, which will keep up a perpetual blockade. Such a blockade will cost us no more than a state of peace, and will save us from increased tributes, and the disgrace attached to them.”<sup>705</sup> Jefferson had tired of the Tripolitan War's cost and did not care about permanently ending the threat of Barbary piracy. If implemented, his plans would have meant that his administration would have spent millions of dollars fighting Tripoli for nothing. What about the *Philadelphia* captives? The letter to Tyler was silent about their fate, but earlier in the year Jefferson reported that if the navy could not win peace, then he would “ransom them.”<sup>706</sup> Notably, Jefferson ignored the political repercussions to abandoning the war effort against Tripoli. Unquestionably it would have helped the Federalist Party by providing them with powerful criticisms of his presidency: a failed war and an enormous waste of money. A protracted hostage situation played a significant role in dooming Jimmy Carter's presidency in the late twentieth century; perhaps a loss against Tripoli and a large ransom payment would have prevented Secretary of State Madison from

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<sup>705</sup> Jefferson to Judge John Tyler, March 29, 1805, Andrew Lipscomb, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1905), XI: 70.

<sup>706</sup> January 8, 1805, Franklin Sawvel, ed., *The Complete ANAS of Thomas Jefferson* (Da Capo Press: New York, 1970), 230.

being elected in 1808. Fortunately for Jefferson, news of the peace treaty arrived in August, which prevented him from quitting the war and inflicting a devastating blow upon his political party.

As news about the treaty trickled in to the United States in summer and fall 1805 (through letters from the Mediterranean) and Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspaper editors began to interpret the Tripolitan War's end, they found little common ground except in rejoicing in the *Philadelphia* captives' freedom. Newspapers battled over shaping public opinion and crafted different narratives that diverged over the appropriateness of paying \$60,000 ransom and the abandonment of the coup attempt. As for the Jefferson Administration, it bided its time and waited months before issuing a statement—not until January 1806 did the public finally learn the full details of the treaty. Fighting in the Mediterranean had ended, but it was just beginning in the United States.

Democratic-Republican newspapers realized that much was at stake regarding public perceptions of the Tripolitan War—they did not want the Federalist Party to regain popularity. In order to bolster their own party, Democratic-Republicans constructed a triumphalist narrative in which the United States crushed Tripoli thanks to Jefferson's resolute leadership. Newspapers in six states ran an article that presented the Tripolitan War as the capstone of Jefferson's presidency: "no event that has happened during the present administration, confers upon it greater lustre than the recent success of our arms against Tripoli. While other nations have disgracefully crouched before the powers of Barbary, the United States...has yet bravely defied, opposed, and conquered them. Our infant nation has set a bright example to European powers, and the world will perhaps be indebted to her for a



generous spirit of independence.”<sup>707</sup> As for the Jefferson Administration, it boldly “procur[ed] a large and powerful army to invade the Tripoline territory.” This article distorted actual events in order to elevate Jefferson’s reputation—he had nothing to do with planning the coup attempt. Moreover, the United States had hardly conquered the whole of Tripoli—Hamet and Eaton’s forces held but one town and could not overcome Yusuf’s reinforcements. Other newspaper articles hoped that the end of the Tripolitan War would further turn the public against the Federalist Party. A Maine newspaper praised Jefferson for winning the war with frugality and claimed that, had John Adams’s policies been continued, “we might have exhausted the whole national treasury in annual tribute,” the Barbary States “would have exacted our property or plunder,” and “we should have been the butt and ridicule of all Europe.”<sup>708</sup> Similarly, a New Hampshire newspaper praised Jefferson for making peace with Tripoli and Morocco “on our own terms” and predicted that the treaty would “put a stop to the shameful defamation of our government by federalists.”<sup>709</sup> In their over-the-top fawning over Jefferson, these articles served as propaganda. Their characterization of the president as a strategic mastermind lacked any basis in reality and distorted his tepid commitment to the Tripolitan War.

By contrast, Federalists readily celebrated the end of the *Philadelphia* crew’s enslavement but expressed reservations about the treaty. Several newspapers demonstrated

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<sup>707</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), September 4, 1805; *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), September 13, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), September 19, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), October 16, 1805. An abridged version ran in *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), September 9, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), September 13, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), September 15, 1805; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), September 18, 1805; *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), September 25, 1805. All of these newspapers were Democratic-Republican except for *The Courier* and *Middlebury Mercury*—they were politically neutral.

<sup>708</sup> *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), September 13, 1805.

<sup>709</sup> *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), September 7, 1805.

their patriotism and enthusiasm for the captives' liberation by utilizing capital letters: for instance, "the EMANCIPATION OF OUR LATE CAPTIVE BRETHERN FROM THE CHAINS OF TRIPOLINE SLAVERY"<sup>710</sup> and "OUR CAPTIVE BRETHERN ARE RELEASED!"<sup>711</sup> Newspapers in two states called their freedom "a highly welcome and joyful event" and exulted that they would no longer "suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness."<sup>712</sup> Other Federalist publications offered criticism about the Tripolitan War's end. Multiple newspapers published an editorial stating that "that our countrymen are free *is true*; and we cordially rejoice—so far we are certain is good. If in all other respects, the treaty has strictly preserved the faith and honour of the country, it is good; if not, it is certainly bad."<sup>713</sup> More harshly, an article that ran in two states argued that Lear prematurely made peace—the expedition could have easily liberated the captives within three weeks "*and at the same time had the satisfaction of seeing their tyrant hurled from the throne; and the friend and ally of the United States established in his stead!*"<sup>714</sup> It also predicted (correctly) that Democratic-Republican newspapers would obstinately defend the Jefferson Administration "*right or wrong, through thick and thin*" and "attempt to *justify*, if they cannot applaud, the *haste* of Mr. LEAR." Moreover, a Boston newspaper mocked a Democratic-Republican publication that credited Jefferson's gunboats for liberating the *Philadelphia*

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<sup>710</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), August 31, 1805; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), September 3, 1805; *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), September 9, 1805.

<sup>711</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), August 30, 1805.

<sup>712</sup> *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), September 4, 1805; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), September 19, 1805.

<sup>713</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), October 1, 1805; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), October 5, 1805.

<sup>714</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), October 1, 1805; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), October 9, 1805.

captives—it suggested that newspaper “might as well have attributed it to the famous whirling armed chair at *Monticello*.”<sup>715</sup> Federalist newspaper editors sought an elusive middle ground: rejoicing at the freedom of the captives while disliking the war’s abrupt end.

Democratic-Republican newspapers barely engaged the substance of Federalist criticisms and mostly blasted their rivals as reprehensive people. A widely published article claimed (falsely) that Federalist newspapers contained “not a word of pleasing congratulation on the release of the captives—not a word of the happy state of our country by restoration of peace.”<sup>716</sup> It also criticized Federalists for making Hamet “the object of their sympathy” and wondered when Federalists will cease “paying hirelings for lying.” A Boston publication waxed poetic about alleged Federalist indifference to the captives’ freedom: “Yet some there really are, we find/ So harden’d and deprav’d in mind,/ On whom this news has no effect,/ But cold indifference or neglect.”<sup>717</sup> These articles either remained ignorant of—or, more likely, ignored—Federalist publications that rejoiced over the return of the *Philadelphia* hostages. Other Democratic-Republican newspapers attacked Federalists as unpatriotic and motivated solely by the prospect of partisan gain. Publications in two states, for instance, mocked Federalists’ anger at the ransom payment by rhetorically asking “can it be possible” that they “are actuated by patriotic movies? Can it be possible that they are not governed by envy, and enmity to the happiness of their country?”<sup>718</sup> Several newspapers spewed a more

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<sup>715</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), October 19, 1805.

<sup>716</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), September 30, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), October 5, 1805; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), October 15, 1805; *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), October 16, 1805; *The Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, OH), November 7, 1805. It also appeared in the Federalist *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), October 15, 1805.

<sup>717</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), January 1, 1806.

<sup>718</sup> *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), October 26, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), October 30, 1805.

spiteful insult, remarking that it would have given Federalists “pleasure [to] hear that the dead corps of our unhappy captives were enriching the soil of Tripoli” because they would have another reason to oppose Jefferson.<sup>719</sup> Another newspaper vaunted that the Tripolitan War “has conferred greater glory on our country” than any event “since the adoption of our constitution” and accused Federalists of lacking “the magnanimity to approve what was done by their opponents....It grieves them sorely to think, that that administration which they had so often represented as weak, pusillanimous and cowardly should display more effective energy, and accomplish greater undertakings than their predecessors. They therefore employ every art in their power to sully the glory which it has acquired and to detract from the merits of the treaty.”<sup>720</sup> Why would Democratic-Republican newspaper editors get so defensive about any criticism of Jefferson or the treaty? They knew that public opinion was at stake and wanted Americans to view Jefferson’s leadership favorably—and forget that he bore some responsibility for the *Philadelphia* crew being held hostage in the first place.

Dehumanizing Federalists and distorting their actual views comprised a vital part of the Democratic-Republican triumphalist narrative. They wanted to persuade the public that Jefferson’s Barbary policies had clearly trumped those of his Federalist predecessors.

Democratic-Republicans also wielded Christianity as a weapon by claiming that some Federalists had offended God by not publicly thanking Him for the restoration of the *Philadelphia* captives. Democratic-Republican publications revolved their attack around Governor Caleb Strong of Massachusetts, lambasting him for ignoring the liberation of the hostages in his Thanksgiving proclamation. Two newspapers published a hostile open letter

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<sup>719</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 10, 1805; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), October 19, 1805; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), October 29, 1805.

<sup>720</sup> *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), November 29, 1805.

to the governor that called him a “cold-hearted, impious wretch, whose conscious is so seared with the hot iron of party prejudice.”<sup>721</sup> This insult alludes to 1 Timothy 4:2, which claims that people professing to be Christians will abandon the faith—“having their conscience seared with a hot iron,” they lack true knowledge and fortitude.<sup>722</sup> By contrast, the article emphasized that other governors had properly thanked God and that the public at large expressed gratitude “in Christian assemblies” as well as in “in the morning and evening devotions of Christian families.” Similarly, an article published in four states condemned Strong for not “mention[ing] one word of the release” of the *Philadelphia* captives “which every real American must consider as a subject of joy and congratulation; and especially of gratitude to the Supreme Being.”<sup>723</sup> Additionally, two Massachusetts newspapers accused Boston clergymen of allowing “party spirit” to “overleap the boundary of *religious decency*” by following Governor Strong’s “irreligious example.”<sup>724</sup> It claimed that they were “more inclined to affront Jehovah than the Governor” and considered them more reprobate than the atheistic French. This tactic of invoking religion for partisan means resembled Federalist efforts in the 1800 election that portrayed Jefferson as unqualified for the presidency due to his unorthodox religious beliefs.<sup>725</sup> Massachusetts made a particularly attractive target since it was the last stronghold of Federalism. These Democratic-Republican newspapers turned

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<sup>721</sup> *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), November 18, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), November 29, 1805.

<sup>722</sup> 1 Timothy 4:2 (King James Version).

<sup>723</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 28, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), November 1, 1805; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), November 4, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), November 9, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Northampton, MA), November 12, 1805; *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), November 13, 1805; *Farmers’ Register* (Troy, NY), November 19, 1805.

<sup>724</sup> *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), December 2, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Springfield, MA), December 10, 1805.

<sup>725</sup> Edward Larson, *A Magnificent Catastrophe: The Tumultuous Election of 1800, America’s First Presidential Campaign* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 170, 173.

the liberation of the *Philadelphia* crew into a religious test for public leadership and sought to portray Federalists as dangerous to the welfare of the United States—they tempted the wrath of God with their ingratitude.

Federalists and Democratic-Republicans also disagreed over whether Yusuf would have executed the *Philadelphia* captives if the coup attempt had continued. The former tended to deny that the threat was real, while the latter took it seriously. A Federalist newspaper from Boston printed Cowdery's May 24<sup>th</sup> diary entry about the bashaw's eagerness to make peace and willingness to free the prisoners without ransom.<sup>726</sup> Below this excerpt, the editor wrote: "*six days after peace was agreed on, and 60,000 dollars ransom money paid.*" Several Federalist publications castigated Lear, portraying him as consumed with envy over the prospect of Eaton gaining all the glory from conquering Tripoli. A widely published (anonymous) letter asserted that Lear "from the moment of Eaton's arrival, conceived a jealousy and formed a plan to defeat his hopes to reinstate Hamet."<sup>727</sup> It added that Yusuf "was ready to submit *to any terms whatever*" and emphasized that Cowdery personally told the writer that "*there never was the smallest danger of the lives of a single individual.*" Similarly, several Federalist publications averred that "nothing can be more ridiculous" than the notion that Yusuf would have massacred the hostages.<sup>728</sup> If he were

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<sup>726</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), January 11, 1806.

<sup>727</sup> *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), October 11, 1805; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), October 11, 1805; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), October 16, 1805; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), October 17, 1805; *The Post-Boy, and Vermont & New-Hampshire Federal Courier* (Windsor, VT), October 22, 1805; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), October 29, 1805. It also ran in two Democratic-Republican newspapers: *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), October 22, 1805 and *Bridgeport Herald* (Bridgeport, CT), October 25, 1805.

<sup>728</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), September 25, 1805; *Newhampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), September 28, 1805. The *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), September 30, 1805 used italics instead of capital letters.

serious about killing them, they asked, why had he not done so during Preble's summer 1804 attacks? The bashaw was smart and "knew our captive countrymen were the best guarantee for his life." The article argued, in bold letters so that no one could possibly miss it, that the negotiators sabotaged an honorable ending: "OUR COUNTRYMEN WOULD HAVE BEEN RELEASED WITHOUT RANSOM;—THE RIGHTFUL PRINCE WOULD HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO THE THRONE OF TRIPOLY;— AND THE AMERICAN FLAG WOULD BE NOW TRIUMPHANTLY FLYING OVER THAT CITY." These Federalist newspapers believed that the Tripolitan War could have been a glorious triumph for the United States—victory was at hand, but the envious Lear betrayed Eaton, Hamet, and their forces by cutting a shameful deal with Yusuf.

By contrast, Democratic-Republican newspapers defended Lear's decision to pay ransom as a prudent choice. Eleven publications printed an essay that conceded that Eaton's victory at Derne "no doubt contributed to induce [Yusuf] to make overtures for peace," but argued that the effect was minimal: "it is chimerical to suppose that the capture of a small town, several hundred miles from Tripoli, would have compelled the Bashaw to have submitted (as some suppose) to whatever terms Col. Lear may have thought to prescribe."<sup>729</sup> It contended that Lear saved the prisoners' lives by paying ransom—had the expedition continued on to the capital city, Yusuf would have "satiated his fury and vengeance by the *massacre*" of the captives. An article printed in three states asked, "what man of sympathy would wish to place the lives of 300 prisoners, (immured within the cells of an enraged

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<sup>729</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), October 9, 1805; *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), October 15, 1805; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), October 15, 1805; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), October 16, 1805; *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 21, 1805; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), October 21, 1805; *Republican Spy* (Northampton, MA), October 22, 1805; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), October 23, 1805; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), October 24, 1805; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), November 11, 1805; *The Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, OH), November 14, 1805.

barbarian) at hazard, having wives, children, brethren and relations anxious for their destiny, merely for the sake of trying how far the threats of such a barbarian would have been carried into execution?...If we had suffered one man to have fallen a sacrifice, the world would have reprobated our conduct.”<sup>730</sup> This article made an emotional appeal to readers in attempting to persuade them that paying ransom was the right choice. Families needed their patriarchs to return—it would be cruel to risk their breadwinner’s life. By killing the *Philadelphia* captives, the bashaw would also be destroying American families. Other newspapers celebrated the treaty because it avoided further bloodshed by sparing the lives of Tripolitan civilians and “our brave tars.” “For this,” it argued, “we have paid the paltry sum of 60,000 dollars, a sum which, divided among the people of the United States, does not exceed a cent a head.”<sup>731</sup> These Democratic-Republican newspaper editors defended paying ransom as the absolutely correct choice that ensured that the *Philadelphia* captives would return home alive.

Eaton eventually become a polarizing figure, but initially newspaper editors of both political parties hailed him as a military genius worthy of the highest accolades. More than two dozen newspapers published a celebratory biography that hailed him as the “MODERN AFRICANUS” (a reference to the eminent Roman General Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus).<sup>732</sup> It depicted Eaton as a larger-than-life warrior, with “a countenance bold and

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<sup>730</sup> *Hornet* (Frederick, MD), November 12, 1805; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), November 14, 1805. It also ran in the Federalist *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), October 29, 1805.

<sup>731</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), November 6, 1805; *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), November 15, 1805; *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), November 18, 1805; *The Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, OH), November 28, 1805.

<sup>732</sup> *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), August 26, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), September 28, 1805; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), September 28, 1805; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), September 30, 1805; *Farmers’ Register* (Troy, NY), October 1, 1805; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), October 1, 1805; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), October 2, 1805; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), October 3, 1805; *The*



undaunted; a constitution robust and confirmed by exercises and fatigues, and courage of that determined and invincible kind.” This hagiographic piece also included an anecdote (probably apocryphal) of a failed assassination attempt against Eaton in 1801—the bashaw and prime minister of Tripoli wanted to kill Eaton, but the American remained cool with a “countenance terrible as Mars, and his eyes glaring as living coals” and reached for his sword. The prime minister relented, being “too effeminate to withstand...the awful appearance of an angry veteran.” Similarly, newspapers in three states printed a letter written by midshipman Henry Martin that portrayed Eaton as being on the cusp of complete victory: “if gen. Eaton could have marched to Tripoli, no doubt remains but that we should have taken that place.” Further, Martin heralded him as a superhuman talent: “the name of ‘EATON’ among the Barbarians was a good as ten thousand Turks.”<sup>733</sup> Altogether, newspaper editors deemed Eaton an extraordinary figure who boasted courage and talent unseen since the days of ancient Rome. Since no one blamed Eaton for the abandonment of the coup attempt (everyone recognized that Lear and Barron made the decision), he was frozen in the public’s mind as a legendary adventurer.<sup>734</sup>

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*Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 3, 1805; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), October 4, 1805; *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), October 7, 1805; *City Gazette* (Charleston, SC), October 8, 1805; *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), October 9, 1805; *The Courier* (Norwich, CT), October 9, 1805; *Republican Farmer* (Danbury, CT), October 9, 1805; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), October 10, 1805; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), October 11, 1805; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), October 11, 1805; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), October 12, 1805; *Pennsylvania Correspondent, and Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), October 14, 1805; *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), October 14, 1805; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord, NH), October 16, 1805; *Freeman’s Friend* (Saco, ME), October 16, 1805; *The Witness* (Litchfield, CT), October 16, 1805; *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), October 17, 1805; *Plebian* (Kingston, NY), October 18, 1805; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), October 25, 1805.

<sup>733</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), October 2, 1805; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), October 4, 1805; *Pennsylvania Correspondent, and Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), October 14, 1805.

<sup>734</sup> Negative press about Eaton was very rare, but one Democratic-Republican newspaper condemned the “ridiculous eulogiums” that likened Eaton “to Alexander the Great or Scipio Africanus!” It also downplayed the impressiveness of the victory at Derne and considered Eaton less “gallant” and “heroi[c]” than Edward Preble and Richard Somers (who died in the *Intrepid* explosion). *Republican Advocate* (Fredericktown, MD),

Despite bipartisan acclaim for Eaton among newspaper editors, the extent to which the government should recognize his accomplishments generated fervent debate in the House of Representatives. It began with a December 11<sup>th</sup> motion made by Barnabas Bidwell (Democratic-Republican—MA) to have President Jefferson present Eaton with a commemorative sword “as a testimony” of Congress’s “approbation of his gallant and good conduct, in leading his army through the desert of Lybia...and taking the city of Derne; contributing thereby, to the successful termination of the war, and to the release of our fellow citizens from slavery.”<sup>735</sup> The following day, Bidwell moved to modify his resolution by replacing the sword with a gold medal (a more prestigious honor).<sup>736</sup> This alteration prompted a heated month-long debate. Joseph Clay (Democratic-Republican—PA) stated that he “was very willing to vote for presenting a sword,” but opposed a medal on the grounds that the Derne victory did not constitute “an extraordinary occasion.” However, many congressmen supported Bidwell’s motion. James Elliot (Democratic-Republican—VT) and John Smilie (Democratic-Republican—PA) argued that Eaton had accomplished as much or more than Preble (who had received a gold medal from Congress) and therefore he deserved a medal as well. Elliot added that the multinational character of Eaton and Hamet’s forces (“collected from the four quarters of the globe”) constituted “a phenomenon in military history, calculated to attract the attention of the world, and not only by its novelty, but by its real influence and consequence.” Josiah Quincy (Federalist—MA) argued that

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October 18, 1805. The *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.) of October 25<sup>th</sup> also ran this article, but included a preface that criticized it for “not do[ing] full justice to the undaunted heroism of Mr. Eaton.”

<sup>735</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), December 12, 1805.

<sup>736</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Daily Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), December 16, 1805.

Eaton's seamless execution of his expedition revealed a "great and superior mind" and therefore merited a medal. No decision was made that day, but the motion was referred to a committee and debated again on December 26<sup>th</sup>. Clay reiterated his opposition, contending that Eaton did not deserve "so high a reward."<sup>737</sup> John Randolph (Democratic-Republican—VA) likewise considered the Derne expedition insufficiently important to merit a medal and he also expressed fiscal concerns: "we ought to be careful of the public money, and not to vote it away, except upon some extraordinary occasion." Joseph Varnum (Democratic-Republican—MA) defended Eaton's accomplishments at length and contended "that in a very little time he would have taken Tripoli itself," while Ebenezer Elmer (Democratic-Republican—NJ) considered a sword far too weak an accolade, "more appropriate to the reward of officers serving under a commander in chief." Nathan Williams (Democratic-Republican—NY) declared that Eaton "had effected more than commodore Preble" and therefore deserved a medal. A vote was taken and although the motion passed 58 to 53, it was well below the necessary two-thirds support.<sup>738</sup> It therefore returned to committee. Although many Democratic-Republicans spoke out in favor of Eaton, nearly half of the House of Representatives opposed giving him the higher honor of the medal. They valued the capture of Derne far less than did Eaton's champions and perhaps they feared that giving Eaton a gold medal would make him a formidable political threat to their own party.

Congress debated Eaton's accomplishments a final time on December 27<sup>th</sup>. Clay offered new arguments for opposing Bidwell's motion, claiming that he had reviewed the *Journals of Congress* and discovered (incorrectly!) that only three gold medals were given to

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<sup>737</sup> *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), December 30, 1805.

<sup>738</sup> *House Journal*, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, December 26, 1805, (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1826), 218, Library of Congress, "American Memory," <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwhj.html>.

Revolutionary War heroes.<sup>739</sup> Clay declared that he opposed awarding Eaton a medal because he did not “consider the taking of Derne as equal in importance to the capture of Cornwallis” and because Decatur had received a sword for his Tripolitan War heroics. Randolph reiterated his opposition as well, arguing that the capture of Derne was not a “great national event,” just a mere “skirmish between a few of our countrymen and a handful of undisciplined, half armed barbarians.” James Jackson (Democratic-Republican—GA) announced that he had changed his mind—he now supported giving Eaton a sword instead of a medal because Decatur had only gotten a sword. Bidwell countered such arguments by emphasizing that Eaton’s endeavor was “not merely military but partly military and partly diplomatic” and therefore worthy of a medal. Varnum concurred, stressing that the navy was unable “to reduce our enemy to terms” and that “the force under Eaton had a greater effect than the whole fleet in producing peace.” He challenged his colleagues: “if we gave Preble a medal...shall we refuse the same reward to Eaton, who accomplished the object”? Elmer noted that “I am not very friendly to things of this kind” but insisted that Eaton clearly deserved a medal on account of demonstrating “bravery, fortitude, and wisdom.” James Kelly (Federalist—PA) similarly hailed Eaton’s expedition as one “of great magnitude and national importance” and, like Varnum, argued that if Preble received a medal even though his efforts did not defeat Tripoli, then Eaton surely deserved one. A vote was taken and Bidwell’s motion again passed 58 to 53—further debate had not made a difference. Despite passionate speeches on behalf of Eaton, too many congressmen remained opposed. Had Bidwell stuck to his original motion for a sword, it likely would have passed. Bidwell tried

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<sup>739</sup> *The Pittsfield Sun; or, Republican Monitor* (Pittsfield, MA), January 20, 1806. Actually, seven Revolutionary War heroes received gold medals. Matthew Glassman, “Congressional Gold Medals, 1776-2014,” Congressional Research Service, [http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%270E%2C\\*PL%5B%3C%230%20%20%0A](http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%270E%2C*PL%5B%3C%230%20%20%0A).

to scale back his goal and, on January 8<sup>th</sup>, presented a resolution in which Congress would thank Eaton “and his brave associates” for their accomplishments.<sup>740</sup> However, like the earlier motions it stalled in the House of Representatives and never passed. Sadly, Eaton never received any official commendation from Congress, although the Massachusetts state legislature awarded him 10,000 acres of land and praised his “undaunted courage and brilliant services.”<sup>741</sup>

Congress’s lack of appreciation for Eaton prompted some Federalists to cry foul. Newspapers in two states claimed that opposition to awarding Eaton a medal stemmed from partisanship—“if General Eaton had been a Virginian, and a thorough democrat, he might have been covered with medals.”<sup>742</sup> They also portrayed Eaton’s opponents as out-of-touch with public sentiment: Americans have “already decided the question, and no man ever held higher rank in their esteem than the brave EATON.” Similarly, several newspapers accused Clay of “pervert[ing] facts” and emphasized the importance of the Derne victory: it “is a fortified city containing between twelve and fifteen thousand souls; it is the capital of the best province of Tripoli, and the eastern key of the kingdom.” The article added that, in their opposition to Eaton, congressmen challenged President Jefferson, who had proclaimed that the coup attempt “gave peace to our country, and freedom to three hundred of our fellow citizens.”<sup>743</sup> These Federalists felt outraged, believing that Democratic-Republican

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<sup>740</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), January 11, 1806.

<sup>741</sup> Lambert, 165; Resolution of Commonwealth of Massachusetts, February 25, 1806, *Naval Documents* VI: 376-377.

<sup>742</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), December 28, 1805; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), January 4, 1806.

<sup>743</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 2, 1806; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), January 10, 1806; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), January 11, 1806.

congressmen withheld a high honor from Eaton simply because he did not belong to their political party. In these newspaper editors' minds, Eaton had been betrayed twice: first by Lear and now by the House of Representatives.<sup>744</sup>

As for President Jefferson, he refrained from issuing a public statement about the Tripolitan War until his December 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Message, which expressed gratitude for “the liberation of our fellow-citizens” from captivity and praised the coup attempt—it “contributed doubtless to the impression which produced peace.”<sup>745</sup> A week later, he gave a copy of the Tripolitan War treaty to the Senate and, the following month, he passed along a plethora of correspondence and government instructions.<sup>746</sup> Jefferson also addressed Congress regarding Hamet.<sup>747</sup> He emphasized that the expedition was abandoned due to Hamet being “totally unable to command any resources, or to bear any part in cooperation with us” and stressed that his administration had never intended “to raise, pay, or subsist an army of Arabs to march from Derne to Tripoli and to carry on a land war at such a distance from our resources.” Although Hamet had no grounds to feel betrayed by the United States, the president thought that Congress should provide some remuneration to him in order to “establish a character of liberality and magnanimity.” Privately, Jefferson expressed

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<sup>744</sup> As for my own judgment, I think that Eaton deserved a gold medal. He gained the trust of hundreds of foreigners, led a grueling 500 mile march, captured a strategic city, and did more to compel Yusuf to pursue peace than the U.S. Navy had done in four years.

<sup>745</sup> Jefferson, Fifth Annual Message, December 3, 1805, *The American Presidency Project*, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29447>.

<sup>746</sup> Jefferson, Special Message to the Senate, December 11, 1805, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65866>; Jefferson, Special Message to the Senate, January 13, 1806, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65870>. Jefferson passed along “the correspondence of the naval commanders Barron and Rodgers, and of Mr. Eaton, late consul at Tunis, respecting the progress of the war with Tripoli, antecedent to the treaty with the Bey and Regency of Tripoli, and respecting the negotiations for the same; and the commission and instructions of Mr. Eaton; with such other correspondence in possession of the offices, as I suppose may be useful to the Senate in their deliberations upon the said treaty.”

<sup>747</sup> Jefferson, Special Message to Congress, January 13, 1806, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65871>.

satisfaction with the treaty, remarking to Secretary of the Navy Smith that “considering that Eaton’s fire was all spent at Derne...the peace is a subject of satisfaction.”<sup>748</sup> The president had long wanted to end the Tripolitan War and Eaton’s expedition served as the catalyst. Jefferson correctly recognized that the coup attempt was too weak to continue, but the Senate initially rejected this interpretation.

Indeed, surprisingly strong opposition to the Tripolitan War treaty emerged among senators. Ratification required two-thirds of their support and, with twenty-seven Democratic-Republicans and seven Federalists, passage should have been easy. However, several senators bucked party loyalty by openly denouncing Lear and the treaty. Much authority lay in a committee created to review the treaty. Comprised of four Democratic-Republicans and one Federalist, it was led by a retired militia officer, Stephen Bradley (Democratic-Republican—VT), who had aided Eaton’s military career by appointing him a captain in 1792.<sup>749</sup> Bradley was clearly not impartial, telling Eaton about the “indignation” felt by many senators and predicting that the treaty would not be ratified.<sup>750</sup> He solicited information from personnel who had been in Tripoli and received responses that made Lear appear guilty of exercising poor judgment.<sup>751</sup> One of the *Philadelphia* captives, Second Lieutenant Wallace Wormeley, described the city of Tripoli as being on the precipice of collapse. It was “in the most distressed situation” and filled with “the greatest terror and

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<sup>748</sup> Jefferson to Smith, September 18, 1805, Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Papers, text-fiche, Reel 54.

<sup>749</sup> Prentiss, 14.

<sup>750</sup> The other committee members were Abraham Baldwin (Democratic-Republican—MD), Samuel Smith (Democratic-Republican—MD), Uriah Tracy (Federalist—CT), and Robert Wright (Democratic-Republican—MD). General Stephen Bradley to Eaton, January 19, 1806, *Naval Documents* VI: 349.

<sup>751</sup> Bradley to Eaton, February 15, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 370; Bradley to Wallace Wormeley, February 19, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 373.

consternation.”<sup>752</sup> The economy was crippled due to the naval blockade, yet Yusuf would not raise taxes lest the populace rebel and support Hamet. Wormeley also denied that the captives’ lives were in jeopardy: “I do not believe that there was any danger to be apprehended for our lives, even if general Eaton and Hamet bashaw had have marched under the walls of Tripoli. It would have been to the interest of every subject, (private as well as political) to have protected us.” Master Commandant John Dent, who had participated in the attack on Derne, claimed that Commodore Barron’s poor health adversely affected his decision-making. Barron’s mental state was “so much impaired as scarcely to recollect any thing that transpired from one day to another.”<sup>753</sup> Dent despised Lear for being irrationally hostile to the coup attempt (he had always considered it “fruitless”) and accused him of manipulating Barron. These negative reports from eyewitnesses reinforced Bradley’s suspicions and validated the Federalist press’s criticisms of the treaty.

After two months’ deliberation, the Senate committee released a blistering report on March 17<sup>th</sup>. It abhorred the abandonment of the coup attempt, declaring that Hamet “would have marched to the throne of Tripoli, had he been supported by the co-operation of the American squadron, which in honor and good faith he had a right to expect.”<sup>754</sup> The report excused Barron from blame due to his “wasting sickness, and consequent mental as well as bodily debility” and instead tore into Lear: he “gained a complete ascendancy over the commodore” and “paralyzed every military operation by sea and land.” Moreover, it accused the diplomat of violating his instructions by paying \$60,000 to Yusuf and rebuked him for

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<sup>752</sup> Wormeley to Bradley, February 19, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 373-374.

<sup>753</sup> John Dent to Bradley, February 26, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 377.

<sup>754</sup> Report of Committee regarding Hamet Karamanli, March 17, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 391-393.



not obtaining the restoration of Hamet's family. The committee suspected (correctly, as time would reveal) that Lear and Yusuf "never intended" to return Hamet's family. Further, the committee rejected Lear's contentions that the *Philadelphia* prisoners would have been executed and that the United States lacked the "*means to prosecute the war.*" The report declared that these excuses "have no foundation in fact, and are used rather as a veil to cover an inglorious deed, than solid reasons to justify the negotiator's conduct." The committee wished that the \$60,000 had instead been used to support the restoration of "the rightful sovereign of Tripoli, on his throne" so that the United States would have freed the captives "without the payment of a cent" and obtained "a peace with the Barbary powers, that would have been secure and permanent, and which would have dignified the name and character of the American people." As for Hamet, the committee viewed him as "*a victim to his unbounded confidence in [American] integrity and honor*" and presented a bill that would authorize the president to pay him compensation (the committee left the amount blank). The committee saw a larger principle at stake than simply doing right by Hamet: they hoped that "the legislature of a free and christian country, can never leave it in the power of a mahometan to say *that they violate their faith, or withhold the operations of justice.*" Clearly, the committee considered Lear untrustworthy and deemed the treaty unacceptable. Notably, the report was not an instance of partisan-motivated warfare: four of the five committee members were Democratic-Republican. They took the concept of national honor very seriously and were livid that the quest to restore the rightful bashaw to power had been abandoned.

The credibility and clout of the Senate report allowed Federalist newspaper editors to present their criticisms of the treaty as reasonable and just and to attack Democratic-

Republican publications as overtly partisan for defending Lear. Newspapers in four states published an article that dared Democratic-Republican editors to renounce their support for the treaty. It asked “is there a man in the United States weak enough to justify the conduct of the government’s agent...to tell us that the Tripolitan Treaty is a good treaty? Will the Richmond Enquirer, the Aurora, the Citizen, the Boston Chronicle...persist in swearing that Mr. Consul Lear made a good, and a cheap, and an honest, and an honourable treaty?”<sup>755</sup> Moreover, a Boston newspaper took a moment to criticize all the Democratic-Republican editors who had slandered Federalists over the past few months. It recalled how the Jefferson Administration’s allies had “exalted” the treaty “to the skies as a *chef d’oeuvre* of diplomacy” and had “abused, with their usual virulence every one who was not ready to shout the praises of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Lear.”<sup>756</sup> Now, however, it was clear that Federalist critics had been right all along and “never before, since the United States were a nation, has the character of our country been so disgraced, as by this most unfortunate and humiliating conduct of a publick Agent.” One can imagine Federalist newspaper editors publishing these articles with glee. In their eyes, the Senate committee report constituted proof that Federalists were right to question Lear’s behavior and were devoted to the best interests of the country.

Yet despite the report’s seething anger, the Senate ultimately supported ratification. John Quincy Adams emerged as the leading critic of the committee and marshalled evidence that challenged its inflammatory conclusions. On April 1<sup>st</sup> he spoke at length about how the

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<sup>755</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 24, 1806; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), March 26, 1806; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), April 1, 1806; *The Post-Boy* (Windsor, VT), April 8, 1806; *Connecticut Centinel* (Norwich, CT), April 8, 1806.

<sup>756</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), April 8, 1806.

report was “in many respects contradictory to the whole tenor” of the “voluminous documents” made available to the Senate.<sup>757</sup> He stressed that the report had a very different interpretation of the “nature” of the coup attempt than did Jefferson’s message from January and letters from Hamet, Barron, and Lear. Adams also cited an August 27, 1802 letter from Secretary of the Navy Smith to Commodore Morris as evidence that Eaton had made promises to Hamet that the government had “expressly disavowed.”<sup>758</sup> In the letter, Smith declared that cooperating with Hamet “is not to be considered by you of sufficient magnitude to prevent, or even to retard a final settlement” with Yusuf. Moreover, the senator denied that Eaton and Hamet would inevitably have captured the capital city had they received more support and he disagreed with Chairman Bradley’s depiction of Barron as being “reduced to a state of perfect childhood.”<sup>759</sup> Adams, a lawyer by training, also cast doubt upon the testimony of John Dent (which had been used to discredit Barron) by emphasizing that it was taken after events happened. The senator observed that “among the officers employed in the Mediterranean service, there has been a division into parties” and thus accounts “are seldom altogether free from a certain bias.”<sup>760</sup> Adams thought that the committee unjustly savaged Lear, although he admitted that he did not believe that Yusuf “would have sacrificed the lives of our prisoners.”<sup>761</sup> Overall, Adams considered the treaty a solid deal for the United States

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<sup>757</sup> *Annals of Congress*, Senate, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 211, Library of Congress, “A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875,” <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/>.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-214. Adams erred by dating this letter August 28, 1804. Smith to Morris, August 27, 1802, *Naval Documents II*: 257.

<sup>759</sup> *Annals of Congress*, Senate, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 219.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

and, in his diary, recorded that David Stone (Democratic-Republican—NC) and James Turner (Democratic-Republican—NC) thanked him afterwards.<sup>762</sup>

In addition to Adams's effective opposition, Eaton's erratic behavior contributed to the Senate passing the treaty. The diary of Senator William Plumer (Federalist—NH) reveals how he became disillusioned with Eaton over time. The senator initially thought very highly of the adventurer, crediting the coup attempt for "induc[ing] the Tripolitans to make peace" and deeming him "a man of information & great enterprize."<sup>763</sup> By spring 1806, though, Plumer came to disliked Eaton due to his arrogance and lack of self-control. He reported an incident at Steele's Hotel that was witnessed by a fellow senator, Nicholas Gilman (Democratic-Republican—NJ). "In a most boisterous manner" Eaton cursed at and attacked the servants for bringing in his breakfast late and vowed to "cut their throats" if anyone ate before him.<sup>764</sup> Plumer and Gilman both deemed Eaton "a haughty assuming imprudent man." Moreover, Plumer despised Eaton for declaring that "'a majority of the Senate have sold the honor of their country'" by postponing the bill for aid to Hamet.<sup>765</sup> Plumer resolved never to eat with Eaton anymore and considered his remarks "an outrageous violation of good breeding."<sup>766</sup> In January, Plumer had distrusted "that vile wretch of a *Lear*," believed that the coup attempt "no doubt" would have succeeded had it received more support, and

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<sup>762</sup> Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), April 1, 1806, 425.

<sup>763</sup> Plumer, November 28, 1805, 332; December 4, 1805, 339.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, April 3, 1806, 473.

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*, April 10, 1806, 479-480.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, 1806, 480.

regretted that “we basely & ungenerously deserted the Ex Bashaw.”<sup>767</sup> Three months later, however, the senator deemed the treaty “a good one,” thought Lear “deserve[d] praise, considered Eaton “an imposter,” and viewed the coup attempt as “trivial in its operations & not affording a single prospect of success.”<sup>768</sup> Plumer once viewed Eaton as a heroic martyr, but now considered him egotistical and untrustworthy.

By mid-April, most senators had determined to support ratification. Chairman Bradley argued for postponing the ratification vote until the next session, but this motion was defeated by a vote of 20 to 10.<sup>769</sup> On April 12<sup>th</sup>, Robert Wright (Democratic-Republican—MD) added an amendment to ratify the treaty only if Hamet’s family members were released, but the Senate rejected it 20 to 9. Later that day another vote was taken to ratify without any stipulations—it passed 21 to 8. Adams characterized the debate as “very warm, zealous, and vehement—General Sumter and myself in favor...Messrs. Wright, Adair, White, Smith of Ohio, Tracy, and Pickering against it.”<sup>770</sup> Ultimately, the Senate wanted to resolve the Tripolitan War business and to prevent the United States from being indefinitely bound to Hamet’s welfare. Later that month, Congress granted him a one-time sum of \$2,400 and expected him to survive on his own.<sup>771</sup>

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<sup>767</sup> Ibid., January 14, 1806, 373.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., April 12, 1806, 482; April 27, 1806, 496-497.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., April 8, 1806, 431.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid., April 12, 1806, 433.

<sup>771</sup> Smith to Rodgers, June 25, 1806, *Naval Documents* VI: 447. Hamet received this money in June 1807; Hugh Campbell Account Statement, April 29, 1808, Ibid., VI: 531. Hamet also had been receiving \$200 per month from the U.S. Navy Agent at Syracuse from July 1805 to May 1807, so altogether he received about \$60,000 from the United States; George Dyson to Charles Goldsborough, November 11, 1807, Ibid., VI: 577.

Despite the heated debates in Congress and bitter partisan fighting among newspaper editors, the public at large overwhelmingly rejoiced in the Tripolitan War's end. Celebrations and entertainments hailed the liberation of the *Philadelphia* captives, showered the naval officers and Eaton with accolades, and did not mind the ransom payment. Any doubts about the honorableness of the treaty or the controversy surrounding the abandonment of the coup attempt did not dampen the public spirit—people wanted to party. Indeed, many Americans celebrated the end of the conflict with public dinners, toasts, and cultural events. The Tripolitan War was clearly not a sideshow to Americans—they considered it a pivotal moment in their young country's history with international ramifications.

As they had throughout the conflict, attendees at parties and gatherings celebrated the Tripolitan War with toasts. In contrast to views held by many congressmen and newspaper editors, toasts portrayed the Tripolitan War as a clear-cut victory for the United States. Attendees at a dinner in Trenton, NJ, for instance, rejoiced in “the War of Tripoli, which alone displays feats of heroism splendid as those which adorn the ages of both Greece and Rome.”<sup>772</sup> A Massachusetts group in West Springfield drank to “no Tribute, but such as Eaton and Preble paid to the Bashaw of Tripoli,”<sup>773</sup> while Charleston partygoers wished that “all pirates and tyrants of the ocean, [would] be brought to speedy humiliation and confusion.”<sup>774</sup> In New York, a gathering of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen remembered “the American tars, who nobly fought, bled, conquered, and obtained a glorious ransom of our countrymen.”<sup>775</sup> Some toasts exaggerated the role played

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<sup>772</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), January 23, 1806.

<sup>773</sup> *Hampshire Federalist* (Springfield, MA), July 8, 1806.

<sup>774</sup> *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), July 21, 1806.

<sup>775</sup> *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), January 11, 1806.

by the Navy in ending the Tripolitan War, inaccurately crediting it with subduing the bashaw. For instance, a Connecticut group of “Gentlemen and Ladies” in Columbia hailed “*our infant Navy*—Large enough to keep in awe the pirates of Barbary.”<sup>776</sup> Similarly, committee members at a Richmond dinner in honor of Stephen Decatur declared that “our infant navy has already displayed Herculean strength, and taught the world to respect the efforts which a free and enlightened people can make, to vindicate their violated rights.”<sup>777</sup> A rare moment of public opposition to the treaty, though, occurred at a Fourth of July celebration in Massachusetts. The speaker urged the audience to despise it, rhetorically asking “where is our national honor, till then unstained and a name respected by all nations? *Betrayed at Tripoli.*”<sup>778</sup> Overall, however, the vast majority of public celebrations hailed the Tripolitan War as an exceptional victory. These toasts do not accurately describe the conflict’s limited gains, but rather reflect the deep nationalism felt by Americans. They ignored the war’s unpleasant ambiguities such as the ransom payment and the abandonment of Hamet and instead argued that the United States had crushed its adversaries and made an honorable treaty.

Americans also lionized the naval officers and seamen as noble guardians of republicanism who defended (and did not threaten) domestic liberty. An Irish-Catholic fraternal society from Charleston drank to “the Navy of the United States—May it, as before the walls of Tripoli, humble the proudest of her enemies.”<sup>779</sup> An Albany group of Democratic-Republicans celebrated the Fourth of July with a toast to “Commodore Preble

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<sup>776</sup> *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), July 30, 1807.

<sup>777</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), June 13, 1806.

<sup>778</sup> *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), July 29, 1806.

<sup>779</sup> *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), March 19, 1807.

and the officers and crews of the American Navy—they have immortalized the name of American sailors,” while a Boston group of Democratic-Republicans celebrated “Com. Preble, Stephen Decatur, and the heroes who fought in the Mediterranean. Theirs is the boast of humbling the Tripolitan tyrant—and their country’s gratitude the laurels which they earn.”<sup>780</sup> The Lieutenant Governor of New York exalted the naval officers and seamen for embodying the finest masculine standards, raising a toast to “the sons of America—May they emulate the spirit of our brethren at Tripoli, when called upon to defend their country’s sacred rights.”<sup>781</sup> Likewise, a Charleston group saluted “the Memory of our heroes who fell before the walls of Tripoli—May the records of their valor be handed down to posterity, and stimulate future generations to deeds of glory.”<sup>782</sup> President Jefferson viewed the navy as a threat to America’s freedom, but the public clearly rejected such fears. To them, the officers and tars had demonstrated their importance to the country’s welfare, merited the highest praise, and served as role models for American men.

Additionally, toasts expressed gratitude at the return of the captives and depicted them as martyrs who suffered and not as cowards who shamefully surrendered their ship to the enemy. A Fourth of July group of Boston Democratic-Republicans drank to “the liberation of our countrymen from Tripolitan captivity—While in confinement we wept with them—and now they are liberated, we rejoice with them.”<sup>783</sup> In Albany, “a party of young gentlemen” hoped that “the animating smiles of their countrymen, [would] erase the sad impressions of a gloomy dungeon,” while a Trenton gathering celebrated “our brethren lately

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<sup>780</sup> *American Citizen* (New York, NY), July 16, 1806; *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), July 7, 1806.

<sup>781</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 12, 1806.

<sup>782</sup> *City-Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), July 10, 1806.

<sup>783</sup> *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), July 7, 1806.



captive in Tripoli—May the twining of the laurel efface the impressions of the fetter.”<sup>784</sup> The Philadelphia Typographical Society similarly drank to “our brethren lately in captivity in Tripoli—May they forget their past sufferings in the pleasing recollection that they were restored to their country by the *cannon balls* of freedom.”<sup>785</sup> Although surrendering the *Philadelphia* greatly hurt the U.S. war effort, the public did not hold a grudge against Captain Bainbridge and the ship’s officers and crew. Americans had read about their sufferings in Tripoli and were relieved that their ordeal had ended.

Yet even while hailing the Tripolitan War’s end, Americans somberly remembered those who died during the conflict. The public believed that their deaths (especially the *Intrepid* officers and crew) had not been in vain, but contributed to the defense of American freedom and commerce. Celebrants at a Martha’s Vineyard Fourth of July celebration, for instance, drank to the *Intrepid* crew: those “young Heroes—Who, at the siege of Tripoli, preferred death to slavery.”<sup>786</sup> A group of Boston Democratic-Republicans likewise remembered “Somers, Israel, and Wadsworth—Their bravery and becoming death shall be remembered by their countrymen, ‘*until nature sinks in years,*’” while a New York dinner party praised “the memory of *Wadsworth, Summers, and Israel*—Like the phoenix of antiquity, they rise more resplendent from the flame which destroyed them.”<sup>787</sup> An infantry company from Trenton offered a broader remembrance that honored all “the heroes who fell before Tripoli—May their bravery and patriotism be as generally imitated as it is

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<sup>784</sup> *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 12, 1806; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), January 23, 1806.

<sup>785</sup> *The Spirit of the Press* (Philadelphia, PA), November 16, 1805.

<sup>786</sup> *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), August 21, 1806.

<sup>787</sup> *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), July 7, 1806; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 12, 1806.

admired.”<sup>788</sup> The public did not take these deaths for granted, but rather genuinely appreciated what the navy had accomplished. They expected future generations of Americans to remember the Tripolitan War and to revere the deceased as heroes.

In addition to remembering the dead, the public relished the living heroes of the Tripolitan War. The naval officers became highly valued dinner guests and Americans wanted to bask in their presence and express their admiration and gratitude. For instance, Bainbridge received a thunderous reception while in Fredericksburg, Virginia to attend a dinner in his honor. As a local newspaper described, many “citizens and other civil and military officers” greeted him and “the streets were crowded and the houses handsomely illuminated.”<sup>789</sup> Recall Bainbridge’s anxiety in his November 1803 correspondence—he feared that his career would be over and that he would become a pariah. Surely he felt immense relief that the public viewed him as a hero who bravely endured captivity and not as a coward who tarnished his honor by surrendering a warship. Additionally, “a party of young gentlemen” of Philadelphia threw a January 1806 dinner attended for Bainbridge, Decatur, Lieutenant Charles Stewart, and Lieutenant John Shaw. As a newspaper described, it featured dazzling art work: “a splendid transparency” of the “the frigate Philadelphia wrapt in flames, and the ketch Intrepid...bearing off from the scene of glory. On the opposite side of the painting was seen, Gun boat No. 1, with her Tripolitan prize in tow, coming out of the harbour of Tripoli, with a distant view of the Castle and Fortifications of the town. In the front ground appeared, a full length likeness of Capt. Decatur...Its effect on the company

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<sup>788</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 11, 1806.

<sup>789</sup> *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), September 27, 1806.

was delightful.”<sup>790</sup> This dinner also featured a song performed by an theater member—the lyrics included the lines “The carnage is past, but our honours remain/ Pure, bright, and exalted, untouch’d by a stain:/ The heroes return’d, with delight we receive,/ And those that are gone, shall in gratitude live.” Even New Orleans residents threw a gala that featured military officers, government officials, and the governor. A Catholic priest even invited people to a service at the Ursuline Convent “in celebration of the happy deliverance of our American christian brethren” from Tripoli.<sup>791</sup> As a notable scholar has discussed, following the Louisiana Purchase, Louisianans sought to dispel any doubts about their loyalty to the United States.<sup>792</sup> By celebrating the return of the *Philadelphia* captives, they clearly demonstrated their nationalism and solidarity with Americans on the East Coast.

The public likewise heaped acclaim upon Eaton, deeply appreciating his heroic expedition and viewing it as a highlight of the Tripolitan War. Prior to August 1805 Americans knew little about him, but now he was deemed the preeminent military genius of his time. Notably, the public accepted his self-appointed designation of “general” even though, officially speaking, he was not. A group of Democratic-Republicans from New York proclaimed “Gen. Eaton—the best negotiator we ever sent to Tripoli,” while a New Jersey infantry group drank to “Gen. EATON—May the laurels gathered in the African desert, never be withered.”<sup>793</sup> In Salem, a group drank to “*Commodore PREBLE and Gen EATON—Heroes of the first stamp—May they continue the lesson to the foes of our country*

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<sup>790</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 9, 1806.

<sup>791</sup> *The Sentinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), December 3, 1805.

<sup>792</sup> Peter Kastor, *Nation’s Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 137-141.

<sup>793</sup> *American Citizen* (New York, NY), July 16, 1806; *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), July 11, 1806.

they taught the Bashaw of Tripoli,” while an Albany assembly praised “General Eaton—The hero who nobly stepped forward for the rights of humanity and justice.”<sup>794</sup> “Merchants and other citizens” at a New York dinner hinted at a promising future political career for the Derne hero, toasting “*General Eaton—The Statesman and Soldier.*”<sup>795</sup> The public did not care about Eaton’s actual military credentials or that Hamet was not actually restored to power. They revered Eaton for leading an arduous march and winning a thrilling, unexpected victory. In their minds, he had earned the title “General.” However, the public’s lionization of Eaton galled at least one policymaker. Senator Plumer considered it “improper” that people called Eaton a general.<sup>796</sup> Notably, although the public revered Eaton they did not embrace his negative interpretation of the end of the Tripolitan War. Toasts did not condemn Lear or blast the treaty as dishonorable. The public did not deem praising both Eaton and the treaty as mutually exclusive.

As with the naval officers, the public vied to host Eaton at social events. Shortly after his arrival in the United States (at Hampton Roads, VA) on November 10<sup>th</sup>, he stopped in Richmond for a dinner in his honor at the Eagle Tavern.<sup>797</sup> One-hundred gentlemen attended (including Chief Justice John Marshall and other judges) and they raised several Tripolitan War-themed toasts, including multiple to Eaton and one to “the Bashaw of Tripoli—whose ruined fortifications have furnished him with a new lecture on the law of nations.” Eaton also attended a dinner at in his honor at Stelle’s Hotel in Washington, at which celebrants

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<sup>794</sup> *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), July 7, 1806; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 12, 1806.

<sup>795</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), December 10, 1805.

<sup>796</sup> Plumer, January 21, 1807, 583.

<sup>797</sup> *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), November 15, 1805; *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), November 20, 1805.

toasted his “heroism [which] supplied the place of legions, in routing the mercenary bands, and appalling the corrupt councils of Tripoli.”<sup>798</sup> In Philadelphia, Eaton joined many naval and marine corps officers at a public dinner that featured a lengthy and laudatory toast to him: “the hero who had the wisdom and enterprise to surmount the many obstacles opposed to him in Egypt, collect and conduct through the Libyan desert an army of undisciplined barbarians, subdue the city of Derne by storm, carry terror to the heart of the bashaw of Tripoli, rescue three hundred citizens from slavery, and secure an honourable peace to his country.”<sup>799</sup> Attendees at a Springfield, MA celebration took umbrage at Eaton’s treatment by the House of Representatives, condemning the “base men and cowards” who “would withhold from him a crown of glory” and proclaiming that “the voice of his country has raised him a monument more durable than the *envied medal*, and more glorious than the sword.”<sup>800</sup> To the public, Eaton constituted the greatest military mind since George Washington and they credited him with ending the Tripolitan War honorably for the United States.

Tripolitan War celebrations extended beyond public dinners, as a new array of artwork, entertainments, literature, music, and exhibits emerged. Although the conflict had dragged on for four years, public enthusiasm had not grown cold and businessmen and artists still saw commercial potential. Americans could purchase Tripolitan War-themed artwork for their homes or as gifts. A Richmond newspaper, for instance, promoted two different “*elegantly Engraved & Coloured*” plates (20” x 14”) of Tripoli. The first image depicted the

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<sup>798</sup> *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), December 2, 1805.

<sup>799</sup> *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), January 3, 1806.

<sup>800</sup> *Hampshire Federalist* (Springfield, MA), January 28, 1806.

loss of the *Philadelphia* and the second portrayed “Commodore Preble’s Squadron” as it appeared on August 3, 1804 (“when they captured three of the Tripolitan boats, and greatly damaged the Bashaw’s fortifications”).<sup>801</sup> The artist (Charles Denoon) had an unusual degree of credibility—he had been a hostage in Tripoli and his artwork reportedly “received the approbation of the capt. and officers of the *Philadelphia*, of Commodore Barron,” and others who had been at Tripoli. Denoon hoped to turn his dreary captivity experience into a financial positive, charging \$2 per engraving. The ad also urged the wealthy to demonstrate their patriotism by patronizing the arts so that the United States would no longer “be continually indebted to the schools of Europe.” Additionally, another artist, one Mr. Binnse, produced a high-quality print of the *Intrepid* as it prepared to burn the *Philadelphia* in Tripoli’s harbor.<sup>802</sup> He painted the image and then had engravings of it made in Paris. Measuring 17” x 22” and in color, this artwork was considerably more expensive than Denoon’s: \$5 for subscribers or \$6 for non-subscribers. Clearly, these artists thought that the Tripolitan War would endure in public memory and that Americans would want to possess images of key events and show them off to family and friends.

In addition to privately owning Tripolitan War artwork, Americans could communally view pieces at museums and shows. For instance, a wax museum in Litchfield, Connecticut ran advertisements vaunting about their “large and elegant collection” of life-size wax figures, including “an elegant Figure of the GRAND BASHAW of Tripoli.”<sup>803</sup> This wax museum provided inexpensive entertainment for the masses—admission cost only

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<sup>801</sup> *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), October 25, 1805 and November 5, 1805.

<sup>802</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), April 28, 1807.

<sup>803</sup> *The Witness* (Litchfield, CT), February 19, 1806.

twenty-five cents for adults and twelve and a half cents for kids. Atypically, the ad referred to Yusuf as “GRAND”—other publications and commentators did not use this word when describing his position. Likely this designation was sarcastic or implied oriental decadence. Similarly, the Columbian Museum in Boston promoted the “*PHANTASMAGORIA*,” which featured “upwards of 60 Moving Figures” including the “*Bashaw of Tripoli*.”<sup>804</sup> At fifty cents per person, it was considerably more expensive than the Connecticut museum. One wonders how people felt when they gazed upon reproductions of Yusuf. Did they feel superior and triumphant? Did they feel disgust or anger? Did they find him attractive or grotesque? Was Yusuf scowling, looking smug, or did he appear afraid? Did these pieces make observers fear or ridicule the Barbary pirates?

Additionally, several entertainments tried to recreate the feeling of being in Tripoli and witnessing the U.S. Navy’s triumphs. A Philadelphia play featured several large pieces of art, including a 924 ft<sup>2</sup> representation of the battle of Derne on canvas. It depicted Eaton on a grey horse, “the Ex-Bashaw receiving his instructions” (note the power dynamic—Eaton is in charge), Presley O’Bannon, Hamet’s cavalry, French artillery (apparently an error—the expedition had a Greek company), and the *Argus*, *Nautilus*, and *Hornet*. Further, this show contained a 636 ft<sup>2</sup> canvas depicting “*THE BLOWING UP OF A GUN BOAT*,” a transparency of many ships (including the “*Philadelphia wrapt in flames*”), and a dance inspired by Decatur, Preble, and Eaton.<sup>805</sup> What an extravaganza! Patrons would be overwhelmed with the onslaught of visual images, which seemed designed to stir up nationalistic frenzy. The show was apparently profitable and popular—advertisements

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<sup>804</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), November 26, 1805.

<sup>805</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 13, 1806; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 13, 1807.

spanned a full year. In New York, a fireworks show included reenactments of the burning of the *Philadelphia* and the August 1804 bombardments of Tripoli.<sup>806</sup> Another Tripolitan War spectacular, called the Panorama, embarked on a tour of northern cities. It visited Boston, Portland, Portsmouth, and Salem, and featured depictions of “the Bombardment of Tripoli” and the “Burning of the Philadelphia Frigate” that “had the approbation” of Preble, Decatur, “and other Officers.”<sup>807</sup> Painted by “that celebrated Italian Artist” Mr. Corne, it promised an immersive patriotic experience and claimed that “a real American may with satisfaction behold and contemplate the achievements of his brave countrymen in an unequal contest with those semi-barbarians of Africa.”<sup>808</sup>

Some performances went beyond merely having Tripolitan War-themed imagery by incorporating iconic American symbols. In doing so, these shows argued that the Tripolitan War was one of the most important events in U.S. history. A New York newspaper promoted a play called *The Tars from Tripoli: Or, a Tribute of Respect to the Mediterranean Heroes*, the finale of which featured actors (portraying Tripolitans) yielding before the presence of Columbia, Liberty, and Justice.<sup>809</sup> This production ignored the fact that the United States paid \$60,000 to Tripoli and instead implied that Tripoli begged the United States to stop attacking. In Philadelphia, the end of one play featured “an Allegorical Transparency...called AMERICAN HEROES; Or, the Naval Garland, in honor of the

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<sup>806</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), September 22, 1806.

<sup>807</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), December 3, 1806; *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), January 29, 1807; *Portsmouth Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), February 28, 1807; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), April 9, 1807.

<sup>808</sup> *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), January 3, 1807.

<sup>809</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 22, 1806.



Officers who fell in the engagements off Tripoli.”<sup>810</sup> Alongside the busts of several officers who died (“[James] Decatur, Summers, Wadsworth, Caldwell, Israel and Dorsey”) were “the Goddess of America,” Preble, and the *Constitution*. Similarly, a Rhode Island newspaper ran an advertisement for a “Musical Farce” entitled “THE RELEASE OF THE CAPTIVES FROM TRIPOLI, or A *TRIBUTE OF RESPECT TO OUR BRAVE COMMANDERS*,” the final scene of which featured “a View of the Horizon and Sea, a Monument erected to the Memory of our illustrious WASHINGTON in Transparency, and our NAVAL COMMANDERS adorned with Wreaths of Flowers.”<sup>811</sup> No higher compliment could be given to the naval officers than to compare them to George Washington, the most preeminent American war hero of all. Altogether, these immersive visuals created bonds of nationalism by encouraging audience members to imagine themselves present at the Tripolitan War’s triumphant moments. As very few Americans actually went to Tripoli, these shows offered the best simulation—and carried no risk of being enslaved!

Other miscellaneous items included poems, songs, and even a children’s performance. A Philadelphia newspaper advertised “A HEROIC POEM, In celebration of the bravery displayed by the American Tars in the contest with Tripoli.”<sup>812</sup> It cost eighteen and three-quarters cents and covered the Tripolitan War’s highlights and lowlights: the capture of a Tripolitan corsair by the *Enterprize*, the loss and destruction of the *Philadelphia*, Preble’s bombardment of Tripoli, the *Intrepid* explosion, Eaton’s desert march and victory at Derne, and “the sufferings of the American captives.” Its author echoed toasts at public

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<sup>810</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 11, 1807.

<sup>811</sup> *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), September 21, 1805.

<sup>812</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 22, 1806.

celebrations that admonished young men to emulate the character of the naval officers and tars, calling his poem “a work of such public utility” and claiming that it “will teach the youth to admire merit, to pity misfortune; and be enamored with...dignified qualities.”<sup>813</sup>

Children in Philadelphia could go beyond reading about the Tripolitan War by demonstrating their patriotism in public—a local newspaper advertised a play that featured “a Pantomimical Dance, (performed by children) called the SAILOR’S RETURN FROM TRIPOLI.”<sup>814</sup>

Songs appeared as well, including “THE SIEGE OF TRIPOLI, An Historical Naval Sonata, for the Piano Forte,” “The Overture and Songs in the Tars from Tripoli,” and the “Conquest of Tripoli.”<sup>815</sup> The public truly had a voracious appetite for Tripolitan War-themed entertainment and artists and businessmen had a seemingly endless supply of ideas.

In contrast to the festive performances, Americans could read books that offered more serious reflections about the Tripolitan War. Two captives quickly published accounts of their experiences: Jonathan Cowdery and William Ray. Cowdery’s journal has been cited several times in this chapter—it discussed his (privileged) life in Tripoli and contains observations about the bashaw and Tripolitan society. Newspapers throughout the country had previously published excerpts of the journal, but now it was available in its entirety for twenty-five cents.<sup>816</sup> One of the advertisements made an emotional appeal to readers by

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<sup>813</sup> Joseph Hanson, *The Mussulmen Humbled; or, a Heroic Poem, in Celebration of the Bravery, Displayed by the American Tars, in the Contest with Tripoli* (New York: Southwick and Hardcastle, 1806), 3-4, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>814</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 6, 1806.

<sup>815</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), March 3, 1806; *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 5, 1806; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 12, 1806.

<sup>816</sup> For instance, see the *Trenton Federalist* (Trenton, NJ), November 11, 1805; *The Post-Boy, and Vermont & New-Hampshire Federal Courier* (Windsor, VT), November 12, 1805; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 12, 1805; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), November 13, 1805; *The Albany Centinel* (Albany, NY), November 15, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), November 16, 1805; *The Spirit of the Press* (Philadelphia, PA), November 16, 1805; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton,

including three lines of poetry that referenced the *Philadelphia* captives: “*O, hear their groans!/ O, see their tears!—/Then—learn their joy.*”<sup>817</sup> These words were especially misleading because they do not accurately describe the material in Cowdery’s journal—he lived comfortably with the officers and was exempt from hard labor. Readers seeking tales of suffering were better served by perusing William Ray’s *The Horrors of Slavery, or the American Tars in Tripoli*. An ordinary seaman who did hard labor and slept in a prison, Ray despised Cowdery and accused him of deceiving the American public about the nature of captivity in Tripoli. Ray warned readers “that when the Doctor says *we*, it is the very same as if he had said *we officers only*; for he does not think proper to descend to the task of relating how the crew were provided for, or whether they were but half alive or all dead.”<sup>818</sup> A publisher from Albany solicited subscribers in early 1807 and Ray’s narrative went through three editions from 1808 to 1811.<sup>819</sup> Other general histories appeared as well, including *A History of the War between the United States and Tripoli* and *History of the Tripoline War*.<sup>820</sup> Given the minimalist nature of these ads (no author was given, for instance), it seems that the publishers deemed these works less impressive than ones written by former captives in Tripoli. Altogether, artists and businessmen saw enormous commercial potential in the Tripolitan War and offered a plethora of entertainment options to the public.

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MD), November 19, 1805; *Freeman’s Friend* (Saco, ME), November 20, 1805; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), December 24, 1805.

<sup>817</sup> *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), February 6, 1806. It soon had a second printing; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), March 14, 1806. For the lines, see *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), February 8, 1806.

<sup>818</sup> William Ray, *Horrors of Slavery, or the American Tars in Tripoli*, in *White Slaves, African Masters*, 189.

<sup>819</sup> *Olive Branch* (Sherburne, NY), February 25, 1807; Baepler, 187.

<sup>820</sup> *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 14, 1806; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), May 13, 1807.

Because no anti-war movement existed (unlike in the earlier wars against Britain and France), no segment of American society was offended by dehumanizing depictions of Tripolitans or uber-nationalistic celebrations of victory over Tripoli.

What did the Tripolitan War ultimately accomplish? Was there a consensus about its significance? At the war's beginning, diplomats, naval officers, and newspaper editors relished the opportunity to avenge two decade's worth of embarrassments in North Africa. They wanted to create a new type of relationship with the Barbary States, one in which the United States demonstrated its naval superiority and freed itself from tribute obligations. Jefferson's insistence on using limited naval force fragmented this unity, with Federalist editors turning critical after Tripoli's capture of the *Franklin*. Democratic-Republican newspaper editors, though, continued to support the president. Federalists wanted to crush the Tripolitans and achieve a decisive victory, but Democratic-Republicans would settle for implementing a blockade and paying ransom.

Paradoxically, even while the Tripolitan War increased partisanship, the public at large overwhelmingly celebrated it. Unlike earlier conflicts with Britain and France, the Tripolitan War did not generate any public backlash. No leaders were burned in effigy (as John Jay was after negotiating the 1795 treaty with Britain) and no pro-Tripoli associations existed to encourage harmonious relations (as Democratic-Republican Societies did regarding France in the 1790s). Federalist newspaper editors and some politicians contended that the treaty was dishonorable and that the Lear had shamefully abandoned Hamet, but these two issues did not deeply resonate with the public. Instead, Americans believed that the United States had taught the Tripolitans a lesson and expressed little concern for Hamet's

welfare. Artists and businessmen offered an abundance of live performances and commercial products, which allowed Americans to feel good about the war against Tripoli and reinforced a shared national identity uncontaminated by party politics.

Regarding Jefferson, as commander-in-chief he deserves enormous criticism for his handling of the Tripolitan War. It dragged on for far too long because he repeatedly ignored advice from naval officers and diplomats to send more ships. Jefferson's commitment to using limited force endangered the lives of American sailors (by depriving them of backup), indirectly caused the deaths of five of the *Philadelphia* hostages in Tripoli (and led five to "Turk turk"), and emboldened the Bey of Tunis to defy the United States (as will be seen in the next chapter).<sup>821</sup> Jefferson's strategy made America appear weak in the Mediterranean and did not intimidate the Barbary Powers. He could probably have achieved a quick and decisive victory had he sent more ships to the Mediterranean in 1801 and authorized a joint attack with Sweden (which had proposed an alliance) against Tripoli's navy. By destroying the Tripolitan fleet, the U.S. would have forced Yusuf to capitulate.

Moreover, one must remember contingency—it was not inevitable that Jefferson (or Madison) would emerge unscathed from the Tripolitan War. Despite having spent more than \$3,630,000 on naval operations during the Tripolitan War, Jefferson decided to withdraw most of the force in summer 1805 and to ransom the surviving *Philadelphia* captives.<sup>822</sup> Essentially, the president had concluded that the U.S. Navy could probably not defeat Tripoli. Ironically, Jefferson was spared from carrying out this potentially devastating decision by a Federalist: William Eaton. His expedition scared the bashaw far more than did

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<sup>821</sup> For a list of the dead, see Smith to George Harrison, August 2, 1805, *Naval Documents* VI: 203.

<sup>822</sup> List of the four squadrons sent to the Mediterranean, *Ibid.*, VI: 30-31. The expenses of one of the ships (the *Hornet*, sixteen-guns) is blank. The average expenses of the four other vessels with sixteen guns is \$34,975.03.

naval bombardments and prompted the end of the Tripolitan War. If Eaton had given up or had the coup attempt imploded during the grueling desert march, Yusuf would not have been anxious to broker a deal with Lear. In this scenario, unless the United States met the bashaw's financial demands, the Tripolitan War would have dragged on indefinitely.

Had Jefferson followed through on his plans to recall most of the Mediterranean squadron and to ransom the *Philadelphia* hostages, the public surely would have responded with outrage instead of joy. Further, Federalists would have exploited Jefferson's capitulation by lambasting him for squandering millions of dollars and arguing that he had deeply embarrassed the United States. A failed war against Tripoli would have slowed Democratic-Republican ascendancy. Since the public deeply cared about the Tripolitan War, Federalist candidates could have made significant political gains in the 1806 congressional elections and perhaps the party could have recaptured the presidency in 1808. Indeed, Madison's career would likely have suffered as well since, as Secretary of State, he bore some responsibility for the Jefferson Administration's decisions. Perhaps opposition to him would have materialized and prevented him from becoming president in 1808—either losing to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (a Revolutionary War veteran) or not even receiving the Democratic-Republican nomination (losing it to James Monroe). Ironically, the Federalist Party would have been better off if the coup attempt had either never materialized or had failed. Eaton's resilience ultimately prevented the Federalist Party from capitalizing upon the Tripolitan War.<sup>823</sup>

Instead, Eaton accomplished far more than the Jefferson Administration had thought possible. Without his unwavering determination to restore Hamet, the Tripolitan War would

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<sup>823</sup> Federalists did poorly in the 1806 midterm elections, losing two seats in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate.

have been the United States' first loss. Because of Eaton, it was a small victory. Both sides gained and lost something. Yusuf stayed in power, demonstrated that he could withstand the U.S. Navy's strongest attacks, held 300 American prisoners for much of the war, and received ransom money. He did agree to cease requiring tribute from America, though. The United States gained a treaty that did not require tribute, inflicted many defeats upon the Tripolitan Navy, and captured a prominent city. However, 300 Americans became hostages in Tripoli and the United States paid \$60,000 to get them back (thereby validating the practice of hostage-taking). By no means was the Tripolitan War the clear-cut victory that the public claimed it was. After spending nearly four million dollars on naval expenses, the coup attempt, ransom, and Hamet's stipend, the United States only achieved a controversial peace.<sup>824</sup> A messy and often frustrating conflict, the Tripolitan War revealed both the limitations of America's naval strength and Yusuf's staunch resilience. The United States repeatedly used the wrong strategy (naval bombardments) to try to win.

What about the aftermath? The Jefferson Administration recalled the Mediterranean squadron in summer 1807 due to increasing tensions with Britain (the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair had happened in June).<sup>825</sup> Tripoli never again presented a serious threat to the United States, but was that because Yusuf had been taught a lesson or because the Tripolitan Navy had fewer opportunities to seize American ships and enslave the crews? Over the next decade, Britain and France increasingly preyed upon American vessels: from 1803 to 1812 Britain captured more than 900 U.S. ships, while France seized 560.<sup>826</sup> Further, Jefferson's

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<sup>824</sup> Eaton estimated the coup attempt expenses as \$30,000; Eaton to Barron, April 29, 1805, *Ibid.*, V: 551. Together with the naval expenses (estimating \$34,975.03 for the *Hornet*), the ransom of the *Franklin* crew, the ransom of the *Philadelphia* crew, and money paid to Hamet, the United States spent \$3,828,090.86 on the Tripolitan War.

<sup>825</sup> Jefferson, *ANAS*, July 2, 1807, 254.

embargo of 1807 crippled the U.S. economy and prevented American ships from sailing to the Mediterranean, while the War of 1812 devastated U.S. trade (in part because of an effective British blockade of the Atlantic coastline).<sup>827</sup> Far from being subdued by the United States, Tripoli simply had fewer occasions to capture American ships. Moreover, Algiers seized three ships in 1807 due to the Jefferson Administration being two years late in delivering tribute. Not only did Tobias Lear have to borrow money to free two of the vessels and their crew members, but he paid \$18,000 as compensation for the deaths of eight Algerine men (who died when the crew of the third ship fought and successfully recaptured their ship).<sup>828</sup> By no means did the Tripolitan War treaty represent a triumph over the Barbary pirates—they remained a threat to U.S. commerce. In 1812 the Dey of Algiers declared war upon the United States, which forced Madison to send the U.S. Navy back to the Mediterranean.

Altogether, Jefferson failed in his role as commander-in-chief during the Tripolitan War and deserves no credit for the conflict's limited accomplishments. He obstinately disregarded advice from knowledgeable diplomats and naval officers, jeopardized the lives of American sailors, and had decided to withdraw most of the Mediterranean squadron. Only the unexpected success of Eaton and Hamet's expedition prevented the Tripolitan War from adversely affecting the Democratic-Republican Party. Without the coup attempt, the Tripolitan War would have ended in failure for the United States. Yet Jefferson did not

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<sup>826</sup>Jones, 80.

<sup>827</sup> Because of Jefferson's embargo, U.S. exports plummeted from \$108 million in 1807 to \$22 million in 1808. As for the War of 1812, from 1811 to 1814 American exports declined from \$61 million to less than \$7 million and imports fell from \$53 million to \$13 million; Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Bicentennial Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 20, 199-200.

<sup>828</sup> Parker, 127-128.



realize the shortcomings of his policies, but instead believed that the United States had triumphed over Tripoli. In a September 1805 letter to a domestic correspondent, he celebrated “the happy termination of our Tripoline war” and claimed that “tho a small war in fact, it is big in principle” because “it has shewn that when necessary we can be respectable at sea, & has taught to Europe a lesson of honor & of justice to the Barbarians.”<sup>829</sup> The U.S. Navy, however, had not subdued Tripoli—only Eaton’s expedition struck fear into the heart of the bashaw. And even though some European commentators applauded America’s war effort, the Tripolitan War hardly heralded a new age of relations with the Barbary States—that would not happen until the following decade. Also, Jefferson claimed that the Tripolitan War validated an important “principle” (apparently not paying tribute), but the United States still paid ransom money. Despite the president’s wish for peace with North Africa, the Tripolitan War did not end his troubles with the Barbary pirates. A serious conflict with Tunis emerged during Jefferson’s second term that necessitated a nearly year-long visit by a Tunisian diplomat and his entourage to the United States. The action of the Tripolitan War took place five thousand miles away in the Mediterranean, but this time Barbary pirates would come to America as honored guests.

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<sup>829</sup> Jefferson to Larkin Smith, September 7, 1805, Thomas Jefferson Papers, HM 5763, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

## Chapter 6: The Mellimelli Mission

In March and April 1805, throngs of New Yorkers jammed into the theater for some very special performances. They came, however, not just to see plays, but real-life Barbary pirates. Up in the stage box sat seven Tripolitans, captured by the frigate *John Adams* in August of the preceding year. Moreover, these were not just any Barbary pirates. According to New York newspapers, their ranks included the Tripolitan captain who “robbed capt. Bainbridge of his epaulets and valuables when the frigate Philadelphia was taken.”<sup>830</sup> This detail about the Tripolitan captive’s identity may or may not be true, but its veracity matters less than the fact that the theater’s owners welcomed Americans to exact a sort of revenge on Tripoli by mocking Barbary pirates and even dressing them in American clothing.<sup>831</sup>

Whereas these New Yorkers delighted in the parading of Tripolitan prisoners, the November 1805 to September 1806 visit of Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli generated a diverse array of responses. The trip constituted an exciting moment when Americans of all classes could interact with a high-level policymaker from a very different society. This episode raised a host of questions with important cultural and diplomatic implications. Should concerns about what European countries thought affect the United States’ treatment of Mellimelli?<sup>832</sup> Would (at least for elites) a shared sense of class

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<sup>830</sup> *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 26, 1805; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 26, 1805.

<sup>831</sup> *American Citizen* (New York, NY), March 28, 1805 and March 29, 1805; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 29, 1805.

<sup>832</sup> Eliga Gould’s *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) contends that American policymakers sought European nations’ respect by adopting many of their governmental practices.

superiority with the ambassador trump racial differences?<sup>833</sup> Or would cultural, racial, and religious tensions overshadow President Thomas Jefferson's efforts to build a constructive relationship with Tunis?<sup>834</sup> Were Mellimelli and the Bey of Tunis even amenable to Jefferson's goal of forming a treaty that would not require the United States to pay tribute?

Mellimelli's trip generated much more controversy than did visits by European diplomats. For instance, neither Edmund Genet (from France) nor Anthony Merry (from Britain) experienced a barrage of derogatory racial rhetoric since both were white. Also, Genet received a hero's welcome among Democratic-Republicans when he arrived in 1793, while Merry enjoyed the support of many Federalists. No pro-Tunis interest group, though, existed in the United States. The missions differed in scope as well: Mellimelli's was intended to be temporary, but Genet and Merry were appointed with the expectation of remaining in the United States for a long period of time (Genet soon fell out of favor, but Merry stayed from 1803 to 1806). Most importantly, Genet's and Merry's governments covered their living expenses, but Jefferson controversially used American funds to pay for Mellimelli's. Critics were incensed that Jefferson's treatment of the Tunisian greatly deviated from normal protocol for hosting diplomats from foreign countries.<sup>835</sup>

The Mellimelli mission more closely resembled official visits from Native American leaders to Washington D.C., though it differed in key ways. The federal government paid for

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<sup>833</sup> David Cannadine's *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) argues that British policymakers often viewed the elite leaders of non-white societies as peers and as more honorable than lower-class whites. He calls this esteem "ornamentalism."

<sup>834</sup> Edward Said's classic *Orientalism* examines how Europeans' cultural, racial, and religious biases fueled negative perceptions of Muslim peoples and societies.

<sup>835</sup> Harry Ammon, *The Genet Mission* (New York: Norton, 1973); Catherine Allgor *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 34-47.

these trips and members of both political parties considered hosting tribal leaders important for achieving peace in the frontier. Federalist and Democratic-Republican presidents had welcomed such delegations, but the Washington and Adams Administrations never invited a representative from the Barbary States to America. Jefferson broke new ground in hosting Mellimelli. Federalists and most Democratic-Republicans did not deem the trip necessary for conducting diplomacy with Tunis. Further, the cost of the mission greatly exceeded the amount typically spent on Native Americans. For example, visits by tribes in 1798 and 1799 (during the Adams Administration) totaled \$15,178 and the expenses of an Osage delegation during Jefferson's presidency amounted to \$10,000.<sup>836</sup> By contrast, the cost of the Mellimelli mission was much higher—at least double that amount. Critics could justly accuse the president of unprecedented extravagance.

Moreover, this chapter challenges a recent claim that American observers of Mellimelli “either failed to mention [his race] or simply affirmed that the ambassador...was not black.”<sup>837</sup> As will be seen, many commentators regularly expressed contempt for Mellimelli by using racialized, gendered, and religious language. They portrayed him as inferior to white Americans by emphasizing his different skin color (descriptions varied), depicting him as a sex-crazed barbarian, or associating Islam with licentiousness. Surprisingly, Jefferson (and various other elites) come off as liberal regarding race since they treated Mellimelli as the equivalent of (white) European diplomats. Their portrayals of Mellimelli reveal the variability in how he was seen as a raced man. A contrast naturally

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<sup>836</sup> Herman Viola, *Diplomats in Buckskins: A History of Indian Delegations in Washington City* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian, 1981), 54; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 186.

<sup>837</sup> Spellberg, 8.

emerges with the Haitian Revolution. The John Adams Administration extended diplomatic recognition to and encouraged trade with the (black) revolutionaries, but Jefferson supported (and Congress passed) a prohibition of trade in 1805.<sup>838</sup> The key difference, of course, is that American slaveholders such as Jefferson feared the potential of the Haitian Revolution to galvanize slave rebellions in the United States. Jefferson had no reason to fear that Mellimelli would inspire resistance among American slaves. Thus, he could safely ignore the Tunisian's skin color and treat him as a peer. Altogether, the Mellimelli mission provides insight into white Americans' attitudes towards race, gender, and religion, while also underscoring the sense of embarrassment and shame that many felt towards being vulnerable to the Barbary pirates.

The purpose of Mellimelli's trip was straightforward. He sought both to resolve a dispute over three Tunisian ships that the U.S. Navy had captured and to obtain a new peace treaty. During the Tripolitan War, a Tunisian ship (along with two vessels it had recently taken as prizes) attempted to break the U.S. Navy's blockade of Tripoli. The Americans apprehended the ships and, citing international law, kept all three as prizes. This angered the Bey of Tunis, who demanded them back. Tensions further escalated in early August 1805 when Commodore John Rodgers, the ranking U.S. officer in the Mediterranean, entered Tunis's harbor with his squadron and issued a hostile letter to the Bey. In it, the naval officer threatened "both defensive and offensive operations" against Tunis if the Bey did not inform

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<sup>838</sup> Two notable recent works that discuss American perceptions of the Haitian Revolution are Ashli White's *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) and Ronald Johnson's *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014). See White, 164-165, for the 1805 ban.

him within thirty-six hours if Tunis wanted war or peace.<sup>839</sup> Although the deadline passed and no conflict occurred, the letter infuriated the Bey and he continued to insist upon receiving the ships.

Unable to resolve this issue with Rodgers, the Bey opted to send an experienced diplomat, the wealthy Mellimelli, to the United States. In a warm letter to Jefferson, the Bey described the mission as evidence “of my good friendship for you and your nation, and of the high esteem in which I hold you particularly.” He blamed tensions on Rodgers’s “too martial temper” and lauded Mellimelli’s credentials—he had previously been chosen for “an important mission to the Grand Sultan in Constantinople.”<sup>840</sup> Tobias Lear, the diplomat who had brokered the controversial peace treaty with Tripoli, thought highly of Mellimelli after spending a delightful day with him in Tunis: they visited “the House of one of his friends in the outskirts of the City, where we met with every hospitality they could bestow, and furnished with excellent lodgings.”<sup>841</sup> Charmed by such cordiality, he wrote a letter of introduction to Secretary of State James Madison that praised the Tunisian as a veteran “Ambassador from this Court to Naples & Genoa” and “a man of correct observation, and much liberality of sentiment.” Lear gave the envoy his “personal recommendation.”<sup>842</sup> On the eve of Mellimelli’s departure, everyone expected a swift resolution.

Jefferson never expected that the mission would become a political landmine. He anticipated a short visit, for Mellimelli to quickly accede to the United States’ positions regarding the justness of capturing the three ships and refusing to pay tribute. As the

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<sup>839</sup> John Rodgers to Hamuda, Bey of Tunis, August 2, 1805, *Naval Documents* VI: 202.

<sup>840</sup> Bey of Tunis to Thomas Jefferson, August 31, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 256.

<sup>841</sup> Tobias Lear to Rodgers, August 28, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 253.

<sup>842</sup> Lear to James Madison, September 4, 1805, *Ibid.*, VI: 273.

president remarked to Senator William Plumer (Federalist—NH) in late November, “in the course of the winter the minister will probably compleat his mission.” Jefferson also told Plumer that the federal government would cover the trip’s expenses since “it was customary for the Government to whom Tunis sent a Minister to provide for his maintenance.”<sup>843</sup> Jefferson’s belief that European countries paid for the expenditures of North African diplomats was somewhat accurate. France covered the expenses of Muslim envoys from countries that offered reciprocal treatment for French diplomats.<sup>844</sup> However, British officials generally treated Moroccan diplomat Bentura de Zary poorly during his 1710-1716 residency and made him pay for housing.<sup>845</sup> Presumably, Jefferson learned about France’s customs during his time there as Minister Plenipotentiary from 1785-1789. He did a very poor job communicating this knowledge, though, and essentially conceded public opinion to critics since he made no efforts to correct them. Given the bipartisan nature of the backlash over Jefferson’s treatment of Mellimelli, it appears that criticism primarily stemmed from ignorance of French practices as opposed to a desire to score political points. To be sure, Federalists tried to gain politically from the Mellimelli mission by characterizing it as a referendum on the president’s leadership. Yet they never argued that Jefferson should discard European precedent by forcing Tunis to pay for Mellimelli’s expenditures. For their part, Democratic-Republican newspapers never ran articles that explained the president’s rationale for covering the diplomat’s expenses. The controversy surrounding the financing of

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<sup>843</sup> Plumer, November 29, 1805, 334.

<sup>844</sup> Mathieu Grenet, “Muslim Missions to Early Modern France, c.1610-c.1780: Notes for a Social History of Cross-Cultural Diplomacy,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2-3 (2015), 237-238.

<sup>845</sup> According to Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, the diplomat “was regularly harassed” and “his servants were arrested, breaching diplomatic immunity”; *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 183-185.

Mellimelli's trip reveals that Jefferson and his critics held entirely different conceptions about, as Eliga Gould has notably explored, how the United States should "conform to European norms and expectations."<sup>846</sup> Jefferson knew that he was following French precedent, but critics feared that his behavior would cause Europe to not take the United States seriously as an emerging world power.

Regardless, Jefferson earnestly sought peace with Tunis and to make Mellimelli feel welcome. He did not think that the Bey's anger over the captured ships warranted a second U.S. war in the Mediterranean. In a letter to the Bey, the president emphasized his intention to treat "your Ambassador Soliman Mellimelli with all the cordiality and respect which a missionary from you so justly commands." Jefferson apologized for Captain Rodgers's bellicosity, saying that he acted "in a manner not consisting with the respect due to your Excellency's character, nor with the friendship which I bear you." Jefferson was polite but firm, insisting that even though European countries paid tribute the United States would not. He drew an analogy, arguing that because "the principles and the institutions of our Government" differed from European countries', "their practices can therefore be no rule for us." Instead, the president desired a treaty based on "justice, equality, and mutual forbearance."<sup>847</sup> Yet a contradiction ran through Jefferson's Tunisian diplomacy. Although he opposed Europe's practice of paying tribute, he embraced France's custom of covering the expenses of Barbary diplomats. Jefferson inconsistently followed precedents. He thought that paying tribute denigrated national honor, but considered covering Mellimelli's expenses

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<sup>846</sup> Gould, 3.

<sup>847</sup> Jefferson to Bey of Tunis, June 8, 1806. This letter is reprinted in Parker, 239-241.



a courtesy. Perhaps, too, Jefferson was being pragmatic and hoped that providing first-class treatment would help negotiations run smoothly.<sup>848</sup>

Difficulties with the trip began shortly after the Tunisians arrived in Hampton Roads, Virginia in November 1805. Newspapers in nine states published an article announcing their arrival, which described Mellimelli as “a very large yellow man, arrayed in the richest purple and gold. His right hand man is still larger, and black as Afric’s sootiest son.” It alerted readers to the non-white skin color of Mellimelli and his companions, urging Americans to view them as racially suspect and, in the case of the “right hand man,” akin to a black slave. Notably, it depicted Mellimelli as having lighter skin than his servants, suggesting an association of fairer skin with authority figures. The article also highlighted Mellimelli’s dress, with his regal clothing indicating personal wealth and high status within his country (purple being associated with royalty). Yet the article, which was published by both Federalist and Democratic-Republican papers, deemed Mellimelli’s mission illegitimate. He came to the United States to “demand retribution” for a Tunisian ship that the U.S. Navy had captured according to “the authority of the laws of nations.” The article emphasized that the Barbary pirates did not share the same legal standards as Americans and Europeans since they disregarded the corpus of precedents, treaties, and commentaries that constituted the law of nations. Its hostility set the tone for Mellimelli’s nearly year-long stay in the United States by encouraging readers to view the diplomat with skepticism and disdain.<sup>849</sup>

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<sup>848</sup> Such behavior would accord with Cogliano’s argument that Jefferson “was pragmatic about the means he employed to protect the republic and advance its strategic interests”; 10.

<sup>849</sup> Eleven Democratic-Republican Papers published the article: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), November 15, 1805; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), November 16, 1805; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), November 19, 1805; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), November 19, 1805; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), November 20, 1805 [for this newspaper’s political views, see Burstein and Isenberg, *Jefferson and Madison*, 439]; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), November 21, 1805; *Plebeian* (Kingston, NY), November 22, 1805 [it used a slightly different wording: “He is

Another widely published article painted a moderately complementary picture of Mellimelli while criticizing the public for fawning over him. It described the ambassador as being about fifty years old and having a “grave and dignified deportment.”<sup>850</sup> It also mentioned that Mellimelli toured Fort Nelson (in Virginia), after which he dined with naval hero Stephen Decatur “and several of his officers.” Perhaps these gatherings served two

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arrayed in the richest purple and gold, is yellow, and of large stature.” For its politics, see Marius Schoonmaker, *The History of Kingston, New York: From Its Early Settlement to the Year 1820* (New York: Burr Printing House, 1888), 417-418]; *Providence Phoenix* (Providence, RI), November 23, 1805 [see William Robinson, *Jeffersonian Democracy in New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 69]; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), November 25, 1805; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), November 28, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), November 29, 1805. Fourteen Federalist newspapers ran it: *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 14, 1805; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 14, 1805; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 15, 1805; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), November 16, 1805; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), November 20, 1805; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), November 21, 1805; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), November 22, 1805; *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 22, 1805; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), November 22, 1805; *New Hampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), November 23, 1805; *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), November 25, 1805; *The Post-Boy, and Vermont & New-Hampshire Federal Courier* (Windsor, VT), November 26, 1805; *The Albany Centinel* (New York, NY), November 29, 1805; *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), December 2, 1805. It also ran in the politically neutral *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT) on November 27, 1805.

<sup>850</sup> Twelve Federalist newspapers published this article: *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), November 15, 1805 [see James Broussard, *The Southern Federalists: 1800-1816* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 281]; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 18, 1805; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), November 18, 1805; *The New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 19, 1805 [it omitted the details of Decatur’s attendance and the Fort Nelson visit]; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), November 21, 1805; *Pennsylvania Correspondent, And Farmers’ Advertiser* (Doylestown, PA), November 25, 1805 [see John Jordan, ed., *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania: Genealogical and Personal Memoirs*, vol. II (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), 722]; *The Albany Centinel* (New York, NY), November 26, 1805; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), November 26, 1805 [it used a slightly different phrasing: “the novelty of their magnificent costume in the true Turkish style”]; *THOMAS’s Massachusetts Spy, OR Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), November 27, 1805; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), November 27, 1805; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, CT), November 27, 1805; and *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), December 2, 1805. Six Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), November 18, 1805; *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), November 18, 1805; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), November 27, 1805; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), November 28, 1805; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), November 29, 1805; and *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), December 2, 1805 [the Library of Congress identifies this paper as Democratic-Republican, see <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94031496/> (accessed October 15, 2014)]. It also ran in the politically indeterminable *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT) on November 25, 1805 and the *Mississippi Herald & Natchez Gazette* (Natchez, MS) on December 17, 1805. According to Robert Hanes, the editor of the *Mississippi Herald & Natchez Gazette* (Andrew Marschalk) underwent a political “change of heart” by 1807 and became a Democratic-Republican; *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 325. An abbreviated version ran in the *Windham Herald* (Federalist; Windham, CT) on November 29, 1805.

purposes. They would not only demonstrate polite hospitality, but could also serve as opportunities to pressure the diplomat to drop his tribute demands. Surely in the course of the day's events Mellimelli heard about Decatur's naval triumphs during the Tripolitan War. Such conversation could suggest to Mellimelli that the United States would potentially send this warrior back to the Mediterranean to fight against Tunis. Regardless, the article criticized public fascination with the Tunisians: "the novelty of their appearance, and their magnificent costume in the true Turkish style, attracted more attention than comported with good breeding." It expressed a tension between political commentators and the public that would increase throughout Mellimelli's visit. Whereas newspaper editors and politicians often condemned him as a disreputable barbarian, the public showered him with attention.

Some newspapers expressed hope that the mission would benefit both the United States and Tunis. Publications from six states ran an article that endorsed Jefferson's goals. It suggested that Mellimelli's trip would result in Tunis obtaining "very correct information respecting our vast resources, and our ability to protect the American commerce; and we may safely calculate on a firm peace with that regency."<sup>851</sup> The Federalist *Salem Register* similarly opined that Mellimelli's mission would "result in the increasing security of Commerce."<sup>852</sup> However, the article based this expectation upon "the spirited proceedings of

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<sup>851</sup> This article ran in eight Democratic-Republican newspapers: *Morning Chronicle* (New York, NY), November 23, 1805; *American Citizen* (New York, NY), November 25, 1805; *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), November 30, 1805; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), December 3, 1805; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), December 3, 1805; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), December 6, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), December 7, 1805; and *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), December 9, 1805. Eight Federalist newspapers published it: *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 22, 1805; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), November 23, 1805; *The Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 23, 1805; *THOMAS's Massachusetts Spy, OR Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), December 4, 1805; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), December 5, 1805 [see George Baker, ed., *The Works of William Seward*, vol. II (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 35]; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 5, 1805; *The Rutland Herald* (Rutland, VT), December 7, 1805; and *Weekly Wanderer* (Randolph, VT), December 16, 1805. It also ran in the politically indeterminable *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT) on December 4, 1805.

<sup>852</sup> *Salem Register* (Salem, MA), November 28, 1805.

the American naval force” and not through any brilliant diplomacy by Jefferson. Such moderate-to-positive opinions quickly faded, though, as criticism of the diplomat and the president intensified as the trip’s length increased.

Other newspapers aspired to arouse public opposition by stressing that an inconsequential country such as Tunis did not merit respect. Such articles used italics in order to maximize the sarcasm. Newspapers affiliated with both parties published an article that remarked that Mellimelli “no doubt, will be received with *distinguished honors*” and informed readers that the Tunisians were staying at Mr. Stelle’s house in Washington.<sup>853</sup> For residents in the Washington area, perhaps this information served as a tacit invitation to hound or harass the foreigners. Similarly, four newspapers broadcast the arrival of the “*illustrious... Representative of his Tunisian Majesty.*”<sup>854</sup> *The Carolina Gazette*, a Democratic-Republican newspaper, announced the “novel sight...of *His Excellency SIDI*

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<sup>853</sup> Sixteen Democratic-Republican newspapers ran this article: *National Intelligencer, and Washington Advertiser* (Washington D.C.), November 18, 1805; *The Expositor* (Alexandria, VA), November 21, 1805; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), November 22, 1805; *Republican Star or Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), November 26, 1805; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), November 27, 1805; *The Democrat* (Boston, MA), November 30, 1805; *Vermont Gazette* (Bennington, VT), December 2, 1805; *The Pittsfield Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), December 2, 1805; *The Witness* (Litchfield, CT), December 4, 1805; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), December 5, 1805; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), December 5, 1805 [it did not use italics]; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), December 6, 1805 [it did not use italics]; *Political Observatory* (Walpole, NH), December 6, 1805 [it did not use italics]; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), December 6, 1805; *Suffolk Gazette* (Sag Harbor, NY), December 9, 1805; *Freeman’s Friend* (Saco, ME), December 11, 1805 [see Daniel Owen, *Old Times in Saco: A Brief Monograph on Local Events* (Saco: Biddeford Times Print, 1891), 100-101]. Eleven Federalist newspapers published it: *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), November 19, 1805; *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 21, 1805; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), November 21, 1805; *United States’ Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), November 21, 1805 [it did not use italics]; *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 22, 1805; *New-York Spectator* (New York, NY), November 23, 1805; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), November 23, 1805; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), November 28, 1805; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), December 3, 1805; *THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, OR Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), December 4, 1805; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), December 5, 1805. It also ran in the December 17, 1805 *Mississippi Herald & Natchez Gazette* [see Hanes, 325, for its political transition].

<sup>854</sup> *Boston Gazette* (Federalist; Boston, MA), November 21, 1805; *The Salem Gazette* (Federalist; Salem, MA), November 22, 1805; *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser* (Federalist; Portland, ME), November 25, 1805; *Political Observatory* (Democratic-Republican; Walpole, NH), November 29, 1805. The *Weekly Wanderer* (Federalist; Randolph, VT) of December 2, 1805 used italics for “*illustrious*” but not for “Tunisian Majesty.”

*SOLYMAN MELIMELI, Ambassador Extraordinary from the BEY of TUNIS to the United States*” in its November 22<sup>nd</sup> issue.<sup>855</sup> These critics, which included newspaper editors from Jefferson’s party, believed that Mellimelli did not merit a distinguished reception. They considered his credentials a laughingstock and encouraged readers to do the same.

Federalist newspaper editors offered harsher criticism by accusing Jefferson of transgressing racial boundaries and squandering taxpayers’ money on the trip. The *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser* ran an editorial sarcastically entitled “*Economy of Mr. Jefferson*” that raised class and racial issues. In claiming that Jefferson stole from the “*mouth of labor*” to host the Tunisians, it subtly invoked Jefferson’s sexual relationship with his slave Sally Hemings: the president’s lavish treatment of the North Africans stemmed from “his attachment for the *color*.”<sup>856</sup> The newspaper suggested that Jefferson’s unnatural attraction to black people compromised his ability to effectively govern the country. The president made bad decisions in both his personal life (by having a sexual relationship with his slave) and in his public life (by doing a “disgraceful, humiliating thing” in providing an all-expenses paid trip for the Tunisians). The article also stressed that Tunis did not offer reciprocal hospitality to American diplomats. Its government did not pay for the upkeep of Tobias Lear—“the pockets of the people of the United States” did. This newspaper sought to galvanize grassroots opposition to Jefferson by describing the president as profligate with federal funds. It deemed him unfit for the presidency since his character flaws and sexual transgressions resulted in awful foreign policy decisions.

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<sup>855</sup> *The Carolina Gazette* (Charlestown, SC), November 22, 1805.

<sup>856</sup> *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), December 9, 1805.

Other Federalist newspapers charged the Jefferson Administration with financial incompetence. *The Salem Gazette* pessimistically portrayed the Mellimelli mission as doomed from the start since “whether or not we give up the vessel, I believe we shall be losers by the visit: for the embassy will be supported at our expence.”<sup>857</sup> The *New-England Palladium* characterized the president as a financial hypocrite: “how it must torture our economical rulers to see the *U.S.* put to these extra expenses!”<sup>858</sup> It also warned readers that Jefferson had set a troubling (and costly) precedent: he had now obligated the United States to pay for all future diplomatic missions from the Ottoman Empire or Morocco. The newspaper feared an incessant drain on the treasury on account of these diplomats taking advantage of Jefferson’s opulent hospitality.

Federalist newspapers in New York and Rhode Island portrayed Jefferson as unqualified to serve as Commander-in-Chief. They used the Mellimelli mission to remind readers about Jefferson’s controversial behavior during the Revolutionary War as Virginia’s governor. They ran an article that discussed Mellimelli’s gift of “some Arabian Horses for the President. The Bey, having heard of Mr. Jefferson’s military exploits, undoubtedly concluded that at this particular crisis, when dangerous times are approaching, he could not furnish a more suitable present than *fleet horses*.”<sup>859</sup> Jefferson had fled from Monticello on horseback in June 1781 upon hearing that British troops were approaching his home. His political enemies accused him of cowardice, although an official hearing cleared him of any wrongdoing. Nevertheless, the charge stuck. This article argued that Jefferson had a

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<sup>857</sup> *The Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 28, 1805.

<sup>858</sup> *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), November 29, 1805.

<sup>859</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), November 26, 1805; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), December 7, 1805.

worldwide reputation for timidity and mockingly suggested that the Bey of Tunis provided him with fast horses in order to enable him to escape future military engagements. Federalist newspapers used the Mellimelli mission to depict Jefferson as unfit for the presidency and invite readers to laugh at his ineptitude.

Newspapers also lambasted Jefferson for treating Mellimelli better than diplomats from European countries. *THOMAS's Massachusetts Spy* (pro-Federalist) attacked Jefferson for paying for Mellimelli's trip even though European governments did not cover North African diplomats' expenses. It claimed (incorrectly) that European nations "have never permitted Ministers from the Petty Barbary States to reside among them, they not being sufficiently *independent* to be allowed Ministers." This article underscored both the perception of the Barbary Powers as trifling nations not worthy of first-class treatment and the sense of national embarrassment at paying for the Mellimelli trip. It recommended that Americans not even consider North Africa autonomous since those countries had a "Master": the sultan of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, Morocco was independent and Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis were only nominally part of the Ottoman Empire (they conducted their own affairs of state). Nevertheless, the article used humor to suggest the absurdity of treating the Barbary States as sovereign: Tunis had "no more right to send a Minister, than the State of *Delaware* has a right to send one to *France*."<sup>860</sup> A Federalist newspaper in Boston similarly believed that Jefferson acted inappropriately in providing such lavish hospitality. Its December 24<sup>th</sup> issue complained that Jefferson treated "the representative of this petty African power...in a style and with an attention far exceeding any thing manifested towards

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<sup>860</sup> *THOMAS's Massachusetts Spy, OR Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), December 4, 1805.

the most respectable nations of Europe.”<sup>861</sup> A New York newspaper railed that the government regarded Mellimelli with a “respect never granted by this country to the Minister of any Christian power” by providing him and his entourage with housing, paying for his living expenses, and even giving him “a military guard of honor.”<sup>862</sup> To critics, Jefferson had his priorities backwards and dishonored his country by treating Mellimelli so well. He needed to concentrate on building constructive relationships with important European countries and not waste time appeasing irrelevant North African ones.

Some critics contended that, in treating Mellimelli as a favored guest, Jefferson both undermined his entire rationale for waging the Tripolitan War and maligned Christianity. Federalist newspapers in three states ran an article that asked readers: “have we humbled Tripoli to suffer all this, from a more insignificant barbarous power?”<sup>863</sup> These papers rejoiced in military resistance against North Africa and accused Jefferson of appeasing Barbary pirates. To them, Jefferson had repudiated the purpose of the Tripolitan War by essentially paying tribute to Tunis—a weaker military power than Tripoli—in covering the costs of Mellimelli’s mission. Further, the article sought to spread religious hysteria among readers by asserting that Jefferson insulted American and European Christians in showering lavish hospitality upon a Muslim. It expressed outrage that the president gave “one of the best houses near the capitol” to this “infidel Ambassador” and “son of Mahomet, [who] is as proud as Lucifer....Is not this an indirect affront to Christian ambassadors?” In comparing Mellimelli to Satan, the article raised questions about Jefferson’s controversial religious

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<sup>861</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), December 24, 1805.

<sup>862</sup> *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), January 2, 1806.

<sup>863</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), December 24, 1805; *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), December 25, 1805; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), January 14, 1806.



beliefs and his ability to effectively govern the country. Since the president welcomed heretics to American soil, how could the public trust his judgment? Since he offended European diplomats, with whom Americans shared a common religious heritage, how could he build constructive relationships with their countries?

Moreover, critics characterized Mellimelli as farcical and unworthy of respect by discussing the ambassador's sex life. Federalist newspapers throughout the country summarized Democratic-Republican John Randolph's March 1806 speech in the House of Representatives, which rebuked Jefferson "for supporting the Tunisian Ambassador, in his beastiality."<sup>864</sup> Since no record of allegations of Mellimelli engaging in intercourse with an animal exists, Randolph most likely referred to the concubines that the federal government provided the diplomat. Senator William Plumer remarked upon this matter in his diary, noting that "our government has, on his application, provided him with one or more women, with whom he spends a portion of the night."<sup>865</sup> He stressed that Mellimelli took the initiative in asking for sexual companionship and that the Tunisian enjoyed the company of multiple women. Plumer did not specify, however, if Mellimelli rotated sexual partners or enjoyed them simultaneously. Also, he suggested that the women did not live with the ambassador or even stay for the entire night. Rather, they arrived for sex and left afterwards. A British traveler, Charles William Janson, also reported that Mellimelli had asked the government for "a few female domestics" since he missed his "seraglio" back in Tunis. He

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<sup>864</sup> *Washington Federalist* (Washington D.C.), March 8, 1806; *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), March 13, 1806; *Connecticut Herald* (New Haven, CT), March 18, 1806 [see Richard Purcell, *Connecticut in Transition, 1775-1818* (London: Oxford University Press, 1918), 421]; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, CT), March 19, 1806; *New Hampshire Sentinel* (Keene, NH), March 22, 1806; *Portsmouth Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), March 22, 1806; *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), March 24, 1806; and *The Post-Boy* (Windsor, VT), March 25, 1806 [see Lewis Aldrich and Frank Holmes, eds., *History of Windsor County, Vermont* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1891), 213].

<sup>865</sup> Plumer, December 23, 1805, 359.

eventually “formed a tender connection with a frail Christian of the softer sex.” Neither Plumer nor Janson implied that the government provided women for Mellimelli’s servants. In contrast to Plumer, Janson thought that Mellimelli had a primary relationship with one woman. Madison recorded a concubine by name (“Georgia a Greek”) in an expense report; perhaps this was the woman that Janson described?<sup>866</sup> Regardless, such behavior repulsed Janson since he found the ambassador physically repugnant: “a more disgusting figure, bending too under the weight of years, can scarcely be conceived.”<sup>867</sup> If the Jefferson Administration had tried to keep its provision of sexual partners a secret, it clearly failed (Janson even mentioned Randolph’s speech, demonstrating that discussions of Mellimelli’s sexual behavior circulated throughout Washington D.C.). Randolph criticized the president for turning the government into a pimping service, Plumer seemed nonchalant over the matter, and Janson deemed the situation grotesque.

Other representations of the Tunisian Ambassador as obsessed with gratifying his enormous sex drive circulated in print. On one hand, they echo longstanding stereotypes that associated Islam with harems and polygamy. Yet they also appear to allude to the government’s provision of sexual companionship for Mellimelli. Newspaper editors of both parties published a humorous negotiation between Mellimelli and the Secretary of State regarding the diplomat’s sexual needs. The diplomat had allegedly issued “a formal demand of *seven* wives for the use of his seraglio.” He mentioned that a man could have fourteen wives in Tunis, but “to shew his respect for the religious prejudices of the people of the

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<sup>866</sup> Brant, *Secretary of State, 1800-1809*, 306; Gordon-Reed, 231.

<sup>867</sup> Charles Janson, *The Stranger in America, 1793-1806*, ed. Carl Driver (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935), 226, 228. In the eighteenth century, “frail” in this context referred to a fallen woman, one who easily succumbed to sinful behavior.

United States” he would compromise at “half that number.” Madison countered that the United States disallowed polygamy, to which Mellimelli replied that he would “further evince his extreme moderation by reducing his demand to *four*; that ‘GOD IS INFINITE;’ and that no less a number will be accepted.” Even if this story was rooted in fact, it nevertheless satirized the diplomat for prioritizing the quenching of his lusts over resolving outstanding issues between Tunis and the United States. It also portrayed him as having the gall to criticize Americans for religious intolerance, as if deeming polygamy immoral made one a bigot. This article admonished Americans to view Mellimelli as a degenerate, not as a respectable official.<sup>868</sup> Similarly, *The Connecticut Courant* (pro-Federalist) condemned Jefferson for “supporting the sable ambassador of his Moorish majesty, and his seven wives, in Washington.” The newspaper reinforced the notion of Mellimelli as a racial and sexual Other since it emphasized his non-white skin (sable means “black”) and his openly polygamous lifestyle.<sup>869</sup> Mellimelli’s reputation as a sex-crazed man continued through the end of his trip. A Federalist newspaper from New York emitted a sarcastic sigh of relief in September 1806: “we do not learn that any number of *Christian wives* make up his assortment of presents.”<sup>870</sup> Critics did not take Mellimelli seriously since they viewed him as

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<sup>868</sup> *Mercantile Advertiser* (Federalist; New York, NY), March 8, 1806; *Connecticut Centinel* (Federalist; Norwich, CT), March 18, 1806; *The Repertory* (Federalist; Boston, MA), March 18, 1806; *Salem Gazette* (Federalist; Salem, MA), March 21, 1806; *The Democrat* (Democratic-Republican; Boston, MA), March 22, 1806; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Federalist; Hudson, NY), March 25, 1806; *The Scioto Gazette* (Democratic-Republican; Chillicothe, OH), April 3, 1806. A much shorter version ran in the *New-England Palladium* (Federalist; Boston, MA), March 14, 1806; *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Federalist; Portland, ME), March 17, 1806; *The Connecticut Courant* (Federalist; Hartford, CT), March 19, 1806; *Portsmouth Oracle* (Federalist; Portsmouth, NH), March 22, 1806; *Vermont Centinel* (Democratic-Republican; Burlington, VT), April 2, 1806; *Republican Spy* (Democratic-Republican; Northampton, MA), April 15, 1806; and *Weekly Wanderer* (Federalist; Randolph, VT), April 28, 1806. *The Green-Mountain Patriot* (Federalist; Peacham, VT), published its own abridged version on April 8, 1806.

<sup>869</sup> *The Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, CT), June 11, 1806.

<sup>870</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), September 23, 1806.

obsessed with sex and they criticized Jefferson for enabling his licentiousness. Mellimelli made headlines for his alleged sexual escapades, not for resolving problems between the United States and Tunis.

Mellimelli faced opposition from politicians as well as from newspaper editors. Many senators considered him a barbarian, not a reputable policymaker. Conflict occurred when Mellimelli visited the Senate on January 2, 1806. As William Plumer recounted in his diary, Samuel Smith (Democratic-Republican—MD) proposed that the diplomat be granted “a seat in the Chamber.” Several senators, including John Quincy Adams (Federalist—MA), adamantly opposed such an honor on the grounds that “it would be establishing a precedent—That Ambassadors from the greatest nations had never received this mark of notice—that they would demand— & we must grant it or give umbrage.” Samuel Mitchill (Democratic-Republican—NY) likewise expressed incredulity that the United States had “given this *half-savage* the dignified title of *Ambassador* in common with the Ministers from nations of the first rank—That we have thus established a new precedent in diplomacy” since European countries “never recognize them as Ministers or Ambassadors.” James Hillhouse (Federalist—CT) concurred with Mitchell, proclaiming “I consider this Tunisian in the same character as I do the Indian Chiefs— & I would treat him accordingly.” In response to steadfast opposition, Senator Smith withdrew his motion. Fifteen senators then walked out of Congress, refusing to stay for Mellimelli’s visit. They believed that treating the Tunisian the same way as a European diplomat transgressed a cultural, and perhaps racial, boundary. Hostility towards Mellimelli was bipartisan, demonstrating that Jefferson had overreached and had failed to build a base of support for his Tunisian diplomacy.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>871</sup> Plumer, January 2, 1806, 364-365. Similar hostility existed in the House of Representatives. During a December 1806 debate on the slave trade, Peter Early (Democratic-Republican—GA) expressed support for

Despite the animosity expressed towards Mellimelli in newspapers and by congressmen, the public often treated him as a celebrity. Rumors that “the newly arrived sons of Mahomet” would visit a Washington theater “set curiosity on the very edge,” according to *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (pro-Federalist).<sup>872</sup> Upper-class locals were especially excited: “preparations were made—carriages prepared; and away drove our belles and beaux to the Theatre.” Yet Mellimelli and his entourage never showed up. Evidently the ambassador preferred to enjoy an afternoon nap and then walk around town. The article depicted the Tunisians as lazy and as religious Others, while also decrying the public’s fascination with Mellimelli. Notably, commentary regarding the aborted coup attempt in Tripoli immediately followed this anecdote. The author roundly condemned the Jefferson Administration for “deserting [Hamet Karamanli] and his followers in the very moment of success.” The back-to-back placement of these two subjects suggests that the article criticized the public for prioritizing the wrong Barbary issue. Instead of lavishing attention on Mellimelli, Americans should focus on doing right by Hamet.

Senator Plumer also attested to the Tunisian Ambassador’s popularity. He noted in his diary that “a great collection of people” attended Mellimelli’s landing at the Navy Yard and that meeting him became something of an obsession. Due to children breaking into his residence to see him, the government temporarily provided a guard for his door.<sup>873</sup> Plumer

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legislation that would bar “Mellimelli, or any other person of color” from coming to the United States. He had “no objection” to prohibiting the Barbary States from sending diplomats since he “did not wish to see here any more Mellimellis.” *Annals of Congress*, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, (Washington D.C., 1857-1861), 178, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwaclink.html> (accessed December 8, 2014).

<sup>872</sup> *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), December 24, 1805.

<sup>873</sup> Plumer, November 30, 1805, 336; and December 23, 1805, 359. Also see Robert Smith’s December 2, 1805 order; *Naval Documents*, VI: 315. The guard ceased on December 25, 1805.

described his own visit to Mellimelli's lodging as sensual and hypnotic. The Tunisian's "elegant & rich" clothing was "of fine *scarlet* colour inwrought with much gold" and he wore "white silk hose— yellow Morocco shoes" and "a turban made of fine white muslin." Mellimelli dressed to impress his visitors by stressing his—and by extension his country's—wealth. Plumer was awestruck, as the diplomat seemed to cast a spell on him. Mellimelli "gave me his hand— & directed me to be seated. He then came up & bowed to me— He opened his elegant gold diamond snuff box, & gave me some very excellent snuff. He took his pipe which was more than four feet long & very elegant & smoked.— His room was perfumed with the essence of roses— which to me was very agreeable." Mellimelli also ordered his servants to play music on the drums and fife, "which they did very well indeed. He said he had ordered this in honor of me who had deigned to visit him." Plumer described himself as caught up in a reverie of sight, smell, and sound. He loved the proffered tobacco, savored the aromatics of the perfume, and relished the live music. It was as if he had been transported into another world. Caught up in the moment, he began to read positive character attributes into Mellimelli's appearance: "his countenance is good— it bespeaks intelligence & integrity." Plumer wanted to believe that he was in the presence of greatness.<sup>874</sup> For his part, Mellimelli perhaps used ceremony in an attempt to build trust with American policymakers and have them take him seriously. He seduced his guests with sensual delights.

Yet the spell did not last. At the end of the evening Plumer still viewed Mellimelli as culturally and racially inferior. He was "a man, between the Savage & civilized state" whose "complezion is about as dark as that of a Molatto," while his servants "were all large black men." Plumer may have been temporarily transfixed by Mellimelli's appearance and the

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<sup>874</sup> Plumer, December 23, 1805, 358-359.

luxurious environment, but he did not disavow his preexisting racial biases. Like various newspaper editors, Plumer remained fixated on racial issues. When discussing the Tunisian Ambassador, many white Americans clung to the notion that white skin indicated superiority.<sup>875</sup>

Other elite Americans and foreign observers met Mellimelli as well. Their memoirs reflect a variety of impressions about the Tunisian, spanning from contempt to adoration. John Quincy Adams's diary reveals that he became more critical of Mellimelli over time. At a December 1805 dinner party hosted by Jefferson, Adams found Mellimelli "courteous" but noted that he arrived half an hour late and "immediately after greeting the President and the company, proposed to retire and smoke his pipe" instead of socializing with everyone else. Jefferson had courteously planned for dinner to begin "precisely at sunset" because it was "in the midst of Ramadan," but Mellimelli's tardiness kept the other guests hungry and waiting.<sup>876</sup> To his credit, though, Adams acknowledged that conversing with Mellimelli was difficult since it required an interpreter. By the following spring, though, Adams viewed him with disgust. Upon reviewing the correspondence between the diplomat and Madison (which Jefferson had lent to the Senate), Adams remarked that "Tunis was as insolent and overbearing in the negotiation as France had been." He adamantly opposed paying tribute and praised Madison for "maintain[ing] a tone of proper firmness."<sup>877</sup> Notably, Adams did not record his harangue against receiving Mellimelli in the Senate that Plumer described in his diary. Adams discussed Mellimelli's January visit, but did not specify his own feelings

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<sup>875</sup> Plumer, *Ibid.*

<sup>876</sup> Adams, December 9, 1805, 378.

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*, April 19, 1806, 435.

about it. Instead, he portrayed the diplomat as unable to understand the nature of the United States' republican government. Mellimelli commented that "it must take one, two, or three years [for senators] to finish any business...but in his country they could always finish any business in half an hour." Buckner Thruston (Democratic-Republican—KY) "endeavored to explain to him the difference between our legislative assemblies and courts of justice" but Mellimelli "could not understand it. He soon withdrew."<sup>878</sup> Adams was altogether unimpressed with Mellimelli. His initial ambivalence towards the diplomat turned into contempt.

Dolley Madison similarly despised Mellimelli. Her memoirs contain a brief derogatory passage about him that broached racial and sexual issues. At a party, she described him as apathetic towards "the open admiration about him."<sup>879</sup> Madison attested to Mellimelli's popularity among elites, but claimed that he only came to life upon "spying a large, fat negress." He "rushed to her, and with much enthusiasm threw his arms around her, saying she reminded him of home and his best and most expensive wife." Madison created a farcical scene by using two adjectives to characterize the maid as overweight and by depicting Mellimelli as burning with lust. The trope of polygamy appeared as well, with Madison claiming that Mellimelli had several wives. Her description resembled the newspaper articles that portrayed him as sex-crazed. Mellimelli allegedly showed no interest in making polite conversation or building constructive relationships with Washington residents—he only wanted to have sex. Also, as did many other commentators, Madison associated him with dark-skinned people of African origin in order to stress his racial

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<sup>878</sup> Ibid., January 2, 1806, 381.

<sup>879</sup> Lucia Cutts, ed., *Memoirs and Letters of Dolly Madison: Wife of James Madison, President of the United States* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 32.



inferiority. It is possible that this incident never occurred and Madison simply recorded an off-color joke. Regardless of this story's veracity, Madison joined newspaper critics in viewing Mellimelli as a disreputable barbarian obsessed with gratifying his sexual needs.

By contrast, prominent socialite Margaret Bayard Smith spoke highly of Mellimelli in both her memoirs and in her novel *A Winter in Washington*. In the former, Smith praised the diplomat's generosity: he gave the "most sumptuous presents for the officers of government and likewise their wives." Regrettably, though, these "rich cashmere shawls, and robes, a superb silver dressing-case, rare essences and other splendid articles for female use" had to be sold since federal law prohibited government officials from accepting gifts. Smith portrayed Mellimelli as an ideal guest who showered his hosts with elegant, luxurious presents. She also emphasized that having Mellimelli attend one's event was considered an asset, with elite families vying for the opportunity. She recounted that "the Tunisian minister was the lion of the season and during the winter, he and his splendid suite were invited to all the fashionable parties."<sup>880</sup> Clearly, fawning over the diplomat was not just a plebian activity—some upper-class Americans engaged in it as well. Elites such as Smith evidently felt a class-based kinship with Mellimelli that superseded the perception of him as a racial inferior (and therefore underserving of respect).<sup>881</sup> Further, by hosting Mellimelli, American elites could assert an identity as powerbrokers who influenced foreign policy.<sup>882</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The First Forty Years of Washington Society: Portrayed by the Family Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith (Margaret Bayard) from the Collection of Her Grandson J. Henley Smith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 403-404.

<sup>881</sup> Cannadine, 122-126.

<sup>882</sup> Allgor's *Parlor Politics* persuasively argues that elite women exerted political influence in Washington by hosting social events; see 52-55, 99-101, 138-141, 187-189.

The Tunisian Ambassador also made multiple appearances in Smith's 1824 novel, which she stated was based on actual events. Again, she depicted him in a positive manner, in sharp contrast to Dolley Madison. At a party, the diplomat looked "noble and imposing, his face full of intelligence, and his large black eyes had an expression peculiarly soft and tender. His dress was in the Turkish costume, of the richest materials...splendidly embroidered with gold, with buttons of precious stones...and was so highly scented with the otto of roses, as to perfume the whole room."<sup>883</sup> Mellimelli appeared dignified, yet somewhat feminine. Indeed, Smith's descriptions of him resembled her portrayal (in her memoirs) of Thomas Jefferson after their first meeting. She depicted the president as having "a voice so soft and low, with a countenance so benignant and intelligent." Indeed, Smith used two of the exact same words in describing the men. Doing so suggests that she thought very highly of Mellimelli—what better complement could she give than to describe him as having a Jeffersonian appearance?<sup>884</sup>

Additionally, Smith envisioned Mellimelli as sexually non-threatening by characterizing his clothing as ambiguously gendered. In a different scene in the novel, one of the main female characters, Emily, fantasized about Mellimelli's clothes. She "twist[ed] a handkerchief around her cousin's head, in imitation of a Turkish turban; and after discussing the dress of *Meley Meley*," said that "her cousin Harriet must borrow his turban, his tunic, and his slippers, and try how she would look in them." Indeed, later in the novel one of the female characters seized the opportunity at a party to wear Mellimelli's turban. After putting it on, she "declared it was not only the most becoming, but most convenient head-dress."

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<sup>883</sup> Margaret Bayard Smith, *A Winter in Washington; Or, Memoirs of the Seymour Family*, vol. 1 (New York: E. Bliss & White, 1824), iv, 36-37.

<sup>884</sup> *The First Forty Years*, 6. *Parlor Politics* also discusses Smith's depictions of Jefferson, 33.

Mellimelli represented oriental exotica to these characters, who desired, if only temporarily, to look like him. Yet these ladies did not fantasize about Mellimelli himself, but rather his clothing and the mysterious culture he represented. Smith's positive portrayals of Mellimelli sharply contrast the negative representations of his sexuality by other critics. Smith viewed him as an exotic charmer of women, not as a sexual predator. She was not repulsed by him, but rather found him alluring and enchanting.<sup>885</sup>

However, *A Winter in Washington* offered some criticism of Mellimelli regarding his views on gender roles. At a party, the ambassador and others discussed the role of women in society. Mellimelli marveled at the sight of "very young and unmarried women" walking about without male chaperones and suggested that he would not grant women in his family such liberty: "all those feelings, and these thoughts, and these pretty looks, if they were *mine*, I should not like to see given to others." A female character, Mrs. Seymour, responded that American women acted virtuously because they believed God would judge them in the next life. Mellimelli, though, remained unconvinced: "the old gentlemen shook his head, as if such doctrines were far beyond his comprehension." Smith tempered her enthusiasm for Mellimelli in this scene. Instead of using his name she referred to him as "the old gentleman," as if to suggest that he stubbornly clung to antiquated ideas about gender roles. Other critics portrayed Mellimelli as threatening women by pursuing sex with them, but Smith critiqued him for upholding a rigid patriarchy that limited women's mobility.<sup>886</sup>

Another political spouse, Catharine Mitchill, mostly expressed admiration for Mellimelli. The wife of Senator Samuel Latham Mitchill (Democratic-Republican—NY),

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<sup>885</sup> Smith, *A Winter in Washington*, 51, 241.

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-249.

she discussed her delightful visit to the Tunisian Ambassador's residence in an April 1806 letter to her sister. "Mellimelli treated us very politely," she wrote, and "showed us his robes and Bernoses."<sup>887</sup> Like Smith, she considered his clothing attractive and luxurious, calling them "more superb & brilliant than any thing of the kind I ever saw." Characters in Smith's novel fantasize about trying on Mellimelli's clothes, but Mitchill thought that actually wearing them would be painful: "they were so heavy with gold and silver that I could scarcely support myself under the weight of them." Also, the diplomat apparently staged different ceremonies for guests of different sexes. Senator Plumer described a smoking ritual, while Mitchill discussed how "upon taking leave of [Mellimelli] he sprinkled us very profusely with rose water, which he says, is the custom in his land." Like Smith, Mitchill considered the Tunisian Ambassador a fascinating charmer of women and not a sexual predator. She even found herself somewhat attracted to him, remarking that "he would really be a tolerably handsome Man, if that nasty beard was taken off, but such is the effect of habit and custom, that his face in its present condition is to me very disgusting."

Additionally, Senator Mitchill sought Mellimelli's help in trying to get his wife pregnant. At a dinner party with the Madisons, Mellimelli claimed that "he had a magical cloak, which if thrown over a woman, would remove the impediments to pregnancy, and make her as fruitful as she wished....he proceeded with great gravity and ceremony to [Dolley Madison]. and adjusting it round her neck and shoulders, pronounced these words. 'Madam, I am a Saint; and what woman so ever is covered by my Bernoses, shall bring forth a

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<sup>887</sup> Catharine Mitchill to Margaret Miller, April 3, 1806, Catharine Akerly Cock Mitchill family Papers, 1806-1936, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

male child.”<sup>888</sup> Mitchill reported that the guests laughed at this demonstration, but he took the diplomat seriously. He requested (and received) a piece of the cloak from Mellimelli and sent it to Catharine. Regrettably, though, they remained unable to conceive a child. Perhaps this incident sheds light on Dolley Madison’s hostility towards Mellimelli—surely she would have felt humiliated and livid that he made a spectacle of her inability to have a child with her husband.<sup>889</sup>

Two British visitors also left disparate accounts of the Mellimelli mission. Sir Augustus John Foster, secretary to Anthony Merry (the British Minister to the United States), deemed the diplomat shrewd and believed he got the best of his American hosts. For instance, Mellimelli requested that the government allow him to handle his own expenses so that he could maintain himself “in the true Turkish style.” He refused bank notes in favor of gold, which he then sold for a profit to Baltimore merchants! Foster also argued that Americans underestimated Mellimelli. During the voyage from Tunis, for instance, American sailors convinced themselves that the Tunisian believed their “stories of floating islands, of trees of monstrous size overshadowing the waters, of krakens and sea serpents and flying fish.” But Foster thought otherwise. He believed that Mellimelli “played the part” of a “fool” on occasion, but retained mastery of situations. Additionally, Foster considered the Tunisian “very entertaining” company and evidently earned Mellimelli’s trust since his memoirs contain details of the diplomat’s life that American accounts lack. Over dinner, the Tunisian “told me he had married a girl of fifteen and that he had built himself a house in the

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<sup>888</sup> Samuel Mitchill to Catharine Mitchill, December 11, 1805; as quoted in Alan Aberbach, *In Search of an American Identity: Samuel Latham Mitchill, Jeffersonian Nationalist* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 40, 48.

<sup>889</sup> Allgor suggests that Dolley Madison may have suffered miscarriages; *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 54.

country in his own village at about six hours' ride from Tunis eight years ago which cost him \$130,000. He was a Turk by birth and a soldier by profession, tho' latterly more of a diplomat. The Bey had given him the post of banker for Mecca and Medina as a reward for his services." Foster's regard for Mellimelli reflects Cannadine's concept of "ornamentalism": the Englishman viewed the Tunisian as similar to British aristocracy, with a luxurious country house, a military background, and the trust of his sovereign. Like Smith, Foster considered the diplomat an honorable man who provided good companionship.<sup>890</sup>

By contrast, the British traveler Charles William Janson detested Mellimelli. His descriptions resemble the contemptuous, racialized rhetoric used in various American newspapers. To Janson, Mellimelli embodied "the pompous forms of Turkish despotism...his appetite only increased with indulgence. He soon became importunate in his demands for personal gratification and public homage." Janson deemed Mellimelli extraordinarily lazy, being "in no hurry to enter upon the subject of his credentials" and preferring to "nurs[e] the job." Unlike Foster, Janson never claimed to have met Mellimelli—although he observed three of the other Tunisians at a hotel bar getting drunk on gin and engaging in "trials of personal strength, such as wrestling" with other patrons. Foster considered the Tunisian delegation "a train of barbarians" and believed that the United States deserved the "contempt of civilized nations" for treating them with undeserved respect.<sup>891</sup> His loathing of the Tunisians lent credence to Federalist claims that the Jefferson Administration's lavish treatment of the delegation resulted in Europeans viewing the United States with contempt and derision. Like Dolley Madison and many congressmen, he deemed

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<sup>890</sup> Richard Davis, ed., *Jeffersonian America: Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805-6-7 and 11-12 by Sir Augustus John Foster, Bart* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1954), 47-49.

<sup>891</sup> Janson, 225-228.

Mellimelli a savage and believed that the United States debased itself by hosting him.

Mellimelli clearly was a controversial figure who generated a variety of responses about himself and the Jefferson Administration.

In addition to enjoying a vibrant social life, Mellimelli clashed with the Jefferson Administration during negotiations. In a letter to Madison, he conceded that the value of the three captured ships “is really trifling (not being more than 4000 dollars)” yet he rejected any cash settlement as “an insult to [the Bey’s] dignity.”<sup>892</sup> He insisted that either the United States return them or provide “another Cruiser” as compensation. Mellimelli underscored his point by stressing that “a substitute in cash cannot be admitted in a case that involves the honor of the Tunisian Flag.” He clearly had a sense of nationalism just as pronounced as any American’s, but his vehemence aggravated the Jefferson Administration. As the president observed in March, Mellimelli’s “vague demands and threatening war in direct terms” offended his cabinet officials—they “unanimous[ly]” agreed that Jefferson should concede nothing until the diplomat “take back his threats.”<sup>893</sup> Although Mellimelli remained unyielding, Jefferson ultimately agreed to relinquish the ships, explaining to Congress that they were of “trifling value” and that returning them would provide “proof of friendship to the Bey.”<sup>894</sup> However, upon learning from Madison that “the Xebec for which we are pledged has been sold at Malta,” the president offered an American vessel (the *Franklin*)

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<sup>892</sup> Sidi Soliman Mellimelli to Madison, February 10, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 365; Mellimelli to Madison, March 11, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 385.

<sup>893</sup> March 14, 1806, *ANAS*, 235.

<sup>894</sup> Jefferson, Special Message to Congress, April 14, 1806, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65710>.

instead.<sup>895</sup> Thus one half of Mellimelli's mission was ostensibly completed, but tensions arose over the diplomat's insistence that the United States must pay tribute as part of a new peace treaty.

Negotiations soon fell apart over this issue of tribute. Mellimelli offered a peace treaty of "at least three years" in exchange for the United States providing naval stores. The ambassador suggested that the cost of such supplies would be minimal since it "may be done from the superfluities of the American Squadron with little expense or inconvenience." He emphasized that since European countries paid tribute, the United States needed to do so as well. France, for instance, had recently provided "an arm'd Xebeque" and "two cargoes of naval stores timber."<sup>896</sup> Mellimelli stressed that paying tribute was normal and threatened war if the United States refused to pay. He warned that "no peace...can be ever permanent" unless it would "conform to the custom practised by other christian powers of the same magnitude, & occasionally make presents of military stores." Additionally, he dismissed any attempt to circumvent his authority by claiming that it would be "superfluous" for Jefferson to write the Bey since Tunis's ruler had authorized Mellimelli to negotiate on his behalf.<sup>897</sup> Mellimelli rebuffed the principle upon which the president waged the Tripolitan War: a rejection of paying tribute.

One cannot fault Mellimelli for defending a centuries-long practice of paying tribute. From his perspective, since European countries purchased peace treaties why should the United States be exempt? Since Jefferson and Mellimelli firmly stuck to their positions, talks

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<sup>895</sup> Madison to Jefferson, May 17, 1806, in James Smith, ed., *The Republic of Letters: The Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, 1776-1826*, vol. 3 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 1421.

<sup>896</sup> Mellimelli to Madison, March 11, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 385-386.

<sup>897</sup> Mellimelli to Madison, March 18, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 394.



reached a standstill. Jefferson, in an April 14<sup>th</sup> message to Congress, described the mission as a failure. Mellimelli had issued “a threat of war” that could only be averted if the United States provided naval stores, so the president requested an extension of the Mediterranean Fund—the 2.5% tax on various goods that Congress had established in March 1804 in order to fund the Tripolitan War.<sup>898</sup> Four days later, Jefferson provided the Senate with the “entire correspondence between” Madison and the Tunisian and emphasized that the ultimatum for naval stores had “been pressed in verbal conferences much more explicitly and pertinaciously than appears in the written correspondence.”<sup>899</sup> Regrettably, no voice recording technology existed at the time which could have preserved these conversations for posterity. Still, the Jefferson Administration had clearly become fatigued with Mellimelli.<sup>900</sup>

Since talks had stalled, the president decided upon a fresh approach by sending the Tunisians on a tour of prominent American cities. He hoped that Mellimelli would be overawed by the country’s large population and drop his tribute demands upon realizing that Tunis could never win a war against the United States. Madison sent a circular letter to Democratic-Republican leaders in Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, asking for their cooperation. He emphasized that Jefferson wanted Mellimelli to “see our principal Cities & the most populous parts of our Country” in order to rectify the Tunisian’s “erronious

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<sup>898</sup> Jefferson, Special Message to Congress, April 14, 1806, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65710>.

<sup>899</sup> Jefferson, Message to the Senate, April 18, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 418.

<sup>900</sup> Secretary of War Henry Dearborn expressed the Jefferson Administration’s frustration to Senator Plumer, remarking that “the Tunisian Ambassador is a very avaricious, cunning swindling man—That it is for our interest & for our honor to send him away as soon as may be convenient.” Plumer, April 3, 1805, 473.

impressions” about American “Strength.”<sup>901</sup> James Cathcart, a former captive in Algiers from 1785-1796 and subsequent consul to Tripoli, served as the Tunisians’ guide. He could communicate with them in a lingua franca and he handled the expedition’s expenses. Mellimelli received \$200 a week in “Salary,” while his entourage got one-time gifts of varying amounts.<sup>902</sup> Madison instructed Cathcart to withdraw money from the Boston branch of the First Bank of the United States in a June 21<sup>st</sup> letter and Cathcart presumably could also draw funds from the Baltimore and New York branches. Ultimately, Madison listed the multi-city tour’s expenses (which included Cathcart’s salary, lodging, supplies, and presents for the Tunisians and the Bey) at \$18,416.91.<sup>903</sup> Indeed, this was a large sum and justified critics who accused the administration of profligate spending. The president had hoped to cover the entire mission’s cost by selling the four Arabian horses that Mellimelli presented to him as a gift from the Bey.<sup>904</sup> However, Jefferson vastly underestimated the length of the trip and its expenses. As costs spiraled out-of-control, critics could justly accuse the president of financial incompetence.

Indeed, many newspapers lambasted the federal government’s vast spending on the trip. Newspapers in Massachusetts and Vermont expressed outraged that Mellimelli (whom they referred to as a “*coloured gentleman*”) collected “TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS from government, every Monday morning, through the hands of Mr. CATHCART, who

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<sup>901</sup> Madison to A.J. Dallas of Philadelphia, General Samuel Smith of Baltimore, DeWitt Clinton of New York, and Dr. William Eustis of Boston, May 19, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 428.

<sup>902</sup> Cathcart to Madison, July 1, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 448. Madison issued the following allowance instructions to Cathcart: Ali Hogia would receive \$400; Mahomet Choux, \$300; Mahomet Bel Hogia, \$200; Mustapha, \$50; Soliman, \$50; Hadji Mahomet, \$140; Three unnamed black servants, \$20 each; June 21, 1806; *Ibid.*, VI: 445.

<sup>903</sup> Cathcart’s expense report, December 26, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 483.

<sup>904</sup> Plumer, November 29, 1805, 334.

accompanies him. Whether this sum is considered as in part payment of the *Tribute* lately demanded by him, or not, we are unable to say.”<sup>905</sup> These newspapers highlighted the cost of Mellimelli’s trip by listing it in capital letters to ensure that readers could not miss it. Also, by putting Mellimelli’s darker skin color in italics the article sought to generate public outrage at the thought of a non-white person receiving free money from the government. Other Federalist newspapers stressed that Jefferson had spent a staggering sum of money by printing an article that claimed “this African mission has cost the U. States *two hundred dollars* per week, ever since its arrival.”<sup>906</sup> Federalist newspapers in Boston and New York drew attention to the total sum; they attacked the president for spending “probably more than FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS” on the trip.<sup>907</sup> Federalist newspaper editors hoped that readers would share their disgust with Jefferson for showering Mellimelli with money and respond by rejecting the Democratic-Republicans and supporting Federalist candidates.

However, as in D.C., Americans in other cities that the ambassador visited did not share this same virulence towards him. Instead, they usually treated him as a celebrity. An article in the Federalist *New-York Herald* criticized local fascination with the Tunisian and dehumanized him by comparing him to a worm. The speaker claimed that while “walking thro’ Wall street yesterday morning, I saw a large crowd” filled with people “standing with

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<sup>905</sup> *Hampshire Federalist* (Federalist; Springfield, MA), July 1, 1806 [see Josiah Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, vol. 1 (Springfield: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1855), 438]. The article also ran in the politically indeterminable *Middlebury Mercury* (Middlebury, VT), July 9, 1806.

<sup>906</sup> *Columbian Centinel* (Boston, MA), September 20, 1806; *Newburyport Herald* (Newburyport, MA), September 23, 1806; *The People’s Friend & Daily Advertiser* (New York, NY), September 25, 1806; *The Farmer’s Museum* (Walpole, NH), September 26, 1806. The version printed in the *Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), September 25, 1806; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser* (Alexandria, VA), September 29, 1806; and *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), October 2, 1806 lacked the italics.

<sup>907</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), December 30, 1806; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, NY), January 20, 1807 [this newspaper italicized the cost instead of using capital letters].

their mouths and eyes distended, and with their heads eagerly reaching over towards the centre....they had surrounded the Musselman in such a manner that he could not proceed until he had satisfied their curiosity. Being, in some measure, a slave to that passion myself, I hastened to the spot, and...instead of beholding a *Great Plenipotentiary* standing with all the dignity of Mahomedan pride, I saw nothing but *a great worm* creeping with all the submission of reptile humility.” This fable-like story condemned public obsession with Mellimelli (although the author admitted his culpability). Far from being a distinguished official, the article depicted the diplomat as a grotesque worm festering in the street and suggested that people who fawned over him debased themselves. It also stressed religious differences between Mellimelli and Americans by twice referencing the ambassador’s Islamic beliefs.<sup>908</sup>

Oddly, given the vast amount of criticism of Mellimelli in Massachusetts newspapers, Bostonians welcomed the Tunisian and vied for the opportunity to host him at social events. Having Mellimelli at one’s gathering could be used as a way to attract customers or for political purposes. The July 14<sup>th</sup> *Boston Gazette* (pro-Federalist) ran an advertisement for an upcoming ball at The Pantheon in Rowe’s Lane that promised the attendance of “His Excellency the Tunisian Ambassador and Suit.” The ad further offered guests the opportunity to witness “a Turkish Dance” (it did not specify if Mellimelli or his entourage would participate).<sup>909</sup> Similarly, an ad in the July 15<sup>th</sup> *The Repertory* (pro-Federalist) announced that “the publick are informed, that his Excellency the *Tunisian Ambassador* and suit, are engaged to visit the COLUMBIAN MUSEUM, THIS EVENING....The Transparent

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<sup>908</sup> *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), July 12, 1806 [see Carl Fish, *The Civil Service and the Patronage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1904), 263].

<sup>909</sup> *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), July 14, 1806.

Paintings of the Bashaw of Tripoli, &c. will be exhibited at half past 9 o'clock." The owners of the Columbian Museum conceived of a brilliant public relations move: what better way to celebrate an exhibit about the First Barbary War than to have real-life North Africans attend? Their presence would create a fantasy-like atmosphere, with their bodies serving as live representations of the region. Moreover, the art exhibit contained an implicit message to Mellimelli: just as the United States defeated the bashaw of Tripoli, so it would crush Tunis if the two countries fought.<sup>910</sup>

Bostonians also used the ambassador as a political pawn. Federalists celebrated a Barbary-themed Fourth of July, as they invited Mellimelli and distinguished Tripolitan War veterans William Eaton and Edward Preble to attend as guests of honor. Eaton's toast celebrated marital valor and featured gendered rhetoric that feminized the Barbary pirates: "let not the sweat of Americans be bartered for essences to perfume a pirate's beard, nor our harvests for gold to purchase humiliation."<sup>911</sup> To Eaton, paying tribute denigrated national honor and amounted to stealing from hard-working Americans since their taxes supported the procurement of luxury goods by North African men. Preble's toast heralded "our enterprising officers and hardy seamen engaged in the peaceful pursuit of commerce:— May it ever be the pride and glory of their naval brethren in arms to protect and defend them." He supported a continued U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean. Former president John Adams also attended and gave a toast supporting the Navy: "May the Trident of Neptune ever protect the independence of Nations, and defend the Liberty of mankind." Ironically, Adams himself preferred purchasing peace with North Africa to war during his

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<sup>910</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), July 15, 1806.

<sup>911</sup> *New-England Palladium* (Federalist; Boston, MA), July 8, 1806.

Administration, but toasting to tribute would hardly have been well-received. Mellimelli gave a gracious toast that acknowledged his warm reception: “may every foreign Agent return to his own country impressed with the same favorable ideas of American hospitality, that I will forever make a merit in cherishing.” Once again, he demonstrated the ability to flatter an audience. Despite the belligerent rhetoric contained in New England newspapers, it appears that Bostonians treated Mellimelli respectfully.<sup>912</sup>

The very act of Federalists hosting Mellimelli merits further comment. It is understandable that Federalists would embrace Eaton and Preble, two military veterans from the Tripolitan War who could lend credibility and authority to the Federalist Party. Honoring Eaton and Preble could also serve as a way to present them as potential candidates for public office. But why would Federalists want to associate themselves with Mellimelli? What would they have to gain? For the past several months Federalist newspapers had condemned Jefferson for paying for the Tunisian’s expenses and had stigmatized Mellimelli as morally debauched and racially inferior. Yet by bringing Mellimelli and Tripolitan War heroes together, Federalists reinforced their support for martial resistance against the Barbary pirates.

Mellimelli also attended the rival celebration held by Boston’s Democratic-Republicans. According to the *Republican-Watch Tower*, “officers of the infantry” walked Mellimelli and Cathcart to the State House. Upon arriving “they were introduced into the representatives’ chamber,” where the Tunisian Ambassador sat in “a chair placed in the center of the room for his reception.” This scene presents a striking contrast to Mellimelli’s

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<sup>912</sup> See David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997) for the political uses of Fourth of July celebrations.

visit to the Senate back in January. Then, senators from both political parties opposed the diplomat's attendance and left the room in order to avoid acknowledging him. In Boston, though, distinguished Democratic-Republicans treated him as a guest of honor. The newspaper also portrayed the Boston public as enthralled with Mellimelli. As he walked to the State House, "curiosity had excited a great number of the inhabitants to assemble in the streets through which they passed, to see a stranger whose customs and habits were so novel in our country. The ambassador was gratified with the civility; and respect paid him, and expressed his warmest attachments for the citizens of Boston." As in other cities, the public relished the opportunity to see a North African in person. This report resembles Margaret Bayard Smith's portrayal of Mellimelli as a gracious guest who charmed others. Further, the celebration included a toast that extolled good treatment of Mellimelli: "The States of Barbary—Neither war, nor rumors of war, should be allowed to annul the sacred rights of national hospitality." This toast could refer to the Boston Democratic-Republicans' event, the Jefferson Administration's treatment of Mellimelli, or both. Regardless, Americans of both political parties viewed Mellimelli as an instrument by which they could bolster their party's credibility.<sup>913</sup>

Yet goodwill faded as Mellimelli's stay dragged on. Jefferson had designated the *Franklin* to return the diplomat to Tunis, but he refused to travel in this ship or receive it as compensation for the three Tunisian ships captured by the U.S. Navy. As he explained to Jefferson in a July 26<sup>th</sup> letter, he could not accept it since "with great concern" he learned it was "a prize vessel captured by a Tripolitan Cruiser and sold at Tunis in the year 1803." Accepting it could even result in the Bey punishing him: "it is more than my life is worth to

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<sup>913</sup> *Republican Watch-Tower* (New York, NY), July 15, 1806.

return in a vessel that has already belong'd to my Master and was sold to *Christians*.”<sup>914</sup>

From Mellimelli's perspective, accepting the *Franklin* could have dire consequences for him and would constitute an insult to his country's honor. If the Bey didn't want it before, why would he want it now? Madison proposed a solution that proved acceptable to both parties: the government would charter a second ship (the *Two Brothers*) to transport Mellimelli, with the *Franklin* also making the voyage as a store ship to carry the diplomat's goods.<sup>915</sup>

The delays over Mellimelli's departure strongly taxed James Cathcart's patience. He reported that the diplomat was unhappy regarding the size of the *Franklin* since it could not fit all of his goods. Consequently, “14,000 lbs of loaf sugar, & 10 Tons of Logwood” had been sent to Washington D.C. “to be forwarded to Tunis in the first public vessel that sails for the Mediterranean.” Mellimelli, though, feared that these items would never arrive and insisted that the U.S. government pay him their value (\$2,643) since it had ample money to spare. Cathcart described the diplomat's rationale as such: “there can be but little loss” to the United States since it is “better able to bear [the cost] than he is.” This report suggested that Jefferson's plan to overawe Mellimelli with U.S. strength had failed. Instead of being intimidated, the Tunisian felt emboldened to ask for more favors. For his part, Cathcart was ready to wash his hands of the matter. He “heartily repent[ed] having accompanied the Ambassador,” whom he considered “a very mean, suspicious, avaricious character; bias'd by nothing but self interest, devoid of every sense of delicacy...the sooner we get rid of him entirely the better.”<sup>916</sup>

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<sup>914</sup> Mellimelli to Jefferson, July 26, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 462-463.

<sup>915</sup> Madison to Jefferson, August 4, 1806, *Republic of Letters*, 3: 1432; Smith to Captain Hugh Campbell, September 4, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 479.

<sup>916</sup> Cathcart to Jacob Wagner, July 20, 1806, *Naval Documents*, VI: 457.



Mellimelli finally departed in late September, but the Jefferson Administration feared that the mission had failed. The Tunisian Ambassador had been in the United States for ten months, but no peace treaty had been made. Mellimelli left in a bad mood according to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith, whether from “not having entirely succeeded in the general objects of his mission” or another issue “operating upon a jealous mind.” Smith feared that he was “hostile” and would advise the Bey “to make a declaration of War.” Smith advised Captain Hugh Campbell to “keep a watchful Eye” on Tunis’s squadron.<sup>917</sup> In turn, Campbell advised the U.S. consul at Spain to caution American captains about the dangers of sailing in the Mediterranean.<sup>918</sup>

Indeed, tensions remained high after Mellimelli’s December arrival in Tunis. Peace was achieved only after diplomat Tobias Lear met with the Bey and his prime minister in January 1807 and agreed to pay \$10,000 as compensation for the three captured ships (the Bey would not receive the *Two Brothers*).<sup>919</sup> In a May letter, Madison informed Lear that Jefferson “approved” the settlement and provided instructions for acquiring the money from the prominent British bank Baring Brothers & Company.<sup>920</sup> Finally satisfied that the United States respected him, the Bey announced in a letter to Jefferson that “henceforward as heretofore, our previous treaty will serve as a law to be fulfilled.” Commerce between both countries would be encouraged and “all our relations will be founded on principles of entire

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<sup>917</sup> Smith to Campbell, September 4, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 479.

<sup>918</sup> Campbell to William Kirkpatrick, December 20, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 492.

<sup>919</sup> Lear to Madison, January 25, 1807, National Archives, “Despatches from United States Consuls in Algiers, 1785-1906” (Washington D.C., 1942), text-fiche, M23, roll 9.

<sup>920</sup> Madison to Lear, May 30, 1807, National Archives, “Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1834” (Washington D.C., 1945), text-fiche, M78, roll 1.

and perfect reciprocity.”<sup>921</sup> He also thanked the president for giving Mellimelli a “polite reception.” Despite the tumultuousness surrounding the Mellimelli mission, Jefferson attained his goal of avoiding a second Mediterranean War.

However, Jefferson completely failed regarding his second goal of not paying tribute—the United States only received peace upon agreeing to pay \$10,000. This sum ostensibly served as compensation for the three captured Tunisian ships, but Mellimelli had earlier told Madison that they were not worth “more than 4000 dollars.”<sup>922</sup> The Bey shrewdly sensed an opportunity to extract more money from America, meaning that Mellimelli had erred—or bluffed—in claiming that the Bey would reject any monetary settlement for the ships.<sup>923</sup> One can reasonably consider this extra \$6,000 as tribute. Clearly, the lavish hospitality that Jefferson showered upon Mellimelli did not buy any goodwill.

Moreover, the Jefferson Administration concealed this payment from the American public in order to avoid generating further controversy. This duplicity has never before been discussed by scholars. In his October 1807 Annual Message to Congress, the president simply commented that “our peace with the several states on the coast of Barbary appears as firm as at any former period and as likely to continue as that of any other nation.”<sup>924</sup> Notably, he mentioned neither the \$10,000 payment nor the Mellimelli mission. Lear, in a March 1807 circular letter to American consuls in the Mediterranean, announced the peace—

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<sup>921</sup> Bey of Tunis to Jefferson, February 27, 1807, *Naval Documents*, VI: 508. The Bey also asked for a favor—that the U.S. Navy aid Mellimelli’s next diplomatic mission (to Spain) by dropping him off at Gibraltar. His request was granted. Campbell to Smith, February 27, 1807, *Ibid.*, VI: 508-509 and Master Commandant David Porter to Smith, March 29, 1807, *Ibid.*, VI: 513.

<sup>922</sup> Mellimelli to Madison, February 10, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 365.

<sup>923</sup> Mellimelli to Madison, March 11, 1806, *Ibid.*, VI: 385.

<sup>924</sup> Jefferson, Seventh Annual Message, October 27, 1807, *The American Presidency Project*, UCSB, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29449>.

but omitted any mention of the payment.<sup>925</sup> Furthermore, by printing this letter or other declarations of peace between Tunis and the United States, newspapers inadvertently aided the cover-up by spreading the (false) belief that Jefferson had achieved an honorable, tribute-free peace.<sup>926</sup>

It made perfect sense for Jefferson to conceal the \$10,000 payment, since admitting it would have invited additional backlash. Federalists would again savage his Barbary diplomacy and Madison could possibly appear vulnerable in the 1808 presidential election. Better to keep silent than create another political landmine. Astoundingly, Jefferson dodged a political bullet in his handling of the Mellimelli mission. The president unwittingly provided Federalists with an opportunity to revive their party's fortunes by making distinguished Tripolitan War veterans Edward Preble and William Eaton appear as attractive candidates for political office. Fortunately for the Democratic-Republicans, their rivals failed to capitalize politically since these two war heroes passed away within a few years of Mellimelli's trip.<sup>927</sup> Jefferson even lacked the support of leaders from his own party, weathering reproach from Democratic-Republican newspaper editors and elected officials. Critics from both parties opposed the president's opulent hospitality, fearing that it would

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<sup>925</sup> Lear to Several Consuls of the U. States in the Mediterranean, March 1, 1807, *Naval Documents*, VI: 509.

<sup>926</sup> In searching the newspaper databases, I found 129 articles that reference the peace with Tunis, 22 of which reprint Lear's circular letter. These articles span from May 1, 1807 to June 15, 1807.

<sup>927</sup> Preble's health declined after returning from the Mediterranean and he died in 1807. Biographer Christopher McKee describes Preble as "a nominal Federalist" who "was drifting towards Republicanism." McKee, *Edward Preble: A Naval Biography, 1761-1807* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 315-316. Eaton won a seat in the Massachusetts State Legislature as a Federalist in 1807, but only served one term. He gradually became a pariah due to alcoholism, self-aggrandizement, and attacking Chief Justice John Marshall in a speech. He died in 1811. Charles Prentiss, *The Life of the Late General William Eaton* (Brookfield: E. Merriam & Co., 1813), 408-410.

perpetuate the United States' status as a second-rate power instead of developing it into a mighty nation.

Jefferson had hoped that Mellimelli would be regarded as a respectable policymaker. Yet the use of government funds to cover his expenses and the decision to send him on a multi-city tour ironically turned the diplomat into a spectacle. Competing perceptions of Mellimelli existed simultaneously. Critics considered the Tunisian a racially inferior reprobate, although they could not dissuade the public's enthusiasm for Mellimelli. Residents showered the diplomat with attention when he visited their towns, surely aware that he was the only Muslim or representative of the Barbary States that they would ever see. Even some elites adored Mellimelli, viewing him as a peer and relishing his company at parties. The president took a huge risk in providing lavish treatment to the diplomat and, remarkably, it did not result in any lasting repercussions.

However, the Mellimelli mission utterly failed as an attempt to build a new type of relationship with Tunis. The United States, like other countries, could not get peace without purchasing it. Jefferson naively believed that he could change the way the Bey conducted foreign policy. Hosting Mellimelli and his entourage at public expense amounted to a gargantuan waste of government funds—Jefferson could have achieved peace at a fraction of the cost by paying compensation for the three captured ships in the first place. Moreover, coming on the heels of the controversial Tripolitan War treaty, Mellimelli's visit tempered the notion that the United States had triumphed over the Barbary pirates. Only a well-executed cover-up, together with Mellimelli's popularity among the public and some elites, prevented the trip from being a complete disaster.

For most of his presidency, Jefferson experienced conflict with the Barbary pirates. The Tripolitan War occurred from 1801 to 1805, Morocco threatened war from 1802 to 1803, problems with Tunis lasted from 1805 to early 1807, and Algiers held ships from late 1807 to early 1808. The Democratic-Republicans had lambasted Federalists for paying tribute to the Barbary States, but they hardly did better during Jefferson's presidency. The government spent millions fighting Tripoli only to pay ransom money and tens of thousands of dollars to host Mellimelli and to resolve problems with Tunis and Algiers. North African rulers simply outmatched the Jefferson Administration. The former were experts at negotiating good terms for themselves—their countries had centuries of experience extorting money from European countries. Jefferson entered his presidency with high hopes for reforming America's relations with the Barbary States, but he largely failed. Only the prevention of war with Morocco in 1803 can be considered a success—but Preble and the U.S. Navy deserve the credit since they (and not the president) acted quickly to resolve the conflict. As Secretary of State, Madison deserves some blame for the Jefferson Administration's ineffective Barbary policies. However, over the next decade he reevaluated Jefferson's approach. Following the War of 1812, Madison would seize opportunities to wage war against Algiers and to crush Barbary piracy once and for all.

## **Chapter 7: The Second Barbary War and the End of Barbary Piracy**

A decade after its war against Tripoli, the United States faced another war in the Mediterranean, this time against Algiers. Although the rulers of these two Barbary States had economic reasons for targeting American ships, the conflicts affected the United States in very different ways. Compared to the Tripolitan War, the Algerine War featured a much stronger naval response from the United States, far fewer Americans were enslaved, and the war did not benefit the waning Federalist Party. Most importantly, the Tripolitan War had ended in disappointment for the United States, but the Algerine War constituted an unambiguous success. President James Madison did not repeat Thomas Jefferson's mistakes—he was fully committed to victory and determined to end permanently the threat of Barbary piracy.

Algiers's declaration of war upon the United States in summer 1812 came as a surprise to Americans, who suspected surreptitious involvement from Great Britain. This perception prevented Federalists from raising meaningful challenges to Madison's leadership. Criticisms from Federalist newspaper editors often smacked of desperation and irrationality (like much of the Democratic-Republican press during the Tripolitan War). By contrast, Britain's alleged involvement with Algiers aided Democratic-Republicans—party newspapers cited it as further evidence of that country's hostility towards the United States. Overall, the government, many newspaper editors, and the public considered the Algerine War as intertwined with the larger war against Britain and its Native American allies. The U.S. Navy's eventual victory over Algiers in June 1815 (and intimidation of Tripoli and Tunis) unleashed nationalistic fervor, as Americans deemed their triumphs over the Barbary

pirates proof of their country's superior moral resolve compared to Europe. By rejecting Jeffersonian principles of limited force and skepticism towards the navy as an institution, the public and the Madison Administration accomplished what American policymakers since the 1780s had failed to do: obtain a permanent peace with the Barbary States.

When Congress declared war on Britain in June 1812, no one anticipated that this conflict would have a Mediterranean component. In early October, however, Americans learned that Algiers had declared war on the United States. A merchant ship arrived in Portsmouth with news that the Dey had rejected America's most recent tribute delivery and had expelled the U.S. consul, Tobias Lear (who took refuge in Gibraltar).<sup>928</sup> Lear confirmed this information in a July 25<sup>th</sup> letter (which newspapers throughout the United States published).<sup>929</sup> The diplomat described how the American ship *Allegany* arrived in Algiers on July 17<sup>th</sup> "with a cargo of naval and military stores" as tribute. The crew began to unload the

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<sup>928</sup> *The Pilot* (Boston, MA), October 2, 1812.

<sup>929</sup> Lear to the American consul in Gibraltar, printed in *The Columbian* (New York, NY), October 27, 1812; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), October 27, 1812; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), October 30, 1812; *Long-Island Star* (Brooklyn, NY), October 28, 1812; *Newburyport Herald, and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), October 30, 1812; *The Repertory & General Advertiser* (Boston, MA), October 30, 1812; *The Whig Chronicle* (Philadelphia, PA), October 30, 1812; *The Albany Gazette* (Albany, NY), November 2, 1812; *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* (Alexandria, VA), November 2, 1812; *Portland Gazette, and Maine Advertiser* (Portland, ME), November 2, 1812; *The Military Monitor, and American Register* (New York, NY), November 2, 1812; *Hagers-Town Gazette* (Hagers-Town, MD), November 3, 1812; *Orange County Patriot; or, the Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (Goshen, NY), November 3, 1812; *The Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence, RI), November 3, 1812 [an abbreviated version]; *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), November 3, 1812; *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), November 4, 1812; *THOMAS'S Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), November 4, 1812 [an abbreviated version]; *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), November 4, 1812; *American Advocate* (Hallowell, ME), November 5, 1812; *The Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis, MD), November 5, 1812; *Kline's Weekly Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), November 6, 1812; *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), November 6, 1812; *The Yankee* (Boston, MA), November 6, 1812; *American Watchman and Delaware Republican* (Wilmington, DE), November 7, 1812; *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), November 7, 1812; *Merrimack Intelligencer* (Haverhill, MA), November 7, 1812; *Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), November 9, 1812 [an abbreviated version]; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), November 10, 1812; *Concord Gazette* (Concord, NH), November 10, 1812; *Independent American* (Ballston Spa, NY), November 10, 1812; *Bennington News Letter* (Bennington, VT), November 11, 1812; *The Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), November 11, 1812; *The Supporter* (Chillicothe, OH), November 14, 1812.

goods, but the Dey claimed (without justification) “that the articles were not such in quantity or quality as he expected” and he expelled Lear and all other Americans from Algiers. Moreover, the Dey declared that the United States owed an additional \$27,000 in tribute because it needed to use the (shorter) Islamic calendar and not the (longer) Western one.<sup>930</sup> Lear begrudgingly paid the sum (plus a 25% surcharge!)—yet another example of his caving in to the demands of a North African ruler. The diplomat also listed each ship in Algiers’s fleet: “5 frigates, 3 corvettes, 2 brigs, 1 xebec, 1 schooner, 1 row-galley, and 6 gun-boats” and warned that “there is reason to apprehend that they had orders to capture American vessels.” Lear disparaged the abilities of Algerine sailors in another letter, calling them “the lowest and most miserable order of people in Algiers” and claimed that “they know nothing of regular combat at sea, and if kept from boarding distance, they could not withstand one half their own force on board another vessel.”<sup>931</sup> He urged an end to paying “disgraceful tribute” and hoped that “*Algiers will be humbled to the dust.*” Despite his anger, Lear’s actions raise the question of why he so readily capitulated to the Dey’s demands. Was Lear unwilling to be jailed by the Dey? Was he more concerned the safety of himself and his family than with his country’s honor? If the Algerine Navy was as weak as he claimed, why was Lear afraid to risk a rupture? Moreover, why did Madison even retain Lear as a diplomat? After brokering bad deals for the United States with Tripoli and Tunis, why did Madison consider him competent?

Regardless, Lear and other commentators blamed Britain for causing the rift with Algiers. Upon returning to America, Lear wrote an open letter (published by newspapers in

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<sup>930</sup> Lear to Madison, July 29, 1815, printed in the *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), December 15, 1812.

<sup>931</sup> Lear to Secretary of State, July 29, 1812, printed in the *American Watchman and Delaware Republican* (Wilmington, DE), December 9, 1812.



six states) in which he declared that “I have good grounds, for believing it *true*” that “the conduct of the Dey towards the United States, was instigated by the British.”<sup>932</sup> Several newspapers (mostly Democratic-Republican) also claimed that “orders have lately been given in *London* for stores to equip the *Algerine* Navy to the amount of upwards of 40,000 pounds.”<sup>933</sup> Two of these publications included additional editorial commentary, contending that this intelligence “corroborat[es]...the dispatches of Consul Lear...and satisfactorily shows to whom we are indebted for the present Algerine War.”<sup>934</sup> Additionally, *The Western Star* (a Democratic-Republican newspaper from New York) reprinted an article attributed to the *London Times*: “the Dey of Algiers intends to undertake a spirited war with the American Republic. To fulfil this design he is provided with 6 frigates of 44 guns, two of which are perfectly new, and he and his vassals are equipping a swarm of smaller vessels, which are to be engaged in depredations on the floating property of this new enemy. Orders have been

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<sup>932</sup> Lear to the Editor of *The National Advocate*, *The National Advocate* (New York, NY), April 19, 1813. Reprinted in the *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), April 21, 1813; *The Columbian* (New York, NY), April 24, 1813; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), April 24, 1813; *American Watchman and Delaware Republican* (Wilmington, DE), April 28, 1813; *The Yankee* (Boston, MA), April 30, 1813; *Boston Patriot* (Boston, MA), May 1, 1813; *New-Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, NH), May 4, 1813; *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1813; *The Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), May 6, 1813; *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), May 11, 1813; *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), May 12, 1813; *The War* (New York, NY), May 18, 1813; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), May 20, 1813.

<sup>933</sup> Two Federalist newspapers published it: *The Repertory & General Advertiser* (Boston, MA), December 15, 1812 and *The Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence, RI), December 18, 1812 [see William Staples, *Annals of the Town of Providence, from its First Settlement, to the Organization of the City Government* (Providence: Knowles and Vose, 1843), 549-550]. Five Democratic-Republican newspapers published it: *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), December 23, 1812; *Republican* (Plattsburgh, NY), December 25, 1812; *Green-Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), December 30, 1812; *Democratic Republican* (Walpole, NH), January 4, 1813; *The War* (New York, NY), January 9, 1813 [see “The Life of Samuel Woodworth” at <http://www.xavier.edu/history-department/heroesofthelake/biography.html> (accessed February 17, 2016)].

<sup>934</sup> *The Native American* (Norwich, CT), December 23, 1812 and *Democratic Republican* (Walpole, NH), January 4, 1813.

given in London for stores to equip the Algerine navy to the amount of upwards of 40,000£.”<sup>935</sup> But were these accusations true?

British sources suggest that the government tacitly encouraged Algiers to harass other countries and reveal that many newspaper editors in England cheered the Dey’s decision to go to war against the United States. Several British newspapers indeed published the article reprinted in *The Western Star* that discussed England’s provisions for Algiers.<sup>936</sup> Yet while it appears that the British government did not actually give ships to Algiers, it did provide £6,262 worth of naval stores.<sup>937</sup> Additionally, many British publications rejoiced that an Algerine-American war would increase their country’s share of the Mediterranean trade. A widely printed editorial observed that this new war “is likely to have a beneficial effect on our trade with the Mediterranean. In spices, and numerous other commodities, the Americans have carried on a successful competition in that sea with our own traders, and by the obstruction they will now meet with, we shall, in several articles, be enabled to supersede them in that extensive market.”<sup>938</sup> Furthermore, William Shaler, the U.S. diplomat whom

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<sup>935</sup> *The Western Star* (New York, NY), January 16, 1813.

<sup>936</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, October 12, 1812; *Kentish Chronicle*, October 13, 1812; *The Public Ledger, and Daily Advertiser*, October 13, 1812; *Hereford Journal*, October 14, 1812 [it omitted the last sentence]; *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, October 15, 1812; *The Derby Mercury*, October 15, 1812; *Chester Chronicle*, October 16, 1812; *Cornwall Gazette*, October 17, 1812 [it omitted the last sentence]; *The Northampton Mercury*, October 17, 1812 [it omitted the last sentence]; *The Leeds Mercury*, October 17, 1812 [an abridged version]; *The York Herald*, October 17, 1812 [it omitted the last sentence]; *The Aberdeen Journal*, October 21, 1812 [it omitted the last sentence]. These sources were found via the online database *The British Newspaper Archive*.

<sup>937</sup> *An Account of the Extraordinary Expenses of the Army, Incurred and Paid by the Right Honourable the PAYMASTER GENERAL of His MAJESTY’S FORCES, from 25 December 1811, to 24 December 1812* (House of Commons, 1813), lists a reimbursement for “the Right honourable George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy; for the value of Naval Stores, furnished by His Majesty’s Ships to the Day of Algiers (page 10). This entry is dated February 28, 1812. Found in the ProQuest online database *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*.

<sup>938</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, August 28, 1812; *Cheltenham Chronicle*, September 3, 1812; *The Manchester Mercury*, September 8, 1812; *The Aberdeen Journal*, September 9, 1812. Some of the newspapers slightly altered the *Kentish Gazette*’s text; for instance, “our commerce with the Mediterranean” and “rare spices, and numerous other rich commodities.”

Madison appointed to make peace with Algiers in 1815, learned about a January 1812 letter sent by the Prime Minister and the Prince Regent (George IV, the heir to the British throne) to the Dey of Algiers. The letter pledged “the strongest friendship for the Dey,” promised that England would “protect [Algiers’s] capital with his fleets,” and “beg[ged] the Dey not to permit those who are enemies of Great Britain to lessen the harmony now subsisting between the two nations.”<sup>939</sup> Although this letter does not specifically mention the United States, Shaler believed that the promise of British protection emboldened the Dey to target American ships. The Prince Regent also met with an Algerine diplomat in early 1811.<sup>940</sup> Given the plethora of British sources that applauded the Dey’s aggression against the United States, it seems clear that a recent scholar has erred in claiming that American accusations of British complicity were groundless.<sup>941</sup> Clearly, British policymakers and members of the press welcomed Algerine attacks upon American ships. However, supporting Barbary piracy was not a new policy for Britain—the country had long encouraged it against commercial rivals. Americans recognized this reality, as several newspapers reprinted Lord Sheffield’s infamous remarks (from the 1780s) about Barbary piracy suppressing U.S. trade (discussed in chapter 2).<sup>942</sup>

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<sup>939</sup> George IV and Lord Liverpool to the Dey of Algiers, January 4, 1812, printed in William Shaler, *Sketches of Algiers, Political, Historical, and Civil* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826), 118-119.

<sup>940</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, March 4, 1811; *Kentish Gazette*, March 5, 1811; *Caledonian Mercury*, March 7, 1811; *Perth Courier*, March 7, 1811; *The Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser*, March 7, 1811; *The Lancaster Gazette*, March 9, 1811.

<sup>941</sup> Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 195-196.

<sup>942</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), November 6, 1815; *American Watchman* (Wilmington, DE), November 8, 1815; *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), November 8, 1815; *The Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), November 15, 1815; *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), November 21, 1815; *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), November 27, 1815; *Orange County Patriot; or, the Spirit of Seventy-Six* (Goshen, NY), December 5, 1815.

Back in the United States, Democratic-Republican newspapers responded to the unexpected war with Algiers by becoming even more outraged with Britain. For instance, an article printed in six states featured the headline “*ALGERINES AND INDIANS—worthy ALLIES of the world’s last hope!*” and argued that Britain intended to destroy “our independence” by teaming with “the *pirates of Africa* and the *savages of America*” to “brew up such a variety of wars *against* and *among* us.”<sup>943</sup> Similarly, another widely reprinted article bitterly observed that “all the independent allies of Britain are upon us. The Algerine corsair, and the murderous Indian are in array against us.” It called for a powerful naval attack against Algiers led by America’s foremost naval officers: “let no tribute henceforth be paid to the African rover, but from the cannon’s mouth, and by ambassadors like Rodgers, Hull, Decatur, Porter, and Bainbridge.”<sup>944</sup> To Democratic-Republicans, Algiers’s sudden anger with the United States constituted both additional proof of Britain’s ill-will towards its former colonies and vindication of their party’s distrust of Britain.

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<sup>943</sup> *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), October 5, 1812; *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), October 8, 1812; *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), October 13, 1812 [see James Lyford, ed., *History of Concord, New Hampshire*, vol. 1 (Concord: History Commission, 1903), 364]; *American Watchman and Delaware Republican* (Wilmington, DE), October 17, 1812 [see Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, vol. 1, (Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888), 451]; *Columbian Phenix: Or, Providence Patriot* (Providence, RI), October 17, 1812 [see *Transactions of the Rhode Island Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry* (Providence: Knowles, Anthony & Co, 1866), 56]; *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), October 19, 1812; *Long-Island Star* (Brooklyn, NY), October 28, 1812; *Northern Centinel* (Burlington, VT), October 29, 1812; *The Bee* (Hudson, NY), November 10, 1812. John Lord Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States*, rev. edition (London: J. Debrett, 1784), 204-205.

<sup>944</sup> Eight Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Columbian* (New York, NY), October 7, 1812 [see Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690-1872* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), 225]; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), October 13, 1812; *The Yankee* (Boston, MA), October 16, 1812; *Otsego Republican Press* (Cherry Valley, NY), October 23, 1812; *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), October 24, 1812; *Republican Star or, Eastern Shore General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), October 27, 1812; *The Sun* (Pittsfield, MA), October 29, 1812; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), October 31, 1812. One Federalist newspaper published it: *Orange County Patriot; or, the Spirit of Seventy-Six* (Goshen, NY), October 13, 1812 [see E.M. Rutenber and L.H. Clark, *History of Orange County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1881), 192].

Some Federalist publications refused to blame Britain and instead accused France of pressuring Algiers, even though no evidence has come to light to support of this theory. A New Hampshire publication declared that “the hand of Napoleon is in this thing;—the Pirate was probably instigated to let loose his Corsairs upon our defenceless commerce; to whip us into the continental system. . . . One object of this war, doubtless, was to cut off the supplies going to the Peninsula.”<sup>945</sup> Similarly, a Boston publication surmised that “it is more than probable that” the Dey’s hostility “was effected by the influence of France.”<sup>946</sup> These articles underscore the loyalty that many Federalists felt towards Britain and their reluctance to criticize it. These Federalists wanted to prevent the new conflict with Algiers from generating additional public anger against Britain.

A few newspapers, however, took a different view and blamed Democratic-Republican policymakers for causing problems with Algiers. A pro-Federalist New Hampshire newspaper deemed it “disgraceful” for a “free government to pay tribute to Algerine Pirates” and declared that “had the *voice of Prebble* been regarded—had the exertions of *Eaton* been noticed, this humiliating homage would never have existed.”<sup>947</sup> It argued that the Jefferson Administration blew the opportunity to permanently end Barbary piracy during the previous decade and that this failure of leadership had created fresh problems in the Mediterranean. A Pro-Democratic-Republican newspaper from Boston declared that “the war with the *Algerines* is an evidence of the want of providence in our administration. Why were not the supplies stipulated by treaty seasonably remitted? This is

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<sup>945</sup> *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), November 6, 1812.

<sup>946</sup> *The Repertory & General Advertiser* (Boston, MA), November 3, 1812.

<sup>947</sup> *Portsmouth Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), October 3, 1812.

of a piece with the management of our national concerns.”<sup>948</sup> Similarly, another Democratic-Republican newspaper accused Madison of being “so occupied in the study of electioneering management” that he had “forgotten these barbarians.” Using jeremiad-like rhetoric, it interpreted this new conflict with Algiers as “another solemn warning from heaven, loudly calling upon the nation to inquire whether our present rulers are adapted to this tremendous crisis....Mr. Madison is at best only half a president.”<sup>949</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, Democratic-Republicans had accused the John Adams Administration of neglecting tribute payments to the Barbary States and thereby precipitating the Tripolitan War. While those charges had some truth to them, those who blamed the Madison Administration for the Dey’s anger lacked any evidence—the government was not remiss in making the stipulated tribute payments. The Dey sought war even though the United States had done nothing to provoke him.

A few newspaper editors envisioned a positive aspect to war with Algiers—they hoped that the United States could permanently end Barbary piracy. An editorial that appeared in Washington D.C. and four states declared that “as for the Algerines, we trust the renewal of hostilities on their part will be the signal for an exemption, henceforth and forever, from tribute to Barbarian despots. We have always viewed it as an ignominious purchase of their forbearance, which half the money expended on a suitable armament would long ago have coerced.”<sup>950</sup> Additionally, this article welcomed the opportunity for naval

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<sup>948</sup> *The Yankee* (Boston, MA), October 9, 1812.

<sup>949</sup> *The Statesmen* (New York, NY), October 9, 1812. See *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 27 (Worcester: The Society, 1917), 467.

<sup>950</sup> Four Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), November 7, 1812; *The Columbian* (New York, NY), November 12, 1812; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), November 17, 1812; *Raleigh Register and North-Carolina Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), November 20, 1812. It also

officers and seamen to bring glory to themselves and their country: “and we cannot help wishing the war with England a speedy conclusion, (supposing England to have had no hand in fomenting their present hostility) if it were only to give our gallant sons of the ocean an opportunity to chastise the insolence of these piratical states.” These newspaper editors (mostly Democratic-Republican) hoped that, under Madison, the United States could fulfill the longstanding goal of eradicating Barbary piracy.

What did President Madison think of the Dey’s actions? Judging by his lack of correspondence regarding it, he gave this problem little thought while the war against Britain was happening. The comprehensive *Papers of James Madison* collection contains no letters written by the president regarding Algiers before 1815. Understandably, Madison was occupied with waging war on U.S. soil against the ultra-powerful British army and navy. Moreover, he surely realized that very few merchant ships would be sailing to the Mediterranean on account of the War of 1812—therefore, Algiers would have few opportunities to attack vessels and take hostages. Madison did, however, acknowledge Algiers in his November 1812 annual message: “with the Barbary Powers, excepting that of Algiers, our affairs remain on the ordinary footing. The consul-general residing with that Regency has suddenly and without cause been banished, together with all the American citizens found there. Whether this was the transitory effect of capricious despotism or the first act of predetermined hostility is not ascertained. Precautions were taken by the consul on the latter supposition.”<sup>951</sup> Unlike Democratic-Republican newspapers, Madison did not

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appeared in the pro-Federalist *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), November 11, 1812 and the politically neutral *Norwich Courier* (Norwich, CT), November 18, 1812.

<sup>951</sup> Madison, Fourth Annual Message, November 4, 1812, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29454>.

explicitly blame Britain. His remarks focused on the injustice of the situation, stressing that the United States had done nothing wrong and did not seek conflict. Notably, the president neglected Algiers in his 1813 and 1814 annual messages; he had a more important war against Britain to wage. Further, it appears that Madison personally did not consider the United States at war yet with Algiers—he wanted to observe the Dey’s future actions before passing judgment.

Algiers took advantage of America’s preoccupation with Britain by seizing the merchant brig *Edwin* (from Salem) on August 26, 1812 and enslaving its captain and ten crewmembers. The public learned about the capture by January 1813 and newspapers throughout the country published letters written by the captives that stressed their poor treatment.<sup>952</sup> For instance, George Tittle’s October 4, 1812 letter (addressed to his mother) discussed how “when taken, we were stript and plundered of every thing, and remain almost naked...we are obliged to hard labour, and every night we are confined in this prison.”<sup>953</sup> Fellow prisoner Daniel Glover discussed the paltry daily food rations (“2 small loaves of bread and water”) and the brutal work. Each day they labored from dawn until night, “some to dragging rocks, and some to sail making. I am at work at carpentering....Sometimes we are all dragging rocks on the mountains. We all have a task master over us flogging us

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<sup>952</sup> The earliest article that I have seen that reports the *Edwin* capture ran in the *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY) of January 19, 1813.

<sup>953</sup> George Tittle to his mother in Beverly, October 4, 1812. Ten Federalist newspapers ran it: *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), February 12, 1813; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 15, 1813; *Mercantile Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 16, 1813; *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), February 19, 1813; *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* (Alexandria, VA), February 23, 1813; *Hagers-Town Gazette* (Hagers-Town, MD), February 23, 1813; *Orange County Patriot; or, the Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (Goshen, NY), March 2, 1813; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), March 4, 1813; *Bennington Newsletter* (Bennington, VT), March 4, 1813 [see Robert Shalhope, *A Tale of New England: The Diaries of Hiram Harwood, Vermont Farmers, 1810-1837* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 44]; *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), March 8, 1813. Four Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Columbian* (New York, NY), February 20, 1813; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), February 23, 1813; *Republican Farmer* (Bridgeport, CT), February 24, 1813; *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), March 2, 1813.



nearly all the time.”<sup>954</sup> Another *Edwin* crew member, Francis Garcia, complained about the “lice and misery” of captivity and about being “under the lash of a severe task master.”<sup>955</sup> He suspected that he would not survive his enslavement and found succor in his Bible (which the Algerines allowed him to keep) and in his Christian faith. Garcia mournfully told his wife that “as for my ever seeing you again, it will be in that eternal world, where sorrow I hope will be quite banished from my troubled mind. I die in the hope of the promises of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that he will present us unspotted before his Father.” Notably, editorial commentary preceded the text of Garcia’s letter: “it will excite the commiseration and sympathy of every reader, and we hope have its effect in prompting the government to provide for loosening the chains of these unfortunate captives.” Clearly, these newspaper editors hoped to spark public outrage and bottom-up pressure upon the Madison Administration to take the necessary steps to free the *Edwin* crew. Altogether, a roughly equal number of Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspapers published these three letters (the George Tittle letter excepted). This relatively equal distribution sharply contrasts

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<sup>954</sup> Daniel Glover to his mother, October 1, 1812. Four Democratic-Republican newspapers ran it: *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), February 13, 1813; *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), February 26, 1813; *The Western Star, and Harp of Erin* (New York, NY), March 13, 1813; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), March 27, 1813. Three Federalist newspapers printed it: *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), February 19, 1813; *Bennington Newsletter* (Bennington, VT), March 4, 1813; *Spooner’s Vermont Journal* (Windsor, VT), March 8, 1813. It also appeared in the politically neutral *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), February 18, 1813.

<sup>955</sup> Francis Garcia to his wife, September 1, 1812. Six Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), March 10, 1813; *Baltimore Patriot* (Baltimore, MD), March 13, 1813; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), March 16, 1813; *The Albany Register* (Albany, NY), March 16, 1813; *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), March 25, 1813; *The Carolina Gazette* (Charleston, SC), March 27, 1813. Five Federalist newspapers ran it: *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), March 5, 1813; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), March 11, 1813; *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* (Alexandria, VA), March 16, 1813; *Northern Whig* (Hudson, NY), March 16, 1813 [see *Natural History of New York* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1842), 28-29]; *Independent American* (Ballston Spa, NY), March 23, 1813. It also ran in the politically indeterminable *Concord Gazette* (Concord, NH), March 16, 1813 and in the politically neutral *The Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), March 24, 1813 and *Norwich Courier* (Norwich, CT), March 31, 1813.

the publication of captivity letters during the Tripolitan War. As discussed in chapter 4, Democratic-Republican newspapers printed letters written by the *Philadelphia* captives far less often than did Federalists ones. The notable difference in 1813 suggests that Democratic-Republican editors were confident that the public would not blame the Madison Administration for the capture of the *Edwin* (in contrast to Jefferson bearing some culpability for the *Philadelphia* loss). Therefore, they saw little risk in publishing captivity letters.

Over time, the lives of the *Edwin* crew improved slightly. Americans who lived in Cadiz, Spain raised about \$2,000 for their relief and, by fall 1813, the Dey permitted Captain Smith to live with the Swedish consul.<sup>956</sup> As a Boston publication described (summarizing a June 19<sup>th</sup> letter from Smith), Smith “receives every attention and kindness” from the consul, while the rest of the captives “were as comfortable as circumstances would admit.”<sup>957</sup> They lived in a tavern and still had to work daily. Smith also observed that the Algerines were “sadly disappointed” that they had not captured more Americans. They had hoped to make large amounts of money from hostage-taking, but ultimately gained only a few thousand dollars from the *Edwin* crew.<sup>958</sup>

Prior to the end of the War of 1812, the public at large devoted little attention to the Algerine War. Newspapers published few toasts that mentioned it and, notably, many of these came from Philadelphia events. Attendees of an October 1812 dinner in Philadelphia

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<sup>956</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.) May 28, 1813.

<sup>957</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), September 20, 1813.

<sup>958</sup> In 1814, the Dey received \$6,000 for the freedom of two *Edwin* crewmembers and an additional \$6,000 for four French-speaking men who claimed that they were from Louisiana (see Leiner, 35-37, 202 and Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 198-199). Mordecai Noah (the U.S. consul to Tunis) oversaw these ransom payments, which greatly displeased the Madison Administration. Noah was recalled and the government did not publicize the liberation of the alleged Louisianans. The public knew about the ransom of the two *Edwin* crewmembers; see the *Rhode-Island Republican* (Newport, RI), October 19, 1814 [from the *Salem Register* (Salem, MA)].

in honor of Captain Porter and the officers of the *Essex* drank to “the united plagues of Egypt” falling upon anyone who “refuses to raise his arm and open his purse to secure gallant American sailors from cruel, ignominious bondage, and American property from Anglo Algerine depredations.”<sup>959</sup> At a March 1813 celebration (in Philadelphia) of the Society of St. Patrick, attendees called for “Retaliation—may the law of nations be enforced upon the abettors of Algerine and American savages, and an English savage be held as hostage and at hard labor, for every American citizen carried into Barbary by the ally of England.”<sup>960</sup> In July 1813, a group of Washington D.C. Democratic-Republicans celebrated Independence Day with various toasts, including one to “the Prince Regent, Tecumseh and the Dey of Algiers—Fit allies of British usurpations, barbarities and piracies.”<sup>961</sup> The above toasts stressed British complicity in Barbary piracy, while others expressed hope that the United States would soon retaliate against Algiers. A celebration of the Philadelphia Typographical Society included a wish that American gun boats would “*sink Algerine galleys and throw their matter into pi with American cannon.*”<sup>962</sup> At an April 1814 public dinner and ball in honor of Captain Stewart and the officers of the *Constitution* a toast was raised to “the Barbary powers—May the next tribute we pay them be in Yankee thunder.”<sup>963</sup> While war raged against Britain and its Native American allies, the public deemed hostilities with Algiers a sideshow. The public lamented their country’s vulnerability to the Barbary pirates, but knew that the government was currently unable to protect ships in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>959</sup> *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), October 20, 1812.

<sup>960</sup> *The Shamrock or, Hibernian Chronicle* (New York, NY), March 27, 1813.

<sup>961</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), July 10, 1813.

<sup>962</sup> *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), November 27, 1812.

<sup>963</sup> *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), April 9, 1814.

Nevertheless, the paucity of public expressions of sympathy for the *Edwin* captives galled some observers. An article published in three states voiced disappointment that efforts were not being made to resolve the hostage situation in Algiers. It regretted that “our feelings are so lukewarm as to be insensible to the sufferings of our fellow citizens, who are reduced to slavery in Algiers, and who are now bending under the weight of chains, and smarting like the slaves in the southern democratic states, under the lash of the whip.” The article also contended that the published letters of the *Edwin* captives “do not appear to have excited either our sensibility, or invited a single comment.”<sup>964</sup> What were Americans supposed to do, though? The war with Britain was occurring on U.S. soil and required the full attention of the government and public. The article also risked alienating slave-owners by suggesting that Americans should care just as much for the plight of the *Edwin* crew as for slaves in the United States. Another article took a different tactic by channeling anger over the Royal Navy’s impressment of Americans. Published by multiple Federalist newspapers, it complained that “so much and so violent a sympathy is felt” for seamen impressed by the British and yet “not a single expression of regret is heard for the fate of the captive American who is doomed to wear out his days in the dungeons of Algiers.” It made an emotional appeal to readers, describing how the captives “pine away a hopeless life in chains and slavery” and suggesting that they could be ransomed for “a small part of the money” that Americans spend on elections.<sup>965</sup> To these critics, the war against Britain offered no excuse

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<sup>964</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), May 1, 1813; *Bennington Newsletter* (Bennington, VT), May 12, 1813; *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston, MA), May 22, 1813. From the *Pennsylvania Farmer* (Lancaster, PA).

<sup>965</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 30, 1814; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), April 2, 1814. An abbreviated version appeared in the *New-England Palladium* (Boston, MA), April 15, 1814 (it lacked the “hopeless life” and election components). The article also appeared in the politically neutral *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), April 2, 1804.

for tolerating Algiers's seizure of Americans—these men deserved to be ransomed and restored to their country and families. To be sure, Federalists had a vested interest in championing the liberation of the *Edwin* captives—emphasizing their continued enslavement served as a way to criticize the Madison Administration.

Not surprisingly, the conflict with Algiers initially had a minimal cultural impact. Only a few businesses attempted to profit from it. In March 1813, an advertisement for a bookstore in Greenfield, Massachusetts listed Susanna Rowson's 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers* for sale. Evidently the owner hoped that a new conflict with Algiers would revive interest in this two-decade old play.<sup>966</sup> A new biography of Tripolitan War hero William Eaton appeared (it hyped his march through “the Desert of Barca” and his “conque[st of] the City of Derne”),<sup>967</sup> while a Massachusetts bookstore solicited funds for printing Eaton's journal.<sup>968</sup> Additionally, a wax museum in New York had a longstanding exhibit that included a statue of “Barbarosso (sic), the tyrant of Algiers.”<sup>969</sup> Barbarossa (real name Oruç Reis) was a prominent late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century pirate and ruler of Algiers. By highlighting this particular wax figure, the museum reminded readers that Barbary piracy had existed for centuries. At this point in the Algerine War, few cultural or commercial interpretations existed. After the war against Britain ended many more would emerge (although not to the same extent as during the Tripolitan War).

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<sup>966</sup> *Franklin Herald* (Greenfield, MA), March 2, 1813.

<sup>967</sup> See, for instance, *THOMAS'S Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), June 23, 1813 and *The Reporter* (Brattleboro, VT), October 9, 1813.

<sup>968</sup> *Newburyport Herald, and Country Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), March 23, 1813.

<sup>969</sup> *The National Advocate* (New York, NY), January 25, 1813; *The National Advocate* (New York, NY), April 17, 1813; *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), November 25, 1813; *New-York Evening Post* (New-York, NY), July 2, 1814.

After the United States and Britain made peace in December 1814, the U.S. government could finally devote its full attention to North Africa. There was a strong consensus among policymakers to send a powerful squadron to exact retribution upon Algiers for capturing the *Edwin* and enslaving the crew. In February 1815, the House of Representatives requested President Madison “to cause such information to be laid before this House, as he shall deem necessary” regarding Barbary affairs.<sup>970</sup> Secretary of State James Monroe responded by issuing a report that castigated the Dey for “violently, and without just cause, oblig[ing] the Consul of the U.S. and all American citizens then in Algiers, to leave that place,” for capturing the *Edwin* and holding the crew hostage, and for enslaving an American citizen “on board a neutral vessel.”<sup>971</sup> Although two *Edwin* crew members “ha[d] been ransomed,” efforts to procure the release of the others had failed. Monroe suspected that the Dey hoped to use to remaining captives as leverage to wrangle “from the United States a degrading Treaty.” A few days later, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Crowninshield issued a report to the House Ways and Means Committee that advised dispatching “a strong squadron...as soon as practicable” to the Mediterranean.<sup>972</sup> He recommended sending “two seventy-fours, six frigates, three sloops of war, and six or eight small armed vessels” and described Algiers’s naval strength as consisting of “four frigates, four corvetts, four sloops of war, and twenty gun boats” along with “powerful batteries, which defend the harbor.”

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<sup>970</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, February 15, 1815, 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session, Library of Congress, *American Memory*, <https://memory.loc.gov>.

<sup>971</sup> Monroe to House of Representatives, February 20, 1815, printed in the *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), February 25, 1815. A few weeks after the *Edwin* capture, Algiers apprehended James Pollard of Norfolk, VA. He was taken at sea while on a Spanish ship; Leiner, 8.

<sup>972</sup> Benjamin Crowninshield to the Ways and Means committee, February 23, 1815, printed in the *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 13, 1815.

Additionally, President Madison urged Congress to pass a resolution that acknowledged “the existence of a state of war between the United States and the Dey and Regency of Algiers” and that would provide the means of “a vigorous prosecution of it to a successful issue.”<sup>973</sup> In late February, the House complied and passed “An act for the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine cruizers” with a vote of 94 to 32.<sup>974</sup> A few days later, the Senate passed it nearly unanimously (27 to 2).<sup>975</sup> The legislation stressed that Algiers had instigated war upon the United States and authorized Madison “to equip, officer, man and employ such of the armed vessels of the United States as may be judged requisite.”<sup>976</sup> Unlike Jefferson, Madison sought congressional authorization to use force against the Barbary pirates before sending ships to the Mediterranean and he wanted the conflict to be recognized as an official war. By requesting these things, the president clearly demonstrated to the public his full-fledged commitment to defeating Algiers.

Also unlike Jefferson, Madison opted to unleash a truly formidable force to overwhelm the Barbary pirates. His administration’s official orders to Stephen Decatur (who would lead the first squadron to the Mediterranean) authorized him “to subdue, seize and make Prize of all Vessels, goods & effects, belonging to the Dey or Subjects of Algiers” and

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<sup>973</sup> Madison, Special Message to Congress, February 23, 1815, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65978>.

<sup>974</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, February 28, 1815, 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session, Library of Congress, *American Memory*, <https://memory.loc.gov>.

<sup>975</sup> *Journal of the Senate*, March 2, 1815, March 3, 1815, 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> session, Library of Congress, *American Memory*, <https://memory.loc.gov>.

<sup>976</sup> “An act for the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine cruizers,” *Statutes at Large*, 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, March 3, 1815, 230.

to “capture or destroy” Algerine ships.”<sup>977</sup> Madison clearly rejected Jefferson’s approach of using limited force and he avoided repeating the bizarre situation at the beginning of the Tripolitan War in which the U.S. Navy was not supposed to take prisoners. The president wanted to crush Algiers and not have a protracted war in the Mediterranean. Decatur’s squadron of ten ships would sail from New York in May, while William Bainbridge would command seventeen ships and leave from Boston in July.<sup>978</sup> Monroe was also eager for total victory, boasting that “the largest squadron that ever sailed from this Country, is now ordered against Algiers, under the command of officers of great experience and talents, from whose judgment and gallantry the happiest result is anticipated.”<sup>979</sup> The Madison Administration felt extremely confident in the U.S. Navy’s ability to overpower their adversary. Compared to Great Britain, fighting Algiers would be a cakewalk. As Monroe remarked, “the Algerine war, in itself, is little more than a mere training exercise for our naval force.”<sup>980</sup>

Madison also wanted a new treaty with Algiers that would avoid generating any public anger or controversy (as the Tripolitan War treaty had done). Decatur, Bainbridge, and William Shaler (a veteran diplomat) were appointed commissioners and Secretary of State Monroe instructed them that “an honorable and lasting peace is the great object of this expedition. An early one would be agreeable, but none must be made, unless it be

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<sup>977</sup> Crowninshield to Stephen Decatur, April 15, 1815. This letter is reprinted in Appendix 1 of Leiner, 183-186.

<sup>978</sup> For more about Bainbridge’s squadron, see Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2005), 190; and Robert Allison, *Stephen Decatur: American Naval Hero, 1779-1820* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 172-173.

<sup>979</sup> Monroe to Shaler, April 10, 1815, William Shaler Papers #1172, Correspondence 1799-1820, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>980</sup> Monroe to Madison, April 30, 1815, Library of Congress, “Presidential Papers Microfilm, James Madison Papers,” text-fiche, Series 2, Reel 26.



honorable.”<sup>981</sup> He emphasized that “no tribute will be paid, no biennial presents made” and forbade the commissioners from paying ransom money for the captives since doing so “would countenance the late unwarrantable declaration of war by the Dey, and might invite another war with a view to a like claim. It is the object of the United States to put an end to these odious practices.” However, if the Dey insisted upon some payment for the liberation of the hostages, then “after the conclusion of the Treaty, a reasonable sum may be given to him gratuitously.”<sup>982</sup> The government was unwilling to make any official payment lest it legitimize Barbary piracy, but understood that, as a practical matter, the Dey may need to receive some money. Additionally, Madison sent an irate letter to the Dey that castigated him for “having declared war against the United States of America, and made captives of some of their citizens, and done them other injuries without cause.” The president offered him the choice of “peace or war” and suspected that, upon seeing the powerful U.S. squadron, the Dey would “be disposed to return to those amicable relations which had so long subsisted between our two countries.”<sup>983</sup> Madison’s letter to the Dey had a much more aggressive and angry tone than did Jefferson’s initial letter to the bashaw of Tripoli in May 1801 (discussed in chapter 3). Jefferson had hoped to avoid war and had authorized Commodore Dale to pay up to \$10,000 to conciliate the bashaw. Madison, however, understood that attaining an honorable peace necessitated threatening a mighty retribution.

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<sup>981</sup> Earlier in Madison’s Administration, Shaler undertook diplomatic missions to Mexico, Cuba, and England. See J.C.A. Stagg, “The Political Essays of William Shaler,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2002); available at <https://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/Apr02/stagg.pdf> (accessed January 16, 2016).

<sup>982</sup> Monroe to Shaler, April 10, 1815, William Shaler Papers #1172, Correspondence 1799-1820, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>983</sup> Madison to Dey of Algiers, April 12, 1815. The letter is printed in Appendix D of Shaler, 274-275.

Many newspaper editors (mostly Democratic-Republican) were also eager for war against Algiers and, now that the war against Britain had ended, they devoted much more attention to North African affairs.<sup>984</sup> Newspapers rejoiced at the prospect of additional naval triumphs and hoped that the United States would gain international renown for crushing Barbary piracy. A widely published article declared that “not one moment should be lost in equipping our navy to attack the Pirate. He should give up our captive countrymen, and relinquish his annual tribute, or his town should be battered about his ears.—We could not wish a finer school for our navy. The Tripolitan war brought great talents to light.—A war with Algiers would be productive of the same benefits.”<sup>985</sup> This article viewed the Algerine War as analogous to the Tripolitan War—another opportunity to develop naval talent and create national heroes.<sup>986</sup> One editorial asserted that fighting Algiers “would be agreeable to our brave seamen, honorable to the nation, and raise our character in all Christendom. It is fortunate that the Pirates have afforded us a fair opportunity of scourging them for the first offences against us.”<sup>987</sup> Democratic-Republican and Federalist newspaper editors alike

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<sup>984</sup> For instance, searching for “Algiers OR Algerine OR Algerines OR Barbary” in *Early American Newspapers, Series I & II*, results in 843 hits for 1812; 1,350 hits for 1813; 440 for 1814; 3,756 for 1815; and 6,891 for 1816.

<sup>985</sup> Five Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *The Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), February 18, 1815; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), February 22, 1815; *Petersburg Daily Courier* (Petersburg, VA), February 22, 1815; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), March 9, 1815; *Western American* (Williamsburg, OH), March 11, 1815. Two Federalist newspapers ran it: *Federal Republican* (Washington D.C.), February 21, 1815 [see Martin Manning and Clarence Wyatt, eds., *Encyclopedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 140]; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, CT), March 1, 1815. It also appeared in the politically neutral *The Star* (Raleigh, NC), March 3, 1815.

<sup>986</sup> Comparisons between the Algerine War and Tripolitan War were infrequent, perhaps because commentators recognized that the latter conflict ended disappointingly for the United States.

<sup>987</sup> It appeared in two Democratic-Republican newspapers [*Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), February 22, 1815; *Petersburg Daily Courier* (Petersburg, VA), March 2, 1815] and one Federalist newspaper [*Farmer’s Repository* (Charles Town, WV), March 2, 1815].

celebrated war with Algiers as a positive good. They felt confident in ultimate victory and relished the opportunity to enhance their country's reputation with Europe.

Many newspapers also ran a highly laudatory, uber-patriotic poem about the naval officers and seamen that lionized them as valiant defenders of freedom and commerce. Entitled "AN ADDRESS *To the Officers and Seamen destined for Algiers,*" it contained four stanzas and urged the U.S. Navy to liberate the captives and annihilate Algiers's navy and capital city:

Ye gallant tars—your country's pride—  
Her sure defence—in combat tried!—  
Heroes of Erie and Champlain—  
Ye who have conquer'd on the Main!  
With brows entwin'd with bays so green—  
*Go and chastise the Algerine.*

Your captive brethren in Algiers  
To you address their sighs and tears!  
Where, torn from country, friends and wives,  
They pine away their wretched lives.  
Then haste!—with arms both bright and keen  
*Deal vengeance on the Algerine.*

Go tell the Dey, within his walls,  
You *tribute* pay in Cannon balls;  
And should the threat not raise his fears,  
Batter his town about his ears!—  
Your *prowness* being felt and seen  
*'Twell terrify the Algerine.*

Blockade his ports—destroy his fleet,  
And make destruction's work complete;  
By CANNON LAW dictate a peace—  
Our captive countrymen release;  
Return with laurel's blooming green,  
*The conquerors of the Algerine!*<sup>988</sup>

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<sup>988</sup> Seven Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), April, 12, 1815; *American Advocate, and Kennebec Advertiser* (Hallowell, ME), April 22, 1815; *The True American* (Bedford, PA), May 25, 1815; *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), May 27, 1815; *The Columbian* (New York, NY), June 22, 1815; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabeth, NJ), July 4, 1815; *Otsego Herald* (Cooperstown, NY), July 7, 1815. Two Federalist newspapers printed it: *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), April 25, 1815; *Independent American* (Ballston Spa, NY), June 7, 1815. It also appeared in the politically indeterminable *Concord Gazette* (Concord, NH), June 27, 1815 and in the politically neutral *The Ohio Register* (Clinton, OH), May 30, 1815 [see A. Banning Norton, *A History of Knox County, Ohio, from 1779 to 1862*

Unlike other pro-war newspaper articles, this poem focused solely on national glory and retribution for Algiers's capture of the *Edwin*—it omitted any grander purpose of impressing Europe. The uniformly positive tone reflected the conviction that Algiers would be easy prey for the U.S. Navy, especially after American officers and seamen had distinguished themselves against mighty Britain. In rejecting Jefferson's view that the navy constituted a threat to civil liberties, these newspaper editors extolled naval officers as the finest embodiments of American ideals. However, unlike during the Tripolitan War, Federalist publications remained mostly silent. They evidently preferred to withhold praise from the navy lest their political rivals benefit. In a reversal of roles from the Tripolitan War, Federalists (not Democratic-Republicans) put politics before patriotism.

Americans throughout the country expressed fervent support for fighting Algiers through making toasts that celebrated the conflict as a just war and an opportunity to demonstrate the United States' superiority to Europe. As during the Tripolitan War, some viewed the Algerine War as analogous to the Quasi-War. A New York celebration of George Washington's birthday included a toast to "Our Navy—may the cannon of INDEPENDENCE soon proclaim to the barbarians of Algiers the watch word of our Constitution, 'Millions for defence not a cent for tribute.'"<sup>989</sup> Similarly, attendees at a South Carolina event commemorating the peace treaty with Britain drank to "the War with Algiers—'Millions for defence, but not a cent for tribute.'"<sup>990</sup> Clearly this slogan from the

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*Inclusive* (Columbus: Richard Nevins, 1862), 244]. The *Essex Register* attributed the poem to the *Gleaner* (politically indeterminable).

<sup>989</sup> *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser* (New York, NY), February 24, 1815.

<sup>990</sup> *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston, SC), April 6, 1815.

Quasi-War against France remained popular two decades later, as it succinctly and memorably encapsulated one's commitment to defending national honor against foreign foes. Other toasts adamantly rejected paying any money for peace and expressed hope that U.S. forces would inflict severe damage upon Algiers. Revelers at a Connecticut dinner drank to "*The Dey of Algiers*—if we *must* purchase peace with the barbarian, let the price be a full cargo of powder and ball."<sup>991</sup> Attendees at a toast at a Fourth of July celebration in Delaware wished success to "the expedition to Algiers—May the feats of Decatur, and the flames of the Philadelphia be remembered with terror by all tyrants."<sup>992</sup> A celebration of the War of 1812's end in Massachusetts contained a toast that called for "tribute to Algiers in seventy-fours, powder and balls—may it be satisfactory in quantity and quality," while attendees at a Fourth of July party in New Jersey drank to "the Mediterranean fleet—May they teach the pirates of Algiers a lesson long to be remembered, and set at liberty our brethren there enslaved."<sup>993</sup> Those who opposed the war even experienced some public backlash—a newspaper reported that Federalist congressman Francis White from Virginia lost his reelection campaign and "was tauntingly called the '*Algerine*'" on account of "voting against the War with the Dey of Algiers."<sup>994</sup> Clearly, the public at large wholeheartedly welcomed a second Mediterranean war against the Barbary pirates and, with full confidence in the robust U.S. Navy, anticipated a smashing victory over Algiers.

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<sup>991</sup> *Norwich Courier* (Norwich, CT), March 1, 1815.

<sup>992</sup> *American Watchman* (Wilmington, DE), July 8, 1815.

<sup>993</sup> *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), April 27, 1815; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), July 11, 1815.

<sup>994</sup> *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), June 30, 1815.

Despite the overwhelming amount of positive press, some Federalist opposition to the Madison Administration's leadership existed, which underscored their desperation to regain a national audience following the ill-advised Hartford Convention. Although no one could accuse Madison of repeating Jefferson's mistake of not sending a sufficient number of ships to the Mediterranean, critics expressed concern about the financial and human costs of another war. A Connecticut newspaper contended that Madison's "bloody-minded Cabinet" had become addicted to war: "our Administration have become *such fighters*—they have grown to be such heroes, that they are about to keep up the game of war as a matter of past time....A brilliant war in the Mediterranean may help toward the next election—and that will be worth all it may cost, either in lives or money, be it more or less."<sup>995</sup> This article depicted the Madison Administration as treating wars like entertainment and accused them of seeking an edge in the 1816 elections at the expense of the country's greater good. Several newspapers published an opinion piece that opposed war with Algiers on the grounds that "it will cost at least five millions annually, and the treasury is already bankrupt,"<sup>996</sup> while a Washington D.C. publication averred that Madison lacked a plan "to reduce the city of Algiers....A naval force cannot carry on land operations; and we therefore predict that the old system of peace and tribute will be adopted before next Christmas, notwithstanding all the vapping of the democratic papers."<sup>997</sup> In their eagerness to raise apocalyptic fears and cast doubt upon Madison's capabilities as commander-in-chief, these Federalist newspaper editors implicitly denigrated the abilities of the naval officers and seamen. Their articles

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<sup>995</sup> *Connecticut Mirror* (Hartford, CT), March 13, 1815.

<sup>996</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), March 13, 1815; *New-York Herald* (New York, NY), March 15, 1815; *Orange County Patriot; or, the Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (Goshen, NY), March 21, 1815; from the *Federal Republican*.

<sup>997</sup> *Federal Republican* (Washington, D.C.), March 17, 1815.

implied that a war against Algiers could not be won quickly, but would either take years or end in failure. These cynical and blatantly partisan articles lacked any constructive criticism of Madison's actions and, notably, they reversed the predominant Federalist position during the Tripolitan War. Then, many Federalists lambasted Jefferson for not fighting a more vigorous war. Now, these Federalist critics castigated Madison for spending too much money on the Algerine War. Did these newspaper editors really expect to win new adherents to their party by doubting America's ability to defeat Algiers?

Several newspaper editors gleefully skewered Federalists as either out-of-touch with public sentiment or as hypocrites for endorsing war against Algiers while opposing it against Britain. A Vermont newspaper observed that "some of the Federal editors express their disapprobation of the late declaration of war against the Algerine Pirates. For ourselves, we believe that honour, policy, and humanity demand it... 'Millions for defence, but not a cent for tribute' is our doctrine."<sup>998</sup> In utilizing a calm, measured tone, this article coyly appropriated the Federalist war cry from the Quasi-War in order to portray Democratic-Republicans as the party fully committed to national defense. Other publications criticized those Federalist newspaper editors who championed war against Algiers but had adamantly opposed it against Britain. A Maryland newspaper, for instance, wondered why "the federalists vote for a war against Algiers, who had only impressed a few of our men, and oppose a war with England, who had been impressing our men for more than twenty years?—Strange partiality!"<sup>999</sup> Similarly, a Vermont newspaper castigated those Federalists who supported war against Algiers (which "had captured but two of our vessels, and

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<sup>998</sup> *The Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), March 22, 1815.

<sup>999</sup> *Republican Star or General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), July 18, 1815.

imprisoned but very few of our citizens”) even though they had tolerated Britain “captur[ing] a thousand of our vessels, and enslav[ing] many thousands of our countrymen.”<sup>1000</sup> These publications emphasized that Federalists adopted logically inconsistent positions regarding the wars against Britain and Algiers and accused them of caring more about appeasing Britain than protecting American sailors.

Decatur’s squadron left New York in mid-May with fanfare. A local newspaper reported that residents gave “three hearty cheers as a farewell” and hoped that the navy would “effect a liberation of the captive Americans held in slavery by the Dey of Algiers, and chastise this savage tyrant for the cruelties he has inflicted upon our countrymen.”<sup>1001</sup> The fleet consisted of three frigates (the *Guerrière*, *Macedonian*, and *Constellation*), a sloop of war (the *Ontario*), four brigs (the *Epervier*, *Fire-Fly*, *Flambeau*, and *Spark*), and two schooners (the *Spitfire* and *Torch*). Shortly after arriving in the Mediterranean in mid-June, Decatur encountered one of Algiers’s most powerful ships (a forty-six-gun frigate) and inflicted a crushing defeat. As he recounted in a letter to Secretary of the Navy Crowninshield, the enemy yielded after a twenty-five minute battle. The Algerine admiral died in battle and the U.S. Navy took four-hundred-six prisoners, while only four Americans were wounded during the fighting (although five died and thirty were wounded when one of the “main deck guns burst in the first discharge”).<sup>1002</sup> Two days later (on June 19<sup>th</sup>), Decatur’s fleet scored another victory by capturing an Algerine brig of twenty-two guns and one-hundred-eighty men. As he described, “after a chase of three hours” the brig entered

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<sup>1000</sup> *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), May 29, 1815.

<sup>1001</sup> *New-York Courier* (New York, NY), May 19, 1815.

<sup>1002</sup> Decatur to Crowninshield, June 19, 1815, *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1 (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 396.



“shoal water, where I did not think it advisable to follow with our large ships, but despatched the Epervier, Spark, Torch, and Spitfire, to whom she surrendered after a short resistance. Twenty-three men were found dead on board” and eighty prisoners were taken.<sup>1003</sup> No Americans were killed or wounded. Clearly, the United States and Algiers were not evenly matched—the former had superior naval strength and ability. Public and government confidence in the Navy was entirely justified.

These impressive victories also provided Decatur and Shaler with ample leverage in negotiations with the Dey. Upon arriving in Algiers, they learned that a regime change had occurred: Omar bin Mohammed was now in power. The Dey who had declared war on the United States, Hadji Ali, had been assassinated back in March.<sup>1004</sup> Nevertheless, Decatur and Shaler stressed (in a letter to Omar) that from henceforth U.S.-Algiers relations must be based on “no other principle, than that of perfect equality, and on the terms of the most favoured nations. No stipulation for paying any tribute to Algiers under any form whatever, will be agreed to.”<sup>1005</sup> Upon learning about Decatur’s recent victories over the Algerine Navy, the Dey yielded to U.S. demands by agreeing to a new treaty within twenty-four hours. In letters to the Secretary of the Navy, Decatur vaunted that the treaty “has been dictated at the mouths of our cannon” and “places the United States on higher ground than any other nation.”<sup>1006</sup> Indeed, its second article stipulated “that no tribute either as biennial presents, or

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<sup>1003</sup> Decatur to Crowninshield, June 20, 1815, *Ibid.*

<sup>1004</sup> Allison, *Stephen Decatur*, 166.

<sup>1005</sup> Shaler and Decatur to the Dey of Algiers, June 29, 1815, printed in Shaler, Appendix D, 274.

<sup>1006</sup> Decatur to Secretary of the Navy, July 5, 1815; Shaler and Decatur to the Secretary of Navy, July 4, 1815; both letters are printed in the *Analectic Magazine and Naval Chronicle* (Philadelphia, PA), January 1816, vol. VII, 129.

under any other form or name whatever, shall ever be required.”<sup>1007</sup> The commissioners made one concession, however. At the Dey’s request, they returned the captured frigate and brig as a personal favor (technically it was not an official part of the treaty). Restoring the ships constituted no real loss to the United States since, as Decatur discussed, “it will take a considerable time to repair them, and a considerable sum of money to make them sea worthy.”<sup>1008</sup> Decatur and Shaler had achieved an honorable peace by utilizing overwhelming naval force.

After concluding negotiations in Algiers, the commissioners went to Tunis and Tripoli and forced the rulers of those countries to pay compensation for violating their treaties with the United States. The rulers of Tunis and Tripoli had recently allowed British vessels to take prize ships belonging to the United States out of their country’s harbor. As U.S. consul to Tunis Mordecai Noah informed Decatur, in February 1815 the British brig *Lyra* “forcibly seized” two American prize ships from Tunis’s harbor. Noah complained to the Bey who, “though sensible of the violation of the neutrality of his port” refused to pay a “settlement of this claim.”<sup>1009</sup> The Bey’s behavior enraged Decatur, who threatened retribution unless he received the “immediate restitution of the property or of its value.”<sup>1010</sup> The Bey settled by paying 46,000 Spanish dollars as compensation.<sup>1011</sup> Next, Decatur confronted the bashaw of Tripoli (still Yusuf Karamanli) for permitting the British brig

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<sup>1007</sup> Treaty of Peace with Algiers, June 30 and July 3, 1815, Yale Law School, “The Avalon Project,” [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/bar1815t.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/bar1815t.asp) (accessed January 20, 2016).

<sup>1008</sup> Decatur to Shaler, July 6, 1815, Arthur Bining Collection, Box 3, Folder 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>1009</sup> Mordecai Noah to Decatur, July 25, 1815, *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1, 397.

<sup>1010</sup> Decatur to the Prime Minister of Tunis, July 26, 1815, *Ibid.*

<sup>1011</sup> Statement of Mordecai Noah, July 30, 1815, *Ibid.* Decatur also signed this statement.

*Paulina* to take two American prize ships from Tripoli's harbor and for declining aid to an American cruiser in need.<sup>1012</sup> Decatur demanded "immediate restitution" and "compensation for the loss sustained by the detention of the American cruiser, in violation of the treaty."<sup>1013</sup> He initially sought \$30,000, but Yusuf negotiated the sum down to \$25,000 by offering the freedom of several European captives.<sup>1014</sup> According to a U.S. naval officer, one of them had been enslaved for fifteen years (and had been "very friendly and attentive" to the *Philadelphia* captives during the Tripolitan War).<sup>1015</sup> This officer also reported that debris from the *Philadelphia* remained visible "at the entrance of the bay; its stern-post and some of its ribs are discovered at low water, but are somewhat dangerous when hidden, which is the case at high tide. . . . The Bashaw has a sort of box built out of the upper story of his palace, to represent the stern of the *Philadelphia*, in which we saw him repeatedly surrounded by his wives." The officer proudly noted that "the American character is highly respected here." Decatur's gunboat diplomacy succeeded fantastically—he had clearly established American dominance and, in a reversal of previous dealings with Tripoli and Tunis, those countries now paid the United States to keep the peace.

Decatur and his squadron succeeded so well that Bainbridge and his fleet had nothing to do once they arrived in the Mediterranean. His September 6<sup>th</sup> letter to Crowninshield

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<sup>1012</sup> Richard Jones to Decatur, August 6, 1815, *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>1013</sup> Decatur to the Prime Minister of Tripoli, August 6, 1815, *Ibid.*

<sup>1014</sup> Letter from an officer on board of the United States Navy, September 10, 1815, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), November 16, 1815. The letter states that Decatur liberated eleven captives, but Decatur (in his August 31, 1815 letter to the Secretary of the Navy) gave the number as ten; *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1, 398.

<sup>1015</sup> Letter from a young officer in the Navy, to his friends, printed in *The Columbian* (New York, NY), November 27, 1815. Decatur received a thank-you letter from the Secretary of State of Naples (Marquis Circello) for freeing eight Neapolitan captives; *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1, 399.

reported that, since relations with North Africa were peaceful, he would return to the United States. Bainbridge, however, left three ships behind in the Mediterranean as a safeguard, lest one or more of the Barbary States renew hostilities.<sup>1016</sup> Despite America's overall triumph over the Barbary pirates, one tragedy did occur: several naval personnel and the *Edwin* captives died in a shipwreck. Decatur had sent them back to the United States along with documents (including the Algiers treaty) in the *Epervier*, but the ship was lost at sea—presumably sunk by intense summer gales.<sup>1017</sup> Newspaper obituaries recorded the names of the officers who perished, but notably omitted the names of the *Edwin* captives.<sup>1018</sup> A lengthy poem entitled “L’EPERVIER” (published in a Massachusetts newspaper) did the same.<sup>1019</sup> Clearly, newspaper editors valued the lives of the naval officers more than those who worked in the merchant fleet. Moreover, Congress likewise favored the relatives of the naval personnel over those of the civilians (e.g. the *Edwin* crew members). In March 1817, Congress passed legislation that granted widows or other family members “of the officers, seamen, and marines” lost in the *Epervier* “a sum equal to six months’ pay” of the deceased’s salary “in addition to the pay due to the said deceased” as of July 14, 1815.<sup>1020</sup> The public

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<sup>1016</sup> Bainbridge to the Secretary of the Navy, September 6, 1815, printed in *The Columbian* (New York, NY), November 17, 1815. Allison, *Stephen Decatur*, 174.

<sup>1017</sup> Decatur to Crowninshield, July 5, 1815, *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1, 396; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), November 25, 1815; *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), January 30, 1816.

<sup>1018</sup> *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 24, 1815; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), November 25, 1815; *New-York Courier* (New York, NY), March 13, 1816; *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston, MA), March 16, 1816; *Berkshire Star* (Stockbridge, MA), March 28, 1816; *Dedham Gazette* (Dedham, MA), March 29, 1816; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), April 10, 1816; *National Standard* (Middlebury, VT), April 24, 1816; *American Advocate, and Kennebec Advertiser* (Hallowell, ME), April 27, 1816; *Farmers’ Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), April 27, 1816.

<sup>1019</sup> *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), February 21, 1816.

<sup>1020</sup> “An Act for the relief of the widows and orphans of the officers, seamen, and marines, who were lost in the United States brig Epervier”; March 3, 1817, *Statutes at Large*, 14<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 369.

had expressed great concern over the *Philadelphia* captives during the Tripolitan War, but those men were members of the U.S. Navy. Tripoli's capture of them greatly embarrassed the United States and hindered its ability to attack Tripoli. By contrast, the *Edwin* captives lacked the same military importance and their capture by Algiers did not embarrass the United States to the same degree.

News of the U.S. Navy's victories over Algiers arrived in mid-August and generated a wellspring of patriotic sentiment. Many newspapers depicted the naval officers and seamen as chivalrous heroes reminiscent of medieval times. One article, entitled "*Genuine knighthood*," declared that "our brave tars unquestionably are true and valiant knights. What many have planned, what a few have attempted, but in vain, their prowess is now effecting.—This is precisely the kind of tribute which ought to be paid to Algiers."<sup>1021</sup> A widely published laudatory article about Decatur declared that "the Algerines, Tunisians and Tripolitans have been reduced to humiliating terms by this chivalric commander. He has given them such an *electric shock* as was never before, discharged from a christian battery. DECATUR may well be termed the 'Champion of Christendom.'"<sup>1022</sup> Similarly, another congratulatory article (published in two states) proclaimed that Decatur's "deeds and his communications conspire to make him a finished model of chivalry. His valour has so much point and decision, negotiations are so prompt, so just and so complete....Lustre awaits all

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<sup>1021</sup> *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), September 5, 1815.

<sup>1022</sup> *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 17, 1815; *Merrimack Intelligencer* (Haverhill, MA), November 18, 1815; *American Advocate and Kennebec Advertiser*, (Hallowell, ME), November 25, 1815; *Kline's Weekly Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), November 29, 1815; *Farmer's Repository* (Charles Town, WV), November 30, 1815; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), December 6, 1815. From the *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA).

his movements, and he exalts his won fame in every act.”<sup>1023</sup> Such rhetoric implied that the naval officers and seamen had accomplished deeds worthy of legendary eras and invited readers to draw upon their knowledge (or perceptions) of medieval knighthood in comprehending the U.S. Navy’s conquests. This language also stressed the exotica of the Mediterranean region, implying that it was a fantastical, dangerous realm that only brave warriors could traverse safely. To some extent, though, this rhetoric was out-of-place because medieval knights fought land battles, whereas the United States bested Algiers in naval warfare. Nevertheless, since very few Americans had been to the Barbary States or the Mediterranean, newspaper editors considered the diction and imagery of knighthood as useful tools for readers to appreciate the significance of the Algerine War.

Other articles vaunted that the defeat of Algiers proved America’s exceptionalism because the U.S. Navy crushed a foe that had long thwarted Europe. As a Virginia newspaper declared regarding Decatur, “you have vanquished the Algerine pirate at sea....You have revived the terror of the American Nation among these piratical states, and compelled them once more to pay respect to our flag. While Europe has been purchasing their forbearance, you have extorted it.”<sup>1024</sup> Similarly, a New York newspaper vaunted that “the last news from the Mediterranean is truly exhilarating....Already has our *navy* canceled forever the tribute to Algiers; opened the dungeons of Barbary and liberated every American captive, and enabled the gallant Decatur, in the field of his early glory, to dictate terms of peace to a piratical nation which all the powers of Europe never so completely humbled. This contest has been short, but it has shed new lustre on the naval character of

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<sup>1023</sup> *The Star* (Raleigh, NC), December 8, 1815. From the *Philadelphia True American* (Philadelphia, PA).

<sup>1024</sup> *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), November 18, 1815.

Columbia.”<sup>1025</sup> Another article boasted that “in the course of a few months [Decatur] has obtained for his country, from *three* of the Barbary Powers, more advantageous and honorable terms, than were ever before obtained by any christian nation on the globe.”<sup>1026</sup>

Clearly, some commentators believed that Decatur’s victories constituted not only a national triumph, but irrefutable proof that the United States belonged among the highest echelon of world powers. Although a young country, it had set an example for older European nations to emulate.

As further evidence of America’s exceptionalism, several newspapers gleefully observed that, even after Decatur’s triumphs, the Netherlands and Britain paid Algiers for ransom and/or peace. One widely reprinted article (entitled “*Dutch Degeneracy*”) discussed how the Dutch Admiral recently paid \$400,000 for a treaty that required tribute. Editorial commentary stressed a valuable lesson in the Dutch Admiral’s behavior, contending that it “teaches us how a people lose energy and honor, and courage, by losing liberty....Compare this treaty with that *negotiated* by DECATUR....America,—free America! you are the sole hope of a degraded and benighted world—May your stars shine through all futurity,—and your example yet give freedom to mankind.”<sup>1027</sup> Similarly, the decision by the British Admiral Lord Exmouth to pay \$500 to \$1,000 each for captives (on behalf of the King of

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<sup>1025</sup> *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), September 14, 1815.

<sup>1026</sup> *The Patrol* (Utica, NY), November 20, 1815; *Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), November 29, 1815.

<sup>1027</sup> *The Yankee* (Boston, MA), November 24, 1815; *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix* (Providence, RI), November 25, 1815; *Ulster Plebian* (Kingston, NY), November 28, 1815; *The Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), November 29, 1815; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), November 30, 1815; *The Western Courier* (Louisville, KY), November 30, 1815; *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), December 4, 1815; *The Western Monitor* (Lexington, KY), December 29, 1815. From the *Columbian* (New York, NY).

Sardinia and the King of Naples, respectively) appalled American commentators.<sup>1028</sup> One naval officer boasted that “with half [Exmouth’s] force, Decatur would emancipate every Christian in Barbary,” while another deemed Exmouth’s dealings “a pitiful arrangement.”<sup>1029</sup> In like manner, a Vermont newspaper observed that “with pride and exultation the American may rejoice, that, while the nations of Europe are ransoming their prisoners in Algiers at enormous prices, and virtually paying homage to the bloody despot, *this* country is *commanding* justice at the cannon’s mouth.”<sup>1030</sup> Another article (published in two states) suggested that Britain’s behavior would only promote further Barbary piracy—it will “have a tendency to encourage, rather than prevent the practice of enslaving Christian prisoners.”<sup>1031</sup> A public dinner in Boston even included a toast that mocked Britain: “The Christian Captives in Algiers—While England pays the ransom of those captives in gold, and receives a stipend for the service, America pays her ransom in powder and balls: her reward is the glory of the action.”<sup>1032</sup> With justification, Americans gloated over their country’s victory and mocked European powers for continuing to pay ransom or tribute. What further proof did Americans need of their country’s exceptionalism?

Although Democratic-Republicans and Federalists alike heaped praise upon the naval officers and seamen, partisan bickering ensued over which party deserved credit for the

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<sup>1028</sup> Letter from the Dey of Algiers, April 15, 1816, printed in the *Commercial Advertiser* (New York, NY), June 21, 1816.

<sup>1029</sup> Letter from an officer on board the American frigate *Constitution*, April 4, 1816 printed in the *New-England Palladium & Commercial Advertiser*, June 25, 1816; letter from an American officer, to his friend in Richmond, printed in the *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), July 9, 1816.

<sup>1030</sup> *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), July 1, 1816.

<sup>1031</sup> *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), July 6, 1816; *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), July 8, 1816; *The Telescope* (Columbia, SC), July 23, 1816.

<sup>1032</sup> *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), July 8, 1816.



Mediterranean triumphs. Both parties vied for the public's respect and gratitude. Several pro-Democratic-Republican newspapers welcomed a comparison of their party's Barbary policies to their rivals' and castigated Federalist presidents for paying tribute instead of waging war. For instance, an article printed in seven states featured two columns that listed various actions of Federalist and Democratic-Republican presidential administrations. Regarding Barbary policy, it noted that Federalists paid Algiers \$1 million and gave it a frigate, whereas Democratic-Republicans captured Algerine ships and forced the Dey "to renounce forever his pretensions to a tribute from the U.S."<sup>1033</sup> Similarly, an article in a New York newspaper praised the Madison Administration for "hav[ing] conquered a peace from Algiers...and wiped away the disgrace of a shameful tribute, which was paid during the whole time the federalists were in power, without any attempt on their part to relieve the country of a burthen so humiliating to the pride of freemen."<sup>1034</sup> Another anti-Federalist article distorted Jefferson's record in its eagerness to lionize Democratic-Republican leadership. It vaunted that "during the reign of Mr. Jefferson, we twice humbled the Barbary powers and brought them to a sense of their duty....The auspicious termination of the war against them confers the highest lustre upon the American character and redounds much to the honor of our Republican rulers....republicans have taught them to respect our rights."<sup>1035</sup> During Jefferson's presidency the United States hardly "humbled" Tripoli and, as earlier

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<sup>1033</sup> *The Green-Mountain Farmer* (Bennington, VT), October 9, 1815; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), October 10, 1815; *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix* (Providence, RI), October 21, 1815; *Republican Star, or General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), October 24, 1815; *Western American* (Williamsburg, OH), October 28, 1815; *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), November 7, 1815. From the *Boston Patriot* (Boston, MA).

<sup>1034</sup> *Farmers Register* (Troy, NY), September 26, 1815.

<sup>1035</sup> *American Mercury* (Hartford, CT), October 18, 1815; *American Advocate, and Kennebec Advertiser* (Hallowell, ME), October 28, 1815.

chapters have argued, his policies mostly failed.<sup>1036</sup> With justification these articles praised Madison's resolute leadership in the Algerine War, although they notably omitted his and other Democratic-Republicans' opposition to creating a navy in the 1790s. Instead, Democratic-Republican newspaper editors associated their party with naval glory and extolled the armed forces as a positive good to an extent that likely would have appalled Jefferson.

Federalist newspapers rejected this Democratic-Republican triumphalist narrative and instead tried to turn the Algerine War to their party's advantage. Several publications reminded readers about Democratic-Republicans' earlier opposition to a navy and argued that the recent triumphs over the Barbary pirates occurred because of astute Federalist policies. An article in a Massachusetts newspaper vaunted that "so short, so profitable and so honourable is this war; which was waged in a just cause...the Federalists are fairly entitled to the glory which this enterprise may shed on our country's fame; since it was achieved by their ships, under the direction of their commanders."<sup>1037</sup> A New York newspaper heralded Decatur's triumphs over North Africa as "another proof of the wisdom of federal policy. Federalists have ever been the advocates of a Navy" and Democratic-Republicans "have been compelled to acknowledge the wisdom and necessity of that policy which federalists adopted."<sup>1038</sup> An article published in four states reminded readers of Democratic-Republicans' prior resistance towards creating a navy and instead credited the Federalist Party for America's naval victories: "What triumphed over the British on Lake-Erie?

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<sup>1036</sup> Presumably, Morocco is the other Barbary State that the article claims Jefferson "humbled."

<sup>1037</sup> *Newburyport Herald, and Commercial Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), September 15, 1815.

<sup>1038</sup> *Northern Whig* (Hudson, NY), November 21, 1815.

Federal policy. What on Lake-Champlain? Federal policy.—What on the ocean? Federal policy. What over the Tripolitans? Federal policy. What over the Algerines? Federal policy....What now enables a man, in any part of the world to hold up his head and say—*I am an American?* Federal policy. Among the most important victories of the navy, is that over the democrats. They once tried hard to prevent a permanent naval establishment. But let them be forgiven, as they have repented and acknowledged their errors.”<sup>1039</sup> Another publication was less charitable, urging President Madison to remind Americans “of his famous arguments against the original formation of the Navy in 1794.”<sup>1040</sup> Federalist newspaper editors attempted to use the Algerine War as an opportunity to win back public support. They made some legitimate points about how their naval policies enabled the United States to defeat foreign foes, yet was it fair for them to take credit for naval victories against Britain even though they adamantly opposed the War of 1812? Regardless, any hopes that the Algerine War would generate a resurgence of Federalist popularity never materialized—the party had been on a steady decline following Thomas Jefferson’s defeat of John Adams in 1800 and the recent Hartford Convention crippled efforts to regain national prominence.

While newspaper editors jostled for partisan points, European observers unanimously acclaimed the U.S. Navy’s accomplishments. American newspapers printed European tributes, thereby bolstering American nationalism and pride in the navy as an institution. For instance, several publications reprinted a July 15, 1815 article in William Cobbett’s *Political Register* that castigated European countries for allowing Barbary piracy to exist: “while all

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<sup>1039</sup> *THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), September 13, 1815; *The Northern Post* (Salem, NY), September 14, 1815; *Dedham Gazette* (Dedham, MA), September 15, 1815; *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), September 22, 1815; *Burlington Gazette* (Burlington, VT), September 22, 1815; *Vermont Mirror* (Middlebury, VT), September 27, 1815; *Federal Republican* (Washington D.C.), October 6, 1815. From the *Wilmington Gazette* (Wilmington, DE).

<sup>1040</sup> *THOMAS’S Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), December 6, 1815.

the regular governments of Europe were acknowledging their *inferiority*, by sending annual presents to the Dey of Algiers, the Americans fitted out a squadron to annihilate this *Royal* pirate....the extirpation of the royal nest of African pirates, is an act which will be recorded in the page of history to the eternal honor of the American people, while the long endurance of this haughty and barbarous race will for ever reflect disgrace on the nations of Europe.”<sup>1041</sup>

Similarly, a letter from a Scottish man to his American brother appeared in several newspapers and praised “the *peppering* which the American navy has given the Algerines.” It also lamented that Great Britain had not earlier subdued them, observing that the U.S. Navy’s triumph “is a kind of reflection to our nation for paying tribute to so detestable a nest of pirates, when it has long been in our power to crush them—but, our government have *political* motives for their forbearance.”<sup>1042</sup> Additionally, newspapers in nine states printed an article from an Italian newspaper (the *Gazetta di Messina*) that praised Decatur for making “the most honorable peace for the GREAT NATION which he represents, and very much to the advantage of the commerce of his Country.”<sup>1043</sup> Such laudatory words resembled earlier

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<sup>1041</sup> *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), October 14, 1815; *The Alexandria Herald* (Alexandria, VA), October 18, 1815; *The National Advocate* (New York, NY), October 18, 1815; *The American Beacon and Commercial Diary* (Norfolk, VA), October 20, 1815; *Raleigh Register and North-Carolina Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), October 20, 1815; *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix* (Providence, RI), October 21, 1815; *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), October 23, 1815; *New-Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown, NJ), October 24, 1815; *Republican Star, or General Advertiser* (Easton, MD), October 24, 1815; *National Standard* (Middlebury, VT), October 25, 1815; *Farmer’s Repository* (Charles Town, WV), October 26, 1815; *The Shamrock* (New York, NY), October 28, 1815. For the original article, see William Cobbett, *Cobbett’s Political Register*, vol. XXVIII (London: G. Houston, 1815), 44-46.

<sup>1042</sup> Letter from gentleman in Greenock to his brother, July 31, 1815, printed in the *The Albany Argus* (Albany, NY), October 6, 1815; *Plattsburgh Republican* (Plattsburgh, NY), October 14, 1815; *The American Beacon and Commercial Diary* (Norfolk, VA), October 16, 1815; *Carthage Gazette* (Carthage, TN), October 31, 1815.

<sup>1043</sup> *The Columbian* (New York, NY), November 20, 1815; *New-York Courier* (New York, NY), November 20, 1815; *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), November 22, 1815; *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* (Alexandria, VA), November 22, 1815; *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, MA), November 23, 1815; *The Albany Argus* (Albany, NY), November 24, 1815; *Rhode-Island American, and General Advertiser* (Providence, RI), November 24, 1815; *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), November 24, 1815; *Newburyport Herald, and Commercial Gazette* (Newburyport, MA), November 24, 1815; *Merrimack Intelligencer* (Haverhill, MA), November 25, 1815; *Providence Patriot and Columbian Phenix* (Providence, RI), November 25, 1815; *New-*

tributes from Pope Pius VII and Lord Nelson during the Tripolitan War. This time, however, such praise was not premature: the United States had dealt a permanent blow to Barbary piracy. Also, by printing these foreign tributes, newspapers encouraged readers to view the Algerine War as an important event in their country's history.

Like European commentators and the American public, key American policymakers expressed complete satisfaction with the U.S. Navy's performance and hoped it would enhance the United States' international reputation. Secretary of State Monroe exulted that "Decatur has dictated a peace to Algiers. This event will raise the reputation of the U States, at home & abroad. The European powers will feel themselves dishonor'd by it, in a retrospect of their past conduct towards that nest of pirates."<sup>1044</sup> Diplomat John Quincy Adams, writing from England, declared that "our Naval campaign in the Mediterranean has been perhaps as splendid as anything that has occurred in our annals since our existence as a nation."<sup>1045</sup> He also thought that Decatur's triumphs would "sink deep enough into the memory" of European policymakers. Clearly, Monroe and Adams deemed the Algerine War important because its significance extended beyond subduing North Africa. The United States took initiative in resolving a centuries-old problem and repudiated European acceptance of Barbary piracy.

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*York Spectator* (New York, NY), November 25, 1815; *The Centinel of Freedom* (Newark, NJ), November 28, 1815; *THOMAS'S Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette* (Worcester, MA), November 28, 1815; *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), November 28, 1815; *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), December 1, 1815; *Raleigh Register and North Carolina Gazette* (Raleigh, NC), December 1, 1815; *Democratic Republican* (Chambersburg, PA), December 5, 1815; *The Eastern Argus* (Portland, ME), December 5, 1815; *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, CT), December 6, 1815; *Western American* (Williamsburg, OH), December 16, 1815.

<sup>1044</sup> Monroe to Madison, September 11, 1815, James Madison Papers at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, [https://www.loc.gov/resource/mjm.26\\_1271\\_1274/?st=gallery](https://www.loc.gov/resource/mjm.26_1271_1274/?st=gallery).

<sup>1045</sup> John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, November 27, 1815, Worthington Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, vol. V (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 453-454.

President Madison likewise took immense pride in the Navy's triumphs over North Africa. His Annual Message of December 5<sup>th</sup> began with an announcement of "the successful termination" of the Algerine War and he praised Decatur for defeating two enemy vessels, including "the principal ship, commanded by the Algerine admiral. The high character of the American commander was brilliantly sustained on the occasion which brought his own ship into close action with that of his adversary, as was the accustomed gallantry of all the officers and men actually engaged."<sup>1046</sup> The president also emphasized that the new U.S.-Algiers treaty did not require tribute and he expressed his conviction that the Navy had attained "a reasonable prospect of future security for the valuable portion of our commerce which passes within reach of the Barbary cruisers." Although Madison's message clearly prioritized Barbary affairs by discussing them first, some Federalists complained that he did not praise Decatur to a larger extent. An article published in several states criticized the president for not using "still stronger terms of approbation and applause" and accused him of not sufficiently appreciating that "Decatur has accomplished in three weeks what all the powers of Europe have not been able to achieve in a century."<sup>1047</sup> Federalists desired more hero worship since they sought both to take credit for the navy and to deflect praise from the (Democratic-Republican) Madison Administration.

The treaty itself received an overwhelmingly positive reception. Madison sent it to the Senate the day after his Annual Message and it was ratified fifteen days later with nearly

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<sup>1046</sup> Madison, Seventh Annual Message, December 5, 1815, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29457>.

<sup>1047</sup> *New York Evening Post* (New York, NY), December 8, 1815; *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA), December 15, 1815; *Burlington Gazette* (Burlington, VT), December 22, 1815; *The Western Monitor* (Lexington, KY), December 29, 1815 [in the inaugural issue of this newspaper (August 8, 1814), the editors identified the publication as Republican, yet they also declared their respect for the Washington Administration and criticized the Madison Administration].

unanimous support (25 to 1).<sup>1048</sup> Newspaper editors waxed enthusiastic about the new treaty with Algiers. An article published by Democratic-Republican newspapers in three states declared that “this noble document consummates the brightest event in the history of our country. Search the archives of the Courts of Europe; trace the treaties which have been made with Barbary; and where is the compact which can parallel the present for the benefits it secures, or the lustre it reflects?”<sup>1049</sup> Other newspaper editors felt somewhat embarrassed at the advantageous terms, deeming the treaty “humiliating in the extreme to the Algerines” and remarking that if they were “civilized men, we should feel some regret that they had been so humbled and degraded.”<sup>1050</sup> Also, in a rare invocation of religious rhetoric, a Philadelphia newspaper vaunted that “never since the days of the Crusades, has the Crescent been so humbled by the Cross.—History will record the glorious achievement, as an imperishable monument of her glory, that America in her infancy, furnished a bright example for the old nations of the Christian World.”<sup>1051</sup> Clearly, many newspaper editors deemed the treaty concrete proof of their country’s exceptionalism and moral superiority to Europe. It did not matter that Algiers was a relatively weak opponent—what mattered is that the United States subdued it before Europe did. John Hay’s famous designation of the Spanish-American War as a “splendid little war” is actually more applicable to the Algerine War.

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<sup>1048</sup> Madison, Special Message to Congress, December 6, 1815, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65987>; *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, vol. III (Washington: Duff Green, 1828), December 21, 1815, 8. The lone “nay” vote came from Samuel Dana (Federalist-CT).

<sup>1049</sup> *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), January 2, 1816; *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), January 5, 1816; *Boston Patriot* (Boston, MA), January 20, 1816.

<sup>1050</sup> Four Democratic-Republican newspapers printed it: *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), December 30, 1815; *Boston Patriot* (Boston, MA), January 6, 1816; *New-Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), January 9, 1816; *National Aegis* (Worcester, MA), January 10, 1816. An abbreviated version appeared in the pro-Federalist *Rutland Vermont Herald* (Rutland, VT), January 17, 1816.

<sup>1051</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), January 9, 1816.

The fighting ended much more quickly, it had far fewer casualties, and it featured virtually unanimous popular support.<sup>1052</sup>

Despite the overwhelmingly positive public response to the end of the Algerine War, Decatur's decision to return the captured frigate and brig to the Dey generated some criticism. A Boston publication considered the commodore's actions counter-intuitive (why allow Algiers to potentially resume its attacks upon commerce?) "and contrary to the dictates of that *prudence, foresight* and *valor*, which... would have enabled him to secure, not only the personal safety of the prisoners, but put an end, completely, to the further depredations of a piratical nation, with whom no laws are sacred."<sup>1053</sup> Additionally, a few newspaper editors argued that returning the ships stained national honor and hurt the financial prospects of the seamen who captured them (since they were unable to sell the ships for prize money). An article that appeared in three states asserted that the ships "were not [Decatur's] to give away as a Commander; one half of them belong to himself, and the squadron; and their consent

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<sup>1052</sup> Fighting in the Algerine War lasted a few days compared to a few months in the Spanish-American War. 5,000 Americans died in the Spanish-American War, but determining the death toll in the Algerine War is complicated and other historians have not provided a figure. Decatur reported that five Americans died in the battle against the Algerine Admiral's ship. But the number of men who were lost at sea in the *Epervier* remains unknown. When leaving Algiers, the *Epervier* carried the ten remaining captives and various naval officers, seamen, and marines. Decatur switched the commanders of the *Epervier* and *Guerrière* (and perhaps other naval officers and crew members; see Decatur to Crowninshield, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1815, *American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs*, vol. 1, 396). An article in the *Salem Gazette* (Salem, MA) of November 24, 1815 provides a few details about the *Epervier*. Drawing upon information from a naval officer, it lists the names of nine officers who were on board and states that "several others" were "passengers." What do we know about the size of the *Epervier*? It was an eighteen-gun brig that the American sloop *Peacock* captured from the British during the War of 1812. The captain of the *Peacock*, Lewis Warrington, reported that the *Epervier* had 128 men on board at the time of surrender [see John Brannan, ed., *Lewis Warrington to William Jones*, April 29, 1814, *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States, during the War with Great Britain* (Washington D.C.: Way & Gideon, 1823), 329-330]. Thus accounting for the capacity of the *Epervier*, I estimate that seventy to one-hundred-thirty Americans were lost at sea (and therefore seventy-five to one-hundred-forty died in the Algerine War). Regardless, the number paled in comparison to the death toll of the Spanish-American War. Jones, 280, 282, 288. The Spanish-American War also had a vocal anti-war group; see Hoganson, 84-87.

<sup>1053</sup> *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), September 14, 1815.



would be necessary to any renunciation of their claims.”<sup>1054</sup> Similarly, several newspapers asked readers, “if the captured vessels are restored, where are our brave seamen to look for their prize money? Will Congress have to pay them?”<sup>1055</sup> What did the government think about Decatur’s decision? President Madison was not upset, observing that “the captured vessels were...of little value, and anxiously requested by [the Dey], as necessary to conciliate his own people.”<sup>1056</sup> He had granted the commissioners flexibility in dealing with the Dey, even authorizing them to pay a sum for ransom as long as it was done informally (that is, omitted from the official treaty). Nevertheless, Congress sympathized with the crew members who were denied the opportunity to sell the Algerine ships. In April 1816, it authorized \$100,000 “to be distributed, among the captors of the Algerine vessels” that had been “restored to the dey of Algiers.”<sup>1057</sup> Beyond this concern, no opposition to the treaty existed. In sharp contrast to the controversy generated by the Tripolitan War treaty, the public overwhelmingly deemed the Algerine War treaty a magnificent accomplishment worthy of the highest encomiums.

The public-at-large showered the end of the Algerine War with praise, viewing it as a thrilling coda to the larger war against Britain. Fourth of July gatherings featured toasts that celebrated the naval triumphs of both wars. A Pennsylvania group, for instance, drank to

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<sup>1054</sup> *Dedham Gazette* (Dedham, MA), October 6, 1815; *New-Bedford Mercury* (New Bedford, MA), October 6, 1815; *Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH), October 7, 1815; *Newport Mercury* (Newport, RI), October 7, 1815.

<sup>1055</sup> *New York Evening Post* (New York, NY), September 12, 1815. The second question was worded differently in other publications (it was longer): *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston, MA), September 16, 1815; *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), September 16, 1815; *Middlesex Gazette* (Middletown, CT), September 28, 1815 and *Norwich Courier* (Norwich, CT), October 4, 1815.

<sup>1056</sup> Madison to Monroe, September 12, 1815, Library of Congress, “Presidential Papers Microfilm, James Monroe Papers,” text-fiche, Series 1, Reel 6.

<sup>1057</sup> “An Act providing for the distribution of one hundred thousand dollars among the captors of the Algerine vessels captured and restored to the Dey of Algiers.” *Statutes at Large*, 14<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, April 27, 1816, 315-316.

“Commodore Shaw and the American squadron in the bay of Algiers. The valor which dared to seize the *Bull* by the *horns*, could never fear to *handle* the Tail of a Bashaw.”<sup>1058</sup> In Vermont, celebrants toasted the “*American Navy*—It has clipped John Bull of many sprigs of laurel, and has paid a *thundering tribute* to Algiers.”<sup>1059</sup> People at a Trenton, New Jersey gathering drank to “Tribute—That which our navy carried to Britain and the Barbary powers—the only kind Americans will ever consent to pay,” while a New York group praised “our land and naval heroes—Humiliation to British arrogance; and terror to the states of Barbary.”<sup>1060</sup> Clearly, Americans considered the wars against Britain and Algiers as intertwined and took special pride in the navy’s performance in both conflicts. It did not matter to them that Algiers was a much weaker enemy than Britain—the public eagerly celebrated all victories.

The public also echoed newspaper editors in viewing the Algerine War as evidence of America’s exceptional world leadership. A New York group drank to “*the Sons of Columbia*” who “first taught the Barbary Powers to respect their flag and release their prisoners without tribute.”<sup>1061</sup> Another group toasted ““The Barbary Powers’—They have for ages past held the iron rod of despotism over the heads of combined monarchs, with their thousand ships—now they haul down their bloody flags to a *few for-battle frigates*.”<sup>1062</sup> Similarly, attendees at a public dinner attended by Decatur drank to “his deeds of valor at Tripoli, and negotiations at Algiers, while they do honor to himself and the country, are a

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<sup>1058</sup> *Kline’s Weekly Carlisle Gazette* (Carlisle, PA), July 10, 1816.

<sup>1059</sup> *Rutland Vermont Herald* (Rutland, VT), July 10, 1816.

<sup>1060</sup> *The Columbian* (New York, NY), July 8, 1816; *Weekly Aurora* (Philadelphia, PA), July 16, 1816.

<sup>1061</sup> *Rutland Vermont Herald* (Rutland, VT), July 17, 1816.

<sup>1062</sup> *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), July 29, 1816.

living monument to all Europe.”<sup>1063</sup> Although everyone knew that the Algerine War was a much smaller conflict than the recent war against Britain, newspaper editors and the public at large celebrated it for transforming America’s relationship to the Barbary pirates.

Additional Algerine War-themed cultural events emerged in the conflict’s aftermath, although not to the same degree as during the Tripolitan War. Theater groups in New York and Boston performed Susanna Rowson’s 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers* (discussed in chapter 2),<sup>1064</sup> while residents of Washington D.C. could attend a performance of *Barbarossa, Tyrant of Algiers*.<sup>1065</sup> Shows that used spectacular technology had been popular during the Tripolitan War, but few such shows commemorated the Algerine War. In August 1815, Bostonians could attend the “Grand Gala,” a concert that featured fireworks and myriad visual images, including a depiction of “a partial Sea Engagement with Decatur’s command, and that of the Algerine frigate, which terminates with the latter becoming prize to our gallant squadron.”<sup>1066</sup> Despite widespread public enthusiasm for the Algerine War, it did not captivate artists’ imagination to the same extent as the Tripolitan War. Perhaps the ease of victory made the Algerine War seem less interesting or less nuanced than the Tripolitan War.

Bookstores, though, saw some potential for profitability in the Algerine War. One text, entitled the *Naval Monument*, discussed the naval battles against Britain and Algiers, although its twenty-five engravings included just one about the Algerine War: the “United

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<sup>1063</sup> *New York Evening Post* (New York, NY), August 14, 1816.

<sup>1064</sup> *The Albany Argus* (Albany, NY), March 31, 1815; *New-England Palladium & Commercial Advertiser* (Boston, MA), April 16, 1816.

<sup>1065</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.), June 19, 1815.

<sup>1066</sup> *The Repertory* (Boston, MA), August 31, 1815.

States squadron returning from the Mediterranean, after concluding peace with Algiers.”<sup>1067</sup> Similarly, another book (entitled *The Naval Temple*) described naval heroics and included an engraving of the “Triumphant return of the American Squadron under Com. Bainbridge from the Mediterranean 1815.”<sup>1068</sup> Oddly, the pictures of the Algerine War in both books associated Bainbridge with the conflict even though he lacked the opportunity to accomplish anything. Perhaps these authors sympathized with his bad luck since Decatur had overshadowed him in both the Tripolitan War and Algerine War. A Washington D.C. newspaper tried to revive public interest in William Eaton by printing advertisements for *The Life of the late Gen. William Eaton* and reminding readers that the Derne victory “led to the treaty of peace between the United States and the regency of Tripoli.”<sup>1069</sup>

Some consumer goods associated with the Algerine War were offered for sale as well. A New York bookstore advertised “A CHART OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, on a small scale, with a plan of the Harbour of ALGIERS.”<sup>1070</sup> Surely this map would have appealed to navy enthusiasts as well as family and friends of the officers and seamen. Owners could display it in their homes and invite viewers to imagine the Mediterranean squadron triumphing over the Algerine fleet. This map implied that the Algerine War was an important event worthy of remembrance and conversation. A very unusual type of item was offered for sale in the Washington D.C. area: a box of 500 smoking pipes that Decatur had seized. The advertisement surmised that “they were intended by the [Algerines] to treat our

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<sup>1067</sup> *Boston Daily Advertiser* (Boston, MA), May 2, 1816. *The Naval Monument* (Boston: Abel Bowen, 1816).

<sup>1068</sup> *The Naval Temple* (Boston: Barber Badger, 1816).

<sup>1069</sup> *Daily Federal Republican* (Washington, D.C.), April 27, 1815; May 1, 1815; May 8, 1815; May 11, 1815; May 12, 1815; May 13, 1815; May 16, 1815; May 22, 1815; May 24, 1815.

<sup>1070</sup> *New-York Evening Post* (New York, NY), April 14, 1815; April 18, 1815; May 2, 1815.

jolly tars with a whif after capture.”<sup>1071</sup> The pipes had to be purchased as a lot (not individually) and were offered at an (unspecified) “very cheap” price. Apparently they sold in January 1816, judging by the date of the final advertisement. Who bought them and what he or she do with them? Were they distributed as gifts to family and friends? Given to museums? Did people use them and, while smoking, gloat that the pipes now symbolized America’s victory over the Barbary pirates? Or were they treated as collectables and not used? The pipes were supposed to symbolize Algiers’s success in capturing American vessels, but Decatur and the U.S. squadron created the opposite scenario.

From the United States’ standpoint the Algerine War had ended (although three ships remained in the Mediterranean). The Dey, however, came to regret offering such liberal terms and tried to revoke the treaty. In summer 1815, he became upset when Spain captured the two Algerine ships that the U.S. navy had defeated (and Decatur had returned). Spain restored the frigate in July, but kept the brig until March 1816.<sup>1072</sup> For his part, Decatur thought that Spain and Algiers needed to resolve this issue on their own. He insisted to Shaler that the United States had “complied fully with our engagement with the Dey— & can in no wise be responsible for the Spanish aggressions on the Regency of Algiers.”<sup>1073</sup> Madison concurred, arguing that because “the vessel has been actually received by the Dey, no further demand can be made by him....Algiers had lost the right by the capture

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<sup>1071</sup> *Daily Federal Republican* (Washington, D.C.), November 7, 1815; *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* (Alexandria, VA), November 11, 1815; November 18, 1815; November 23, 1815; January 3, 1816.

<sup>1072</sup> Irwin, 182-183.

<sup>1073</sup> Decatur to Shaler, October 7, 1815, William Shaler Papers #1172, Correspondence 1799-1820, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

[which]...was lawful.”<sup>1074</sup> Nevertheless, as one naval officer reported, even after the Dey reacquired the brig he still insisted that the United States owed him “a vessel or money equivalent” to the brig’s value. Why? Because the United States had nothing to do with Spain restoring it.<sup>1075</sup> Moreover, in a letter to Madison, the Dey tried to pressure him to abrogate the new Algiers-U.S. treaty and to renew the older one (which had required the United States to pay tribute).<sup>1076</sup> The Dey apparently feared that his subjects would overthrow him on account of the unusually generous terms in the new treaty. As one naval officer discussed, the Dey believed that the Algerine “*people* were not altogether satisfied” with the new treaty. As “he was but young upon the throne,” he felt that “the restoration of the two prizes was absolutely necessary to his popularity.”<sup>1077</sup> Madison, however, firmly rebuffed the Dey’s requests. In his reply, the president stressed that Algiers had “made war without cause on the United States” and castigated the Dey for “magnifying an incident so little important as it affects the interests of Algiers, and so blameless on the part of the United States.”<sup>1078</sup> The president adamantly refused to pay any money: the United States “will buy peace with none. It is a principle incorporated into the settled policy of America, that as peace is better than war, war is better than tribute.”

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<sup>1074</sup> Madison to Monroe, June 29, 1816, James Madison Papers at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, <http://www.loc.gov/item/mjm017916/> (accessed January 13, 2016).

<sup>1075</sup> Letter from an Officer on board the ship *United States*, off Algiers, April 16, 1816, printed in *Vermont Republican* (Windsor, VT), July 6, 1816.

<sup>1076</sup> Omar bin Mohammed to Madison, April 24, 1816, printed in Shaler, Appendix E, 276-278.

<sup>1077</sup> Letter from an American Naval Officer, to his friend in Baltimore, November 19, 1816, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot & Evening Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), February 6, 1816. This (anonymous) officer sympathized with the Dey, believing that “he has just cause for his displeasure.”

<sup>1078</sup> Madison to Omar bin Mohammed, August 21, 1816, printed in Shaler, Appendix G, 295-297.

Meanwhile, Algiers courted the wrath of the British Navy when, in May 1816, Algerian forces at the city of Bona massacred two hundred fisherman who were under the protection of the British Empire. In response, Lord Exmouth returned to Algiers in August and, together with the Dutch Navy, bombarded Algiers's capital city and fleet for nine hours. As part of Algiers's surrender terms, the Dey had to release all of his European slaves (1,642), pay about \$350,000 (the amount that Exmouth, on behalf of the kings of Naples and Sardinia, had paid for ransom a few months earlier), and promise to cease enslaving Christians.<sup>1079</sup> In December, the Dey dropped his grievances against the United States and officially reaffirmed his support for the new peace treaty.<sup>1080</sup>

In retrospect, Madison's decision to use overwhelming force against Algiers in 1815 constituted the initial blow that would permanently end Barbary piracy.<sup>1081</sup> Madison fulfilled the grand hopes expressed in the futuristic newspaper article from 1788 (discussed in chapter 2), which was written at a time when Algiers had enslaved several Americans and the United States lacked a navy to defend itself. The article envisioned a future in which, if news arrived that Algiers had captured Americans, the president would demand that the Dey free them "instantly" or else the U.S. Navy would "lay the town of Algiers in ashes."<sup>1082</sup> It was entitled "Anticipation: 1858, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>," yet Madison and Lord Exmouth fulfilled this imaginary scenario forty-two years ahead of time.

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<sup>1079</sup> Leiner, 162-171; Shaler, 133-137.

<sup>1080</sup> The American Commissioners to the Dey of Algiers, December 9, 1816, printed in Shaler, Appendix G, 297-299; Shaler, 139.

<sup>1081</sup> France invaded Algiers in 1830 and retained it as a colony until the 1960s.

<sup>1082</sup> *Poughkeepsie County Journal* (Poughkeepsie, NY), April 8, 1788, Merrill Jensen, ed., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, 26 vols. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976-), XX: 905-906.

Madison was also a much more effective commander-in-chief during the Algerine War than Jefferson had been throughout the Tripolitan War. Madison made Congress a partner from the beginning by requesting (and receiving) a declaration of war. Also, whereas Jefferson dilly-dallied in the Tripolitan War until the *Philadelphia* loss, Madison pursued complete victory against Algiers from the start. Moreover, Jefferson's resistance to sending more ships to the Mediterranean permitted Federalists to marshal a viable opposition movement, but Madison's resolute leadership drove the final nail into the Federalists' coffin. Altogether, Jefferson was out-of-touch regarding public opinion about the Barbary pirates and the navy—Americans wanted to crush them with superior force and loved celebrating the heroism of naval officers and seamen. Jefferson's deep distrust of the navy as an institution was atypical—Americans overwhelmingly deemed it a positive good. The United States triumphed over Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis in 1815 because the Madison Administration and the public rejected Jefferson's feeble North African policies.

Beyond domestic ramifications, ultimately we should rethink our periodization of the War of 1812 by recognizing that it extended beyond the Treaty of Ghent and the Battle of New Orleans. We should end it with Decatur's June 1815 triumphs in the Mediterranean because Americans at the time deemed the Algerine War intertwined with the larger conflict against Britain and its Native American allies. The War of 1812 had a global dimension that, unlike the war on the U.S. mainland, ended in an unqualified triumph for the United States.



## Chapter 8: The Historical Memory of the Barbary Conflicts

Throughout the nineteenth century, American authors contested the importance and legacy of the Barbary conflicts in a variety of sources intended for public consumption, such as general histories of the United States, naval histories, and schoolbooks. Authors considered them vital to the national narrative, although the quality of accounts greatly varies. Many contain factual errors, while others are simply triumphalist propaganda that extol naval victories and ignore the political controversies generated by the Tripolitan War and Sidi Soliman Mellimelli's visit. Generally, nineteenth-century accounts of the Tripolitan War sought to bolster American nationalism and encourage readers to take pride in naval victories. This patriotic purpose accelerated after the Civil War, as authors increasingly omitted William Eaton's role and recast the Tripolitan War as an unambiguous triumph for the United States. General and naval histories sometimes mentioned the Mellimelli mission, but they reframed it as a victory for this United States. They praised Jefferson for refusing to pay tribute and argued that the impressiveness of the U.S. navy frightened the Bey of Tunis into withdrawing his demands. Some works discussed the 1815 conflicts, with authors uniformly agreeing that they constituted a complete triumph for the United States. Altogether, nineteenth-century accounts of the Barbary conflicts contained many dubious or outright inaccurate interpretations and sought to produce patriots instead of encouraging readers to critically evaluate the past.

## **The Tripolitan War in Naval Histories and General Histories of America**

Interpretations of the Tripolitan War varied widely prior to the Civil War. Authors generally agreed that it provided important training for naval officers and featured some impressive naval victories. However, they strongly disagreed about the potential of the coup attempt led by William Eaton and Hamet Karamanli and the nature of the peace treaty that ended the conflict. Some deemed the treaty an embarrassment since it required the United States to pay ransom money and marked the end of a promising coup attempt. Other commentators held a more positive view, celebrating the treaty as an honorable resolution. Such authors contended that the coup attempt never would have succeeded and claimed that the United States brokered a better deal than any European country ever had. At stake was whether the Tripolitan War should be heralded as a triumph of gunboat diplomacy or lamented as a lost opportunity for national greatness.

A big shift in the historical memory of the Tripolitan War occurred after the Civil War, as accounts became much more positive. Compared to antebellum authors, post-Civil War ones stressed the naval battles to a larger extent and downplayed (or entirely ignored) Eaton's role in the coup attempt. Why would these authors do so? By omitting Eaton and portraying the expedition as an indigenous uprising, authors could downplay the political controversy surrounding the treaty and recast the Tripolitan War as an event that featured national unity. Given the desire to promote reconciliation between white northerners and white southerners after the Civil War, it is not surprising that authors reshaped the Tripolitan War in order to serve the needs of the present day.<sup>1083</sup>

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<sup>1083</sup> Hoganson, 124-125. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 13.

An early history of the Tripolitan War, published in 1806 by the Federalist newspaper the *Salem Gazette*, was surprisingly dispassionate. It listed many details about naval events and the coup attempt, but offered scant praise or criticism. The book commended the burning of the *Philadelphia* (“the importance of this bold enterprise to the reputation of America must be great”) and proclaimed the coup attempt “a brilliant stroke of policy.” It tacitly sympathized with Eaton since the appendix featured his August 9, 1806 letter to the Secretary of the Navy in which he railed against the expedition’s abandonment. Also unusually, the book expressed some goodwill towards the Tripolitans by wishing for “a more frequent and general intercourse between the citizens of the United States and the people of Barbary.”<sup>1084</sup> Given the heavily politicized character of newspapers at this time and the *Salem Gazette*’s prior criticism of Jefferson’s conduct of the Tripolitan War, the book’s objective tone is very unexpected.<sup>1085</sup>

In the 1810s, authors of Tripolitan War accounts depicted it in a mostly positive light. They stressed American heroism and regretted the abandonment of Eaton’s coup attempt. Charles Prentiss wrote a highly celebratory biography of William Eaton (published in 1813) that portrayed him as a monumental figure beloved by the public but betrayed by the U.S. government. Unlike other books, it argued that the “daring and dangerous” coup attempt constituted the centerpiece of the Tripolitan War, being “much superior in extent and effect to any of the late naval victories.” It vilified Lear and the Jefferson Administration, castigating the former for being “so anxious to make a treaty” even though the expedition

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<sup>1084</sup> *History of the War between the United States and Tripoli, and Other Barbary Powers* (Salem: Salem Gazette Office, 1806), 109, 115, 128.

<sup>1085</sup> For instance, the *Salem Gazette* blamed the Jefferson Administration for the *Franklin* capture on October 22, 1802 and criticized Democratic-Republican naval policies on April 7, 1803.

“had the fairest prospect of” success and condemning the latter for treating Eaton “with great duplicity.” Prentiss lamented the abandonment of the coup attempt and stressed that the public appreciated Eaton’s brilliance, believing that he that would “have been master of the kingdom of the Tripoli” and made “his own terms of peace.”<sup>1086</sup>

Philadelphia printer Mathew Carey, himself the author of *A Short History of Algiers* (discussed in chapter 2), published Thomas Clark’s *Sketches of the Naval History of the United States* (1813) and David Ramsay’s three volume *History of the United States* (published posthumously in 1816 and 1817). Mordecai Noah, former consul to Tunis, also wrote a super-patriotic *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States, in the Years 1813-14 and 15* (1819) that lionized American military and naval heroes. In the preface to the *History of the United States*, Carey noted that because Ramsay “omitted the relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers,” he added this material himself.<sup>1087</sup> Clark and Carey extolled Stephen Decatur as a legendary naval warrior for destroying the captured *Philadelphia*. Clark described it as “an enterprize of the most daring nature,” while Carey proclaimed it “as gallant an enterprize, as was ever recorded to the honour of any hero, or the glory of any nation.”<sup>1088</sup> For his part, Noah argued that the Tripolitan War served as a “school of active warfare” that prepared officers for the War of 1812.<sup>1089</sup> Clark believed that Commodore Preble deserved special acclaim, attributing the navy’s “brilliant success” to his

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<sup>1086</sup> Prentiss, 445, 443, 393.

<sup>1087</sup> David Ramsay, *History of the United States, from their First Settlement as English Colonies, in 1607, to the Year 1808m or the Thirty-Third of their Sovereignty and Independence*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1817), 89.

<sup>1088</sup> Thomas Clark, *Sketches of the Naval History of the United States; from the Commencement of the Revolutionary War, to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1813), 108; Ramsay, 3: 94.

<sup>1089</sup> Mordecai Noah, *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States, in the Years 1813-14 and 15* (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1819), 344.

effective leadership.<sup>1090</sup> These authors deemed the Tripolitan War a seminal moment in U.S. naval history.

Additionally, Clark and Carey emphasized that foreign observers recognized the significance of American victories over the Barbary pirates. By providing quotes from distinguished persons, they presented the Tripolitan War as a validation of America's leadership in world affairs. Clark included Pope Pius VII's praise (see Chapter 4) and a quote from Sir Alexander Ball, the governor of Malta and "a distinguished commander in the British navy." Ball commended Preble for "set[ting] a distinguished example. [His] bravery and enterprize are worthy [of] a great and rising nation....A few brave men have indeed been sacrificed, but they could not have fallen in a better cause."<sup>1091</sup> By incorporating these quotes, Clark perhaps sought to reassure the public regarding the ongoing war against England: the U.S. Navy had vanquished the Tripolitans and could now defeat the British. Carey similarly celebrated the Tripolitan War for bolstering America's worldwide reputation, but he inadvertently downplayed the impressiveness of naval victories by denigrating the Tripolitans as cowardly and incompetent. He praised the navy for "shed[ding] a lustre on the American naval character" and included a lengthier version of the Ball quote."<sup>1092</sup> Yet Carey also portrayed the Tripolitans as easy prey, which raises the question of whether the U.S. Navy deserves copious praise. For instance, after losing a battle, "so terrified were the Tripolitans...that the sailors abandoned the cruisers.... Crews could not be procured to navigate them."<sup>1093</sup>

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<sup>1090</sup> Clark, 114.

<sup>1091</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>1092</sup> Ramsay, 3: 97.

<sup>1093</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 91.

Yet despite such triumphalist rhetoric, Clark, Carey, and Noah concurred that the Tripolitan War had a disappointing conclusion due to the abandonment of the coup attempt. They all believed it would have succeeded had Tobias Lear not made a treaty with the bashaw. Noah portrayed Eaton as an “honourable” hero betrayed by a “cold, calculating and timid” Tobias Lear and argued the coup “unquestionably” would have succeeded.<sup>1094</sup> Clark thought that “Eaton would have forced the bashaw to unconditional submission,” while Carey proclaimed that Eaton’s “bold enterprise” resembled “the feats of sir William Wallace and his valorous partizans. The Christians engaged the barbarians in the proportion of tens to thousands, and actually put them to flight.”<sup>1095</sup> Carey considered Eaton truly great, the American equivalent of the medieval Scottish rebel who courageously led a rebellion against England in spite of overwhelming odds. Carey deemed it tragic that the Jefferson Administration did not appreciate Eaton’s brilliance, but at least the public admired him: Americans unanimously believed that he would, “in all human probability, have penetrated to Tripoli; deposed the reigning bashaw; elevated Hamet, the ally of the United States; liberated the American captives without a price; and settled an advantageous commercial convention with the restored Hamet.” Lear’s treaty “was to be regretted” since it tarnished national honor.<sup>1096</sup> Thus, by recounting the stifled coup attempt, Clark, Carey and Noah tempered their overall synopsis of the Tripolitan War. Although the United States could vaunt about naval victories, it agreed to a dishonorable treaty and shamefully abandoned a promising

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<sup>1094</sup> Noah, 352-353. Noah expressed additional contempt for Lear, describing him as a particular favorite of the Dey of Algiers. The Dey “admired” Lear “for qualifications, which he never should have possessed—for his uniform pacific disposition, and his amiable accordance to all his demands.” Noah, 359.

<sup>1095</sup> Clark, 120; Ramsay, 3: 98-99.

<sup>1096</sup> Ramsay, 100-101.

coup. To Clark, Carey, and Noah, the Tripolitan War contained a mix of triumph and tragedy.

S. Putnam Waldo, writing a biography of Decatur in 1821, outdid Carey in utilizing sensationalist rhetoric. He portrayed the Tripolitan War as a clash between the forces of good and evil, labeling the Barbary pirates as “merciless hordes of inhuman wretches,” “butcherers of mankind,” and “ferocious sons of Ishmael” who had “a deadly and implacable hatred against Christians.”<sup>1097</sup> In contrast to contemporaneous descriptions of the conflicts, he (falsely) implied that the Tripolitans were primarily motivated by religious animosity. Perhaps Waldo’s interpretation reflected the ongoing religious revivals that constituted the Second Great Awakening.<sup>1098</sup> He also depicted the bashaw as a villain of Shakespearean dimensions, comparing him to Richard III and calling him the “devil incarnate.”<sup>1099</sup> Waldo used equally colorful rhetoric when describing American personnel. He lionized Decatur as the “ardent and chivalrous hero” who “*revived* the spirit which pervaded the hearts of men in the ‘Age of Chivalry’” and praised Eaton’s “daring and romantic project of restoring *Hamet Caramanli* to the throne of Tripoli.”<sup>1100</sup> Waldo wanted readers to view Decatur and Eaton as larger-than-life figures, modern-day knights who boldly braved danger. Yet his treatment of the coup contained some nuance. While admiring Eaton’s courage, Waldo considered the expedition destined for failure since the “rabble-army” could never have defeated the

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<sup>1097</sup> S. Putnam Waldo, *The Life and Character of Stephen Decatur; Late Commodore and Post-Captain in the Navy of the United States, and Navy-Commissioner* (Hartford: P.B. Goodsell, 1821), 54-56. Near the end of his book, Waldo added more religiously charged rhetoric, warning North African Muslims that their daily prayers would not “save them from the *Christian* cannon of America” (258). It appears that Waldo wanted American Christians to wage holy war against North Africa!

<sup>1098</sup> Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>1099</sup> Waldo, 93-94.

<sup>1100</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 98, 110-111.

“20,000 well armed Arabs” that protected the bashaw.<sup>1101</sup> He therefore praised Lear’s treaty and urged any “dignified and patriotic statesmen” to do the same.<sup>1102</sup> One can imagine Waldo having ample fun when writing his narrative, as he apparently thought the Tripolitan War was best understood by using hyperbole and flashy rhetoric.

Other authors writing prior to the Civil War held conflicting interpretations of the Tripolitan War’s meaning and disagreed about the coup’s potential for success. Some despised the peace treaty and longed for an alternate past, one in which Eaton and Hamet fulfilled their mission to overthrow the bashaw. Other authors defended the treaty, viewing it as the best possible deal. John Milton Niles, writing in 1820, called the treaty “premature” and argued that, had the coup attempt not been abandoned, it would have resulted in “more favorable” terms or even the bashaw’s “unconditional submission.”<sup>1103</sup> Nevertheless, Niles believed that the Tripolitan War had a sanguine effect upon the Navy: it served as “the great practical school of most of our naval officers” and had a strong “influence upon their character.”<sup>1104</sup> Similarly, William Grimshaw’s *History of the United States* (1821) lamented the abandonment of the coup attempt, arguing that it promised “the most glorious and beneficial result.” He praised Eaton’s “distinguished lustre” and “brilliant progress” and condemned the treaty as “a sacrifice of honour.”<sup>1105</sup> Other pro-Eaton apologists included William Allen (in his 1832 *An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary*) and J.W.

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<sup>1101</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>1102</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>1103</sup> John Niles, *The Life of Oliver Hazard Perry* (Hartford: William Marsh, 1820), 52-53.

<sup>1104</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>1105</sup> William Grimshaw, *History of the United States, from their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Cession of Florida, in Eighteen Hundred and Twenty-One*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Benjamin Warner, 1821), 194-195.



Barber (in his 1834 *United States Book*). Allen lionized Eaton for defeating the bashaw's superior forces and "open[ing]...the gates of Tripoli" (that is, victory was imminent),<sup>1106</sup> while Barber hailed the military campaign as a "gallant and romantic affair."<sup>1107</sup> John Frost's *American Naval Biography* (1844) portrayed Lear as a backstabbing villain: Eaton "came so near [to] overturning the government, and humbling the barbarians to our own terms" and "was only prevented from doing this by the precipitate treaty of Mr. Lear." Like Carey and Waldo he waxed poetic about the coup, remarking that "the singularity of this affair—a body of Americans allied with Turks, attacking an African town by sea and land and capturing it—renders it...[a] romantic achievement."<sup>1108</sup> John Blake's *The Beauties of American History* (1844) portrayed Eaton as a larger-than-life figure who "encountered peril, fatigue, and suffering, the description of which would resemble the exaggerations of romance." Unlike authors who castigated Lear, Blake blamed naval officers for stopping Eaton's "brilliant and successful" enterprise.<sup>1109</sup> Jacob Neff's *Thrilling Incidents of the Wars of the United States* (1848) featured a portrait of Eaton and extolled the coup as a "romantic expedition" and "spirited enterprise." It provided very few details about why it dissolved, simply stating that it ran out of "supplies."<sup>1110</sup> The English minister John Hinton, in *The History and*

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<sup>1106</sup> William Allen, *An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: William Hyde & Co., 1832), 359.

<sup>1107</sup> J.W. Barber, *United States Book; or, Interesting Events in the History of the United States* (New Haven: L.H. Young, 1834), 198.

<sup>1108</sup> John Frost, *American Naval Biography, Comprising Lives of the Commodores, and Other Commanders Distinguished in the History of the American Navy* (Philadelphia: E.H. Butler, 1844), 233-234.

<sup>1109</sup> John Blake, *The Beauties of American History* (New York: Alexander Blake, 1844), 206-207. Blake plagiarized Salma Hale's 1835 textbook, discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>1110</sup> Neff, *Thrilling Incidents of the Wars of the United States: Comprising the Most Striking and Remarkable Events of the Revolution, the French War, the Tripolitan War, the Indian War, the Second War with Great Britain, and the Mexican War* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1848), 413, 415. Neff's description also appears in

*Topography of the United States* (1854) considered Eaton one of the greatest men in American history (alongside John Smith and Miles Standish). He raved that Eaton's "mind was of an epic cast" and that his talents would have been better appreciated "had he lived in the days of the crusades."<sup>1111</sup> Henry Watson's 1854 history book featured a large portrait of Eaton as well as a picture of the "Capture of Derna."<sup>1112</sup> Clearly, he wanted readers to be awestruck by Eaton's accomplishments and to consider him a prominent leader of the early republic. Also, Watson plagiarized Carey's comparison of Eaton to William Wallace and concluded that the coup would likely have met "with the most brilliant successes."<sup>1113</sup>

Henry Dawson's *Battles of the United States, by Sea and Land* (1858) celebrated the coup as one of the "most remarkable" military events in American history and claimed it "hastened" the bashaw's pursuit of peace.<sup>1114</sup> Jesse Spencer's *History of the United States* (1858) praised Eaton's "unflinching courage and dogged perseverance" and acknowledged that "it is not easy to approve of the terms of this peace with Tripoli" since "it seems almost certain that better terms might have been obtained."<sup>1115</sup> Charles Peterson's *The American Navy* (1859) also criticized the treaty, arguing that it "alone prevented the success of this

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James Brayman, ed., *Daring Deeds of American Heroes, with Biographical Sketches* (Auburn: Derby & Miller, 1853), 307-309.

<sup>1111</sup> John Hinton, *The History and Topography of the United States of North America, Brought Down from the Earliest Period*, Samuel Knapp and John Choules, eds., vol. 1 (Boston: Samuel Walker, 1854), 328.

<sup>1112</sup> Henry Watson, *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1854), 620-621.

<sup>1113</sup> *Ibid.*, 622

<sup>1114</sup> Henry Dawson, *Battles of the United States, by Sea and Land: Embracing those of the Revolutionary and Indian Wars, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War*, vol. 2 (New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company, 1858), 60.

<sup>1115</sup> J.A. Spencer, *History of the United States. From the Earliest Period to the Administration of James Buchanan* (New York: Johnson, Fry and Company, 1858), 59.

expedition and the dethronement” of the bashaw.<sup>1116</sup> That same year, John Denison’s military history trumpeted Eaton as a “genius” whose “skill and activity” outshone any accomplishments by the navy.<sup>1117</sup> He also plagiarized Carey in comparing Eaton to William Wallace and in concluding that the coup would have succeeded in “in all human probability.”<sup>1118</sup> Clearly, Eaton’s admirers *loved* him and sought to persuade readers that he was truly great. These authors celebrated the use of force to advance American interests, perhaps reflecting antebellum interest in what Amy Greenberg has called “martial manhood.”<sup>1119</sup> As she discusses in *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, this rough and wild masculinity celebrated filibustering in foreign areas with non-white populations.

However, other authors prior to the Civil War challenged this pro-Eaton narrative. Many thought that the coup had a dubious chance of succeeding and defended the treaty as a good deal. Charles Goldsborough, in *The United States’ Naval Chronicle* (1824), acknowledged Eaton’s “energy and gallantry” but argued that the coup attempt accomplished nothing of value since it did not create “a disposition for peace” in the bashaw.<sup>1120</sup> Abiel Holmes’s *The Annals of America* (1829) praised both Eaton and the treaty, proclaiming the

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<sup>1116</sup> Charles Peterson, *The American Navy: Being an Authentic History of the United States Navy, and Biographical Sketches of American Naval Heroes, from the Formation of the Navy to the Close of the Mexican War* (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Smith & Co., 1859), 30.

<sup>1117</sup> John Denison, *A Pictorial History of the Wars of the United States: Embracing a Complete History of all the Wars of the Country, from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (New York: Henry Bill, 1859), 260, 262.

<sup>1118</sup> *Ibid.*, 265. Denison plagiarized Carey again in *A Pictorial History of the Navy of the United States* (San Francisco: Henty Bill, 1862), 113.

<sup>1119</sup> Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11-13.

<sup>1120</sup> Charles Goldsborough, *The United States’ Naval Chronicle*, vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: James Wilson, 1824). 277-278.

latter “more honourable than any peace obtained...with a Barbary regency, at any period within a hundred years.”<sup>1121</sup> Robert Greenhow’s *The History and Present Condition of Tripoli* (1835) considered Eaton “a remarkable man,” but criticized him for “far exceed[ing] the limits of his commission” and listed several reasons why Hamet would have failed as bashaw.<sup>1122</sup> However, Greenhow despised the treaty, arguing that “there is every reason to suppose” that Lear should have insisted upon “terms more honorable” by refusing to pay any ransom money.<sup>1123</sup> Thomas Harris’s 1837 biography of William Bainbridge offered a pessimistic (and Orientalist) interpretation of the coup attempt, calling it “extremely problematical” since it depended upon a “tumultuous and undisciplined horde” of Tripolitan allies.<sup>1124</sup> James Fennimore Cooper’s 1839 naval history acknowledged the controversy over the abandonment of the coup attempt, but remained agnostic about its potential success. Eaton and Hamet still needed to encounter the bashaw’s 20,000 soldiers, although Cooper surmised that, had Barron continued support, perhaps more Tripolitans would have joined the rebellion. At the very least, he thought that the treaty should have included “better terms” in the treaty since Hamet still occupied Derne.<sup>1125</sup> Richard Hildreth’s *The History of the United States* (1856) commended Eaton as “a person of romantic temper and great enterprise,” but

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<sup>1121</sup> Abiel Holmes, *The Annals of America, from the Discovery by Columbus in the Year 1492, to the Year 1826*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 430.

<sup>1122</sup> Robert Greenhow, *The History and Present Condition of Tripoli, with Some Accounts of the Other Barbary States* (Richmond, T.W. White, 1835), 14, 27. Those reasons included the Tripolitans being “bigoted Mahometans” who cherished piracy as “an ancient and most honorable calling.” Greenhow alleged that they would oppose Hamet’s promise not to attack American ships.

<sup>1123</sup> Greenhow, 32.

<sup>1124</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Life and Services of Commodore William Bainbridge, United States Navy* (Philadelphia, Carey Lea & Blanchard, 1837), 125-126.

<sup>1125</sup> James Cooper, *The History of the Navy of the United States of America*, vol. 2 (Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1839), 55, 60.

defended Barron's decision to withhold support—he knew “the exceedingly economical spirit of the government” and lacked “faith in Eaton's project.”<sup>1126</sup> James Marshall's *The United States Manual of Biography and History* (1856) took a neutral view of the treaty, remarking that Lear took advantage of “the bravery displayed at Derne” to broker a deal with the bashaw.<sup>1127</sup> George Tucker's *The History of the United States* (1857) deemed both the coup's potential and Eaton's leadership skills greatly overrated. Hamet had overestimated the amount of followers, lacked “energy or military talent,” and wholly depended upon the United States. As for Eaton, “the merits of his exploits were greatly magnified” and Tucker also criticized Federalists for opposing the Jefferson Administration's support of the treaty.<sup>1128</sup> Taliaferro Shaffner's *History of the United States of America*, published during the Civil War, admired Eaton's resolve but also considered the treaty a good deal: its “terms were far more favourable than any ever before offered by the bashaw.”<sup>1129</sup> Altogether, these authors tempered the pro-Eaton camp's notion of a lost cause. They raised logistical concerns about the coup's viability, although some criticized Lear for not using it as leverage to negotiate a better treaty.

Following the Civil War, depictions of the Tripolitan War changed as authors increasingly neglected the coup attempt and more strongly emphasized the naval battles.

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<sup>1126</sup> Richard Hildreth, *The History of the United States of America. From the Adoption of the Federal Constitution to the End of the Sixteenth Congress*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 558, 561.

<sup>1127</sup> James Marshall, *The United States Manual of Biography and History: Comprising Lives of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the United States, and the Cabinet Officers, from the Adoption of the Constitution to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: James B. Smith & Co., 1856), 250.

<sup>1128</sup> George Tucker, *The History of the United States from their Colonization to the End of the Twenty-Sixth Congress, in 1841*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1857), 249-250.

<sup>1129</sup> Taliaferro Shaffner, *History of the United States of America, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, vol. 2 (London Printing and Publishing Company: New York, 1864), 238.

Whereas virtually all pre-Civil War accounts of the Tripolitan War discussed Eaton (whether celebrating or criticizing him), a significant number of those written after the conflict omitted him. Post-Civil War works instead valorized the naval officers and argued that they levied so much pressure on the bashaw that he eventually sued for peace. The 1890s in particular featured a surge in naval-oriented histories of the Tripolitan War, which reflected the strong contemporary interest in building a powerful naval fleet that could rival European powers'.<sup>1130</sup> Alfred Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (1890) received a thunderous reception and, later in the decade, the United States engaged in overseas wars against Spain in Cuba and the Philippines.<sup>1131</sup> By emphasizing the Tripolitan War's naval elements, authors created a useable past that provided inspiration for modern policies.

One school of writers emphasized the naval aspects very strongly and either downplayed the importance of the coup attempt or did not mention it at all. Robert Belford's *A History of the United States in Chronological Order* (1866) entirely ignored Eaton's coup attempt and instead focused on naval leaders (Dale and Preble).<sup>1132</sup> James McCabe's *The Centennial History of the United States* (1874) also left out Eaton and instead made Stephen Decatur the hero of the Tripolitan War. The book credited the navy with harassing Tripoli until the bashaw "asked for peace."<sup>1133</sup> David Porter, a commodore in the U.S. Navy,

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<sup>1130</sup> For the naval buildup in the 1880s and 1890s, see Paullin, 387-426.

<sup>1131</sup> Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890).

<sup>1132</sup> James Belford, *A History of the United States in Chronological Order from A.D. 432 to the Present Time* (New York: The World, 1866), 113-114.

<sup>1133</sup> James McCabe, *The Centennial History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Close of the First Century of American Independence* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1874), 594.

likewise left out Eaton in his 1875 discussion of the Tripolitan War. He did, however, criticize the treaty, averring that “no doubt, the United States could have made better terms.” Oddly (and without providing any evidence), he attributed the sudden end to the conflict to public pressure on the government to stop “the sufferings of the prisoners” and to cease spending money on the conflict.<sup>1134</sup> James Soley’s *Operations of the Mediterranean Squadron under Commodore Edward Preble* (1879) credited the navy for pressuring the bashaw to negotiate: “the Tripolitans had already lowered their terms under the stress of Preble’s attacks; and in the presence of a force so much more effective, they might be expected to agree to anything.” In a footnote, though, he conceded that the capture of Derne “doubtless had some influence in bringing the Pasha of Tripoli to terms; thought it is difficult to see how he could have acted otherwise, if Eaton’s expedition had never been undertaken, in view of the overwhelming naval force.”<sup>1135</sup> Willis Abbot’s *Blue Jackets of ’76* (1888) is unique for claiming (quite inaccurately) that the *Intrepid* explosion of September 1804 essentially “terminated the war with Tripoli. Thereafter it was but a series of blockades and diplomatic negotiations.” Still, Abbot despised the treaty: it “cannot be too harshly criticized” since “a native force of insurrectionists, re-enforced by a few Americans, was marching upon Tripoli from the rear, and would have soon brought the Bashaw to terms.” Although the book did not mention Eaton by name, it condemned the treaty in a manner resembling the pro-Eaton camp.<sup>1136</sup> Edgar Maclay’s *A History of the United States Navy*

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<sup>1134</sup> David Porter, *Memoir of Commodore David Porte; of the United States Navy* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1875), 65-66.

<sup>1135</sup> James Soley, *Operations of the Mediterranean Squadron under Commodore Edward Preble, in 1803-4* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Academy, 1879), 80.

<sup>1136</sup> Willis Abbot, *Blue Jackets of ’76: A History of the Naval Battles of the American Revolution together with a Narrative of the War with Tripoli* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1888), 300.

*From 1775 to 1894* (1895) belittled the expedition as “a rabble of thirty thousand unarmed and destitute adventurers” seeking “pillage and plunder.” While grossly inflating the size of Eaton and Hamet’s army, it defended the treaty as “undoubtedly the best that could be expected under the circumstances.”<sup>1137</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt’s *Hero Tales from American History* (1895) featured an entire chapter about the destruction of the *Philadelphia* and lamented it being “well-nigh forgotten” by the public.<sup>1138</sup> The Tripolitan War’s naval heroics constituted a useful past for Roosevelt, who championed a naval buildup, served briefly as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and, as president, would send the “Great White Fleet” on a world tour. *Hero Tales*’s introduction explained the book’s purpose: relating stories about Americans who “knew how to live and how to die...who joined to the stern and manly qualities which are essential to the well-being of a masterful race the virtues of gentleness, of patriotism, and of lofty adherence to an ideal.” Roosevelt apparently had reevaluated his thoughts on the Tripolitan War; his *The Naval War of 1812* (first published in 1882) dismissed it as consisting of “some obscure skirmishes...none of which could possibly attract attention.”<sup>1139</sup> Thirteen years later, though, Roosevelt extolled Decatur as an embodiment of robust masculinity and bravery.

James Barnes’s 1897 biography of William Bainbridge credited naval attacks for gradually making the bashaw “more inclined to negotiation for peace.” He mentioned Eaton in just one sentence, omitted the capture of Derne, and did not comment on the

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<sup>1137</sup> Edgar Maclay, *A History of the United States Navy from 1775 to 1894*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 299-300.

<sup>1138</sup> Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, *Hero Tales from American History* (New York: Century Co., 1895), 113.

<sup>1139</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812 or the History of the United States Navy during the Last War with Great Britain*, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1900), 56.



honorableness of the treaty.<sup>1140</sup> Charles Morris, in *The Nation's Navy* (1898), also detailed naval battles, left out Eaton, and briefly mentioned an indigenous “insurrection” (which he thought pressured the bashaw to make peace).<sup>1141</sup> Tom Masson’s *The Yankee Navy* (1898) distorted actual events by claiming that Edward Preble deserved “chief honors” for the capture of the city of Tripoli. In reality, Eaton and Hamet’s forces captured a different city (Derne) and Preble was not in the Mediterranean in April 1805—he had returned to the United States two months earlier.<sup>1142</sup> John Brown’s *American Naval Heroes* contained a chapter about Preble’s actions during the Tripolitan War, but ignored Eaton and the coup attempt.<sup>1143</sup> A.D. Hall’s *Uncle Sam’s Ships* (1899) attributed the treaty to the bashaw yielding to a superior U.S. naval squadron and “the stress of Preble’s attacks.” The book also plagiarized Soley’s 1879 naval history (discussed above) in discounting the influence of the coup attempt: “it doubtless had a strong additional influence...though it is hard to see how [the bashaw] could have acted otherwise in face of the overwhelming naval force.”<sup>1144</sup> John Spears, in *History of Our Navy from its Origin to the Present Day* (1899), spent three chapters trumpeting the naval battles of the Tripolitan War and entirely excluded Eaton. He mentioned the coup in one sentence, portraying it as an indigenous “uprising...with the aid of

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<sup>1140</sup> James Barnes, *Commodore Bainbridge: From the Gunroom to the Quarter-Deck* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1897), 143-144, 145, 150.

<sup>1141</sup> Charles Morris, *The Nation's Navy: Our Ships and their Achievements* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1898), 41.

<sup>1142</sup> Tom Masson, *The Yankee Navy* (New York: Life Publishing Company, 1898), 42.

<sup>1143</sup> John Brown, *American Naval Heroes 1775-1812-1861-1898* (Boston: Brown and Company, 1899), 183-206.

<sup>1144</sup> A.D. Hall, *Uncle Sam's Ships. Being a History of the American Navy* (New York: Street & Smith, 1899), 58.

the Americans.”<sup>1145</sup> As for the treaty, he contended that it had “more favorable terms” than other countries had ever received, but lamented that it nevertheless required a humiliating “blackmail tribute.”<sup>1146</sup>

As illustrated above, relatively few post-Civil War authors praised Eaton and/or the coup attempt. Among those that did, some criticized the treaty while others approved of it. An 1869 book written by Amos Perry (consul to Tunis from 1862 to 1867) lionized Eaton’s capture of Derne as “one of the brightest pages in our nation’s history” and accused “jealous” naval officers of pressuring Lear to make a treaty.<sup>1147</sup> Benson Lossing’s *The Story of the United States Navy for Boys* (1881) argued that the coup attempt would have worked: Eaton and Hamet “were marching on the capital with a promise of full success” when news of Lear's treaty reached them.<sup>1148</sup> Oddly, Lossing refrained from criticizing the treaty and omitted the \$60,000 ransom cost. James Schouler’s *History of the United States of America under the Constitution* (1882) contained a lengthy discussion of Eaton and the coup attempt, praising its “spice of romance” and the “gallant capture” of Derne. Although the treaty “was not...wholly gratifying to the American sense of honor,” it still contained the best terms made by any “Christian nation within a hundred years.”<sup>1149</sup> A history book from 1883 extolled the coup attempt as “a brilliant example of heroism and wise policy.”<sup>1150</sup> Notably

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<sup>1145</sup> John Spears, *The History of Our Navy from its Origin to the End of the War with Spain, 1775-1898*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 378.

<sup>1146</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 339.

<sup>1147</sup> Amos Perry, *Carthage and Tunis, Past a Present: In Two Parts* (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1869), 550.

<sup>1148</sup> Benson Lossing, *The Story of the United States Navy for Boys* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), 87.

<sup>1149</sup> James Schouler, *History of the United States of America under the Constitution*, vol. 2 (Washington D.C.: William Morrison, 1882), 92-93.

<sup>1150</sup> C. Edward Lester, *Lester’s History of the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: P.F. Collier, 1883), 457.

missing from this account, though, is the controversy surrounding the \$60,000 ransom. Eugene Schuyler's *American Diplomacy and the Furtherance of Commerce* (1886) celebrated the coup as "the most romantic incident of the war" and believed that it might have succeeded had Lear not "hastily made a treaty by which we gained none of the principles at stake, and simply bought a peace."<sup>1151</sup> Henry Adams, writing in 1891, resembled pre-Civil War writers in waxing poetic about Eaton's accomplishments. He valorized Eaton as "a man of extraordinary energies and genius" with "the courage of Alexander the Great"<sup>1152</sup> Although Adams considered the payment of ransom money "astonishing," he nevertheless concluded that the Tripolitan War had "a triumphant end."<sup>1153</sup> He also suggested that youth used to learn about the coup attempt: "for at least half a century every boy in America listened to the story with the same delight with which he read the Arabian Nights."<sup>1154</sup> Richard Collum's *History of the United States Marine Corps* (1890) discussed both naval events and the coup attempt, taking pride in Americans "hoisting [their flag]...on a fortress of the Old World." Surprisingly, the book ignored the \$60,000 ransom.<sup>1155</sup> John McMaster, in *A History of the People of the United States* (1892), joined Perry in blaming envious American officials for sabotaging the coup attempt: "what could not be done by the arms of Jussuf Caramalli was done by the jealousy of Commodore

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<sup>1151</sup> Eugene Schuyler, *American Diplomacy and the Furtherance of Commerce* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 219-220.

<sup>1152</sup> Henry Adams, *History of the United States of America during the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 435, 432.

<sup>1153</sup> *Ibid.*, 435-436.

<sup>1154</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>1155</sup> Richard Collum, *History of the United States Marine Corps* (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1890), 50.

Rogers and the hot haste of Tobias Lear.” The book condemned the treaty as being “most shameful to the United States.”<sup>1156</sup> In its entry for the Tripolitan War, J. Franklin Jameson’s *Dictionary of United States History* (1897) discussed naval affairs, but the “Derne Expedition” entry credited Eaton and Hamet for both the victory and a “highly favorable treaty.”<sup>1157</sup> Israel Clare’s *Library of Universal History* mentioned the coup “as properly belonging to the history of the Tripolitan War” and praised Eaton’s “energy and courage.”<sup>1158</sup> It offered no commentary regarding the treaty, though.

Surprisingly, nearly all of the books surveyed above neglected the Tripolitan War monument (figure 3). From 1808-1831, it resided in the Navy Yard (in Washington D.C.) before moving near the U.S. Capitol building. In 1860, it was transferred again, to its current home at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. The memorial was privately commissioned, built in Rome, and honors six naval officers who died in 1804 battles.<sup>1159</sup> As Janet Headley has discussed in “The Monument without a Public: The Case of the Tripolitan Monument,” it has had endured a history of public apathy. Its classical imagery confused spectators (who did not understand the references) and, during its residence outside the Capitol, the dense garden area made it difficult for tourists to find.<sup>1160</sup>

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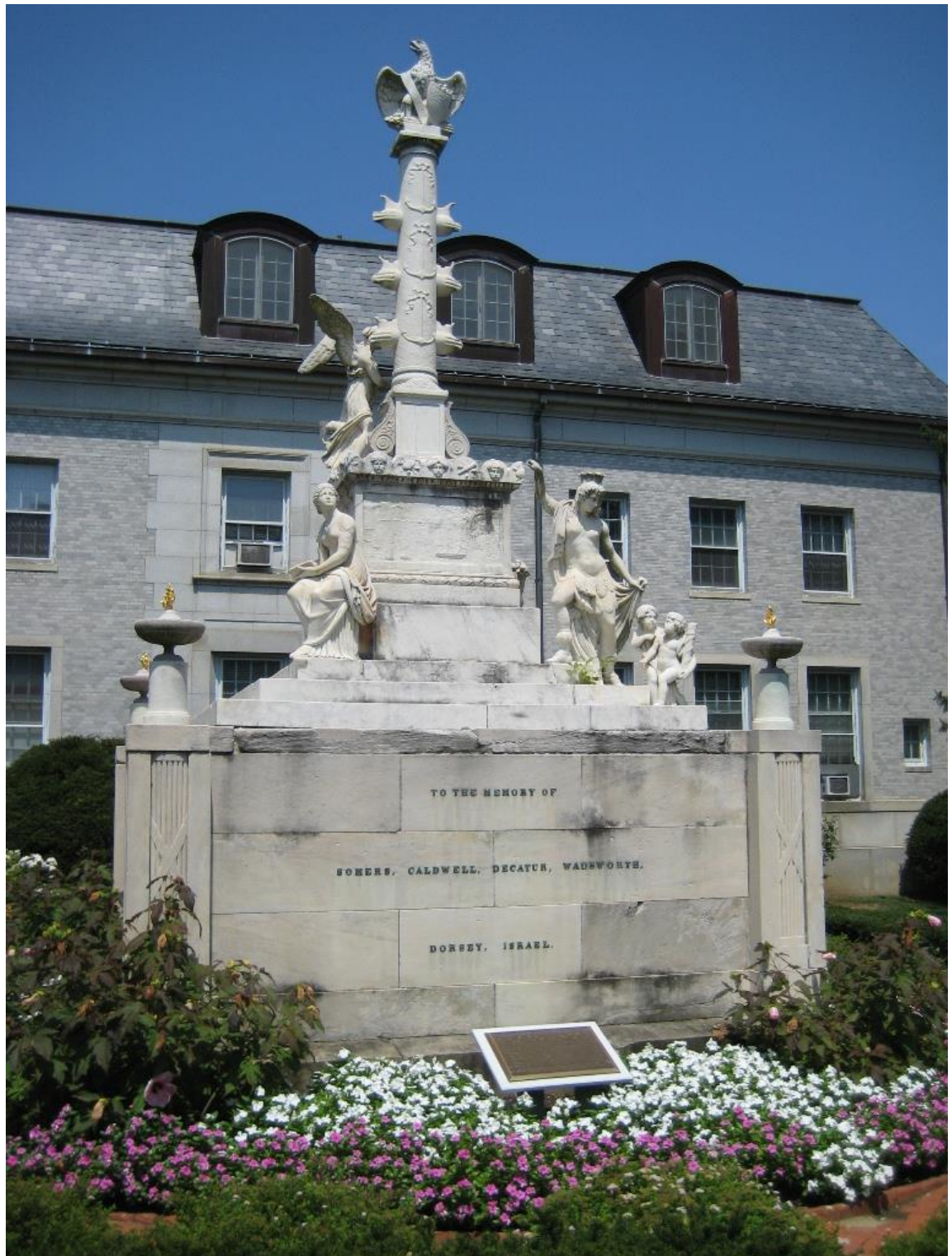
<sup>1156</sup> John McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War*, vol. 3 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 204, 207.

<sup>1157</sup> J. Franklin Jameson, *Dictionary of United States History, 1492-1898* (Boston: Puritan Publishing, 1897), 663, 196.

<sup>1158</sup> Israel Clare, *Library of Universal History*, vol. 12 (New York: Union Book Company, 1898), 99-100.

<sup>1159</sup> These officers are James Caldwell, Stephen Decatur, Thomas Dorsey, Joseph Israel, Richard Somers, and Henry Wadsworth.

<sup>1160</sup> Janet Headley, “The Monument without a Public: The Case of the Tripolitan Monument,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 4 (1994).



*Figure 3: The Tripolitan War Monument, photo taken by the author, summer 2011*

Due to a lack of fanfare, the monument faded away in popular memory and most authors of Tripolitan War accounts were probably unaware of it. An 1815 spelling book noted its location in Washington, D.C. and its honoring those who died in “a severe battle off Tripoli in 1805” (this battle actually occurred in 1804).<sup>1161</sup> Lossing’s 1881 naval history described the memorial as a “fine monument” and included a large picture of it.<sup>1162</sup> However, it erroneously gave its location as “the western front of the Capitol at Washington”—the monument had already moved to Annapolis. An 1899 history textbook contains two errors, claiming that the monument only honors Richard Somers and that it was located in Washington D.C.<sup>1163</sup> Soley’s 1879 naval history, published by the Naval Academy Press, also mentioned the monument and claimed that “not a day passes in which the young officers who are in training there, fail to look upon the memorial of their heroism and sacrifice.”<sup>1164</sup> That may have been true then, but what about today? I have visited the Naval Academy twice (most recently in July 2011) and was saddened to learn that the standard tour does not stop at the Tripolitan monument. Truly, it has become a forgotten memorial.

### **Schoolbooks and the Tripolitan War**

Nineteenth-century school children regularly learned about the Tripolitan War in history and grammar textbooks. Primary sources for this section primarily come from the University of Pittsburgh’s online database “19<sup>th</sup> Century Schoolbooks”

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<sup>1161</sup> *The United States’ Spelling Book, with Appropriate Reading Lessons*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Pittsburgh: Cramer, Spear and Eichbaum, 1815), 107.

<sup>1162</sup> Lossing, 84-85.

<sup>1163</sup> H.A. Guerber’s *The Story of the Great Republic* (New York: American Book Company, 1899), 67.

<sup>1164</sup> Soley, 82.

(<http://digital.library.pitt.edu/n/nietz/>) and Google Books. Schoolbooks generally presented a triumphalist interpretation that stressed the naval battles (especially Decatur's destruction of the *Philadelphia*). Further, post-Civil War textbooks not only largely discounted or omitted William Eaton's role, but most of them left out the \$60,000 ransom payment. Instead, authors presented the treaty as an unambiguous triumph, a validation of Jefferson's strategy of peace through strength.

An 1807 history book glorified the "courage and conduct" and "gallant services" of military and naval officers and celebrated Lear's peace treaty since it capitalized upon the bashaw's "fear of being dethroned by his brother."<sup>1165</sup> The author surely was a Democratic-Republican and sought to inculcate young minds against Federalist criticism of the treaty. *First Lessons in the History of the United States* (1823), written by "Mrs. C.M. Thayer," celebrated Decatur's "intrepidity and skill" and mentioned the victory at Derne, but excluded the treaty's controversy.<sup>1166</sup> Charles Goodrich's 1825 schoolbook recounted Decatur's destruction of the *Philadelphia* in two lengthy paragraphs (he clearly considered it valuable for young readers) and also praised Eaton and Hamet for braving "incredible toil and suffering" on their march to Derne. Goodrich seemed perplexed over Lear's decision to make the treaty since "he knew of the success of Eaton and Hamet."<sup>1167</sup> The book also erroneously stated that "Hamet visited the United States" in 1806—the author evidently

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<sup>1165</sup> John M'Culloch, *A Concise History of the United States, from the Discovery of America till 1807*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: John M'Culloch, 1807), 209-210. The preface stated the publisher's hope that the book would be "useful" for schools; 3.

<sup>1166</sup> C.M. Thayer, *First Lessons in the History of the United States: Compiled for the Use of the Junior Classes in Joseph Hoxie's Academy* (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1823), 113.

<sup>1167</sup> Charles Goodrich's *A History of the United States of America, on a Plan Adapted to the Capacity of Youth, and Designed to Aid the Memory by Systematick Arrangement and Interesting Associations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Collins & Co., 1835), 230-231.

confused Hamet with Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli. A subsequent schoolbook written by Goodrich contained an oddly sadistic section about the destruction of the *Philadelphia*: “Oh! what a scene soon took place! What carnage was there! In a few minutes, fifty Tripolitans were reeking in blood on the deck. Not one escaped. The vessel was set on fire, and the flames rose.”<sup>1168</sup> This sensationalism of violence is atypical of Tripolitan War accounts. Further, the book’s claim that no Tripolitans escaped is untrue—letters by naval officers reported that some jumped into the water (and presumably swam away).<sup>1169</sup>

Salma Hale’s *History of the United States* (1835) rhapsodized about the navy’s performance in the Tripolitan War, contending that it “evinc[ed] a love of fame and a devotion to country unsurpassed in Grecian or Roman story.” It also praised Eaton’s “bold and romantic” coup attempt and claimed that the public despised the treaty. Hale’s book has an unresolved tension: it simultaneously promotes American exceptionalism (the United States had already transcended the military glories of the ancient world), while portraying the Tripolitan War as somewhat of a failure since the “brilliant” coup attempt was forsaken.<sup>1170</sup> John Frost’s *History of the United States for the Use of Schools and Academies* (1836) is notable for downplaying the importance of naval battles. Instead, it argued that the Tripolitan War “would have probably effected little” without the coup attempt. Frost despised the treaty, which both ended the conflict “in a most unromantic style” and generated

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<sup>1168</sup> Charles Goodrich, *The Child’s History of the United States* (Boston: Carter, Hendee, and Babcock, 1831), 117.

<sup>1169</sup> Edward Preble to John Gavino, 18 February 1804, *Naval Documents* III: 422; Ralph Izard to Mrs. Ralph Izard, Sr., 20 February 1804, *Naval Documents* III: 416-417.

<sup>1170</sup> Salma Hale, *History of the United States, from their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain in 1815* (Philadelphia: Uriah Hunt, 1835), 243-244.



public uproar.<sup>1171</sup> An 1839 textbook argued that the Tripolitan War’s “brilliant exploits...added great lustre to the military character of the nation,” but criticized Lear for making a treaty that stifled the promising coup attempt. It offered a strikingly pro-Eaton narrative, as the footnotes contained ten questions about the coup attempt. One of them sought to make children angry at Lear: “How did Eaton feel to be thus stopped when he had so fair a prospect of placing Hamet on the throne, and having the American prisoners released without ransom? A. No one can describe his grief and indignation.”<sup>1172</sup> Benson Lossing’s *A Pictorial History of the United States, for Schools and Families* (1854) emphasized naval battles, contained portraits of Bainbridge and Decatur, and omitted the details of the treaty. It credited the coup attempt for “terrif[ying]” the bashaw and, like Goodrich’s book, falsely claimed that Hamet visited the United States.<sup>1173</sup> G.P. Quackenbos’s *Illustrated School History of the United States* (1857) mostly recounted naval events and only briefly mentioned Eaton’s forces.<sup>1174</sup> *A Child’s History of the United States* (1858) spent seven pages recounting the naval feats of the Tripolitan War and sympathized with Eaton’s disappointment over the treaty—he “returned to America very much disgusted, and I don’t wonder at it”<sup>1175</sup>

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<sup>1171</sup> John Frost, *History of the United States for the Use of Schools and Academies* (Philadelphia: Edward C. Biddle, 1836), 364-365.

<sup>1172</sup> J. Olney, *A History of the United States, on a New Plan; Adapted to the Capacity of Youth* (New-Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1839), 198-199.

<sup>1173</sup> Benson Lossing, *A Pictorial History of the United States, for Schools and Families* (New York: F.J. Huntington, 1854), 254-255.

<sup>1174</sup> G.P. Quackenbos, *Illustrated School History of the United States and the Adjacent Parts of America, from the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857), 330-331.

<sup>1175</sup> John Bonner, *A Child’s History of the United States*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1858), 130-136, 145.

As with the general and naval histories, textbook authors' treatment of the Tripolitan War began to change around the time of the Civil War. Schoolbooks heaped praise upon naval officers and generally excluded the controversy surrounding the treaty (especially the \$60,000 ransom cost). In doing so, these authors recast the Tripolitan War as a triumphant victory, a conflict which exemplified the pinnacle of statecraft and valor.

An 1870 schoolbook credited both the navy and Eaton for pressuring the bashaw into peace, but ignored the controversy surrounding the treaty.<sup>1176</sup> Two other history textbooks from the early 1870s ignored Eaton, the coup attempt, and the treaty's controversy, instead arguing (incorrectly) that the navy bombarded Tripoli until the bashaw capitulated.<sup>1177</sup> David Scott's *A School History of the United States* (1874) discussed both naval affairs and Eaton's efforts, but left out the treaty controversy and grossly underestimated the size of the coup attempt. It claimed that the expedition consisted of "only 70 seamen and a small body of Egyptian soldiers."<sup>1178</sup> *A Grammar School History* (1876) sympathized with Eaton, declaring that Lear's treaty ended his excursion "in the midst of his successes."<sup>1179</sup> An 1879 history textbook for Catholic schools left out the coup attempt and the treaty controversy, instead crediting the navy for bombarding the bashaw into submission.<sup>1180</sup> The coauthored *New School History of the United States* (1880) offered a corrective to works that

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<sup>1176</sup> L.J. Campbell, *A Concise School History of the United States Based on Seavey's Goodrich's History* (New York: Taintor Brothers, Merrill & Co., 1870), 120.

<sup>1177</sup> Joel Steele, *A Brief History of the United States for Schools* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1871), 157; William Swinton's *First Lessons in Our Country's History* (New York: Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor, & Company, 1872), 142-143.

<sup>1178</sup> David Scott, *A School History of the United States, from the Discovery of America to the Year 1870* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 242.

<sup>1179</sup> John Anderson, *A Grammar School History of the United States* (New York: Clark & Maynard, 1876), 110.

<sup>1180</sup> *Sadlier's Excelsior Studies in the History of the United States for Schools* (New York: William Sadlier, 1879), 257.

overemphasized naval aspects, stressing that naval battles alone did not persuade the bashaw to make peace. It discussed the coup attempt and the \$60,000 ransom payment, but erroneously claimed that Hamet visited the United States and that Congress “refused to grant him anything”—in reality, Congress gave him \$2,400.<sup>1181</sup> An 1885 history textbook only mentioned naval battles and offered a triumphalist interpretation that distorted the reality of the conflict: “Tripoli was so badly punished that the Bashaw was only too glad to sue for peace.”<sup>1182</sup> Edward Eggleston’s *A History of the United States and its People* (1888) likewise omitted Eaton and the coup attempt, instead recasting the Tripolitan War as “the birth of the American navy.” It proclaimed that American seamen “performed acts of daring before Tripoli which have never been forgotten, and which yet serve for an example to their successors” and contended that “four years of blockade and war” wore down the “obstinate” bashaw.<sup>1183</sup> An 1888 history book briefly mentioned the coup attempt (not Eaton, though) and offered a patriotic interpretation by omitting the ransom payment and declaring that other countries “followed the American example” in relations with the Barbary States.<sup>1184</sup> An 1893 book intended for Catholic schools mentioned the Pope Pius VII quote and coup attempt, although it neglected Eaton. It also contained a misleading summary of the treaty: the bashaw “was glad to make peace without being paid for it.”<sup>1185</sup> *Lee’s Advanced School*

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<sup>1181</sup> J.S. Blackburn and W.N. McDonald, *New School History of the United States of America from the Earliest Discoveries to the Present Time* (Baltimore: WM. J. C. Dulany & Co., 1880), 285-286.

<sup>1182</sup> T.F. Donnelly, *A Primary History of the United States for Intermediate Classes* (New York: American Book Company, 1885), 127.

<sup>1183</sup> Edward Eggleston, *A History of the United States and its People: For the Use of Schools* (New York: American Book Company, 1888), 228-229.

<sup>1184</sup> Alexander Johnston, *A History of the United States for Schools* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1888), 171.

<sup>1185</sup> *School History of the United States for the Use of High Schools and Colleges and the Higher Classes in Parochial Schools*, revised edition (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1893), 172.

*History of the United States* (1896) made Decatur the hero of the Tripolitan War (it included a small portrait of him) and excluded Eaton's expedition and the ransom payment.<sup>1186</sup> H.A. Guerber's *The Story of the Great Republic* (1899) painted a grossly distorted picture of the Tripolitan War's end, claiming that the bashaw ran out of ammunition and that he capitulated because of the *Intrepid* explosion and "some trouble in the city"<sup>1187</sup> Another 1899 book ignored Eaton and the coup attempt, portraying the treaty as a triumph that increased Europe's respect for the United States.<sup>1188</sup>

Most post-Civil War authors recast the Tripolitan War as an unvarnished triumph for the United States, one that proved America's exceptionalism. By ignoring the ransom payment and the controversy surrounding the treaty, school textbooks indoctrinated students with patriotism instead of challenging them to think critically about the conflict's ambiguous conclusion. Further, many of these textbooks downplayed or entirely ignored William Eaton's contribution to the Tripolitan War. In doing so, authors recast it as a naval affair that offered perspective and inspiration for the modern U.S. Navy. These schoolbooks misleadingly suggested that the Tripolitan War united the country against the detested Tripolitans.

### **The Mellimelli Mission**

Many nineteenth-century histories of the United States and naval histories mentioned Sidi Soliman Mellimelli's visit. Like contemporaneous newspaper articles (discussed in

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<sup>1186</sup> Susan Lee, *Lee's Advanced School History of the United States* (Richmond: B.F. Johnson, 1896), 262.

<sup>1187</sup> Guerber, 67.

<sup>1188</sup> William Mowry and Arthur Moray, *A History of the United States for Schools* (New York: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1899), 219.

chapter 6), they rarely used his name and usually referred to him as a diplomat from Tunis. Notably, very few mentioned that the federal government paid for the trip. By ignoring the controversy that surrounded the mission, authors recast it as a triumph in which Jefferson rebuffed tribute demands and the U.S. Navy intimidated the Bey of Tunis. All of these accounts are therefore very inaccurate. Notably, none of them mention the \$10,000 payment to Tunis, which attests to the successful cover-up by Jefferson, Madison, and Lear. Also, none of the schoolbooks cited above mention the Mellimelli mission, suggesting that authors deemed it unimportant to the national narrative.

Books that mentioned Mellimelli's trip used it in a triumphalist manner by stressing the government's refusal to accede to the diplomat's tribute demands. Goldsborough's *The United States Naval Chronicle* (1824) contained several details about negotiations between the Tunisian Ambassador and the Jefferson Administration, commended the president for "very properly refus[ing]" tribute demands, and alleged that Mellimelli's reports of the United States' "national strength" helped persuade the Bey to drop his demands. It offered a strikingly pro-Jefferson narrative, viewing the trip as a validation of the president's diplomatic skills.<sup>1189</sup> Cooper's 1839 naval history mentioned the government's "explicit denial" of Mellimelli's tribute request, celebrated Rodgers for "negotiating under the muzzles of his guns," and claimed that the Bey was intimidated "by the attacks on Tripoli."<sup>1190</sup> Hildreth's 1856 book claimed that Barron's (it was really Rodgers's) "appearance with his whole fleet...soon brought the Bey to terms." To his credit, though, Hildreth acknowledged that the U.S. government covered the expenses of Mellimelli's s visit. The book also

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<sup>1189</sup> Goldsborough, 286-287.

<sup>1190</sup> Cooper, 63-64.

portrayed the diplomat as high-maintenance remarking that he demanded “the best house in Washington.”<sup>1191</sup> Spencer’s *History of the United States* (1858), mentioned that the Bey of Tunis sent an ambassador to Washington D.C. and that his request for tribute “was explicitly refused.”<sup>1192</sup> Shaffner’s *History of the United States* (1864) praised the government for “emphatically and peremptorily reject[ing] thenceforward and for ever” the demand for tribute by the “Tunisian envoy.” It also claimed that the Bey was scared by the United States’ attacks on Tripoli.<sup>1193</sup> Schouler’s 1882 book excluded details about Mellimelli’s mission, but noted his attendance at Jefferson’s New Year’s reception. He “conversed in Italian” and “wore his silk slippers, turban, and a robe which displayed a scarlet jacket beneath, embroidered with buttons of precious stones.”<sup>1194</sup> Maclay’s 1895 book claimed that Captain Rodgers “literally dictated the terms of peace under the muzzles of his cannon” and that European countries marveled that the United States obtained such ““honorable terms”” from Tunis.<sup>1195</sup> It also briefly stated that “a Tunisian minister” visited the United States, but provided no details.

Works that mentioned tensions with Tunis but omitted the Mellimelli mission featured a unique triumphalist narrative. They credited the naval fleet for achieving an honorable victory over Tunis through overawing the Bey. Books increasingly neglected Mellimelli’s visit in the 1890s, revealing that accounts of U.S.-Tunis relations became increasingly inaccurate over time. *The American Navy* (1859) claimed that the Bey simply

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<sup>1191</sup> Hildreth, 562, 586.

<sup>1192</sup> Spencer, 59-60.

<sup>1193</sup> Shaffner, 239.

<sup>1194</sup> Schouler, 83.

<sup>1195</sup> Maclay, 301-302.

“yielded” to Commodore Rodgers’s “imposing force.”<sup>1196</sup> Masson’s 1898 naval history grossly distorted actual events by saying that the mere presence of Commodore Rodgers’s squadron “compelled the Bey to sue for peace.”<sup>1197</sup>

*The Nation’s Navy* (1898) likewise misled readers by stating that “the guns of the American fleet” forced peace upon Tunis.<sup>1198</sup> Spears’s 1899 naval history likewise claimed that “terms of peace were dictated under the muzzles” of American guns, an accomplishment that European countries considered “a matter of wonder.”<sup>1199</sup> These late 1890s authors radically reinterpreted U.S.-Tunisian relations in order to portray the United States as having a longstanding tradition of successful gunboat diplomacy. Such portrayals could serve to encourage readers to support both the ongoing construction of a powerful navy and its use abroad in foreign conflicts.

By default, all of these nineteenth-century accounts of U.S.-Tunis relations were inaccurate since peace occurred only through the \$10,000 payment. The most patriotic and triumphalist accounts were the least accurate ones, since they suggested (falsely) that the Bey succumbed to a raw display of naval force. Authors recast the Mellimelli mission as a victory for the United States by ignoring the political firestorm that it created. Accounts of U.S.-Tunis relations portrayed them as an ideal template for foreign conflicts: achieving peace through formidable strength.

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<sup>1196</sup> Peterson, 31.

<sup>1197</sup> Masson, 46.

<sup>1198</sup> Morris, 41.

<sup>1199</sup> Spears, 378-379.

## The 1815 Conflicts

The 1815 conflicts against Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli received less attention from nineteenth-century authors than did the Tripolitan War even though they resulted in an undisputed triumph over the Barbary pirates. Perhaps authors found the Algerine War less interesting because it ended so quickly and only entailed two naval battles. Authors agreed that Decatur achieved outstanding terms for the United States in his treaty with Algiers—it did not generate conflicting interpretations or heated debate. Also, nearly all authors ignored Madison’s role in sending a formidable fleet to the Mediterranean. Instead, they anointed Decatur the chief hero.

Prior to the Civil War, histories that mentioned the 1815 conflicts mostly emphasized that they resulted in permanent peace with North Africa, with a few authors lamenting that the Algerine War ended too quickly for the U.S. Navy to win many battles. *The Naval Temple* (1816) devoted a chapter to the Algerine War and praised Decatur for making a “highly honourable and advantageous” treaty. It regretted, though, that “few, perhaps no opportunities occurred for a display of the hardy prowess of our sailors,” but rejoiced that the United States “humbl[ed] and chastis[ed] a race of lawless pirates.”<sup>1200</sup> Niles’s *The Life of Oliver Hazard Perry* (1820) considered the 1815 conflicts less exciting than the Tripolitan War, stating that they lacked any “splendid or desperate achievements” and provided “no opportunities for the display of the consummate skill and undaunted bravery of our seamen.”<sup>1201</sup> Still, he praised the U.S. Navy for making “a prompt and satisfactory adjustment of all differences” with the Barbary States. *The Life and Character of Stephen*

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<sup>1200</sup> *The Naval Temple* (Boston: Barber Badger, 1816), 219, 223. Horace Kimball’s *American Naval Battles* (Boston: J.J. Smith, Jr., 1831) plagiarized this statement; 262.

<sup>1201</sup> Niles, 268.



*Decatur* (1821) lavished more praise upon Decatur than did the Perry biography, but similarly praised the treaty with Algiers. Its author, S. Putnam Waldo, deemed it “very important” because the United States gained “privileges and immunities never before granted by a Barbary State to any Christian power.”<sup>1202</sup> Holmes’s *The Annals of America* (1829) applauded Decatur’s diplomacy (he made “an honourable peace” with Algiers), but offered a less effusive interpretation. The book simply cited Madison’s Seventh Annual Message, in which he praised the U.S. Navy for gaining “a reasonable prospect of future security” for American commerce.<sup>1203</sup> *The Beauties of American History* (1844) and *The History and Topography of the United States* (1854) also relied upon Madison’s quotation in evaluating the war.<sup>1204</sup> Allen’s 1832 *An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary* contended that the Algerine War had international ramifications—the treaty “shamed the great powers of Europe, who had long been tributary to a band of corsairs.”<sup>1205</sup> Barber’s *United States Book of Interesting Events* (1834) considered the Algiers treaty “highly honourable and advantageous,” while Greenhow’s *The History and Present Condition of Tripoli* (1835) deemed it “highly favorable to the United States.”<sup>1206</sup> Harris’s 1837 biography of Bainbridge praised the U.S. Navy for ensuring a lasting peace with North Africa, observing that the United States currently enjoyed “friendly relations” with them.<sup>1207</sup> *The American Naval Biography* (1844) plagiarized Waldo’s 1821 book in praising the Algerine treaty for giving

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<sup>1202</sup> Waldo, 251.

<sup>1203</sup> Holmes, 475.

<sup>1204</sup> Blake, 252; Hinton, 348. Hinton copied an entire paragraph from Blake without citing him.

<sup>1205</sup> Allen, 338.

<sup>1206</sup> Barber, 200; Greenhow, 39.

<sup>1207</sup> Harris, 200.

the United States “immunities and privileges never before obtained by a Christian power from any Barbary State.”<sup>1208</sup> An 1854 *History of the United States of America* acclaimed Decatur for “making every arrangement for the security of American commerce in the Mediterranean, and satisfying the demands of the honor and interest of his country.”<sup>1209</sup> Uniquely, Tucker’s 1857 *History of the United States* credited the Madison Administration for dealing forcefully with Algiers—the government sent “a naval force which that power would not be able to resist.” Also unusually, the book mentioned the loss of the *Epervier*, observing that it was “keenly felt” and tempered “patriotic pride” in Decatur’s accomplishments.<sup>1210</sup> Spencer’s 1858 American history book praised the Mediterranean fleet for upholding “the honor and interest of the United States,” while Peterson’s 1859 naval history heralded Decatur for being “the first man to win for any civilized nation exemption from tribute to the Barbary Powers.”<sup>1211</sup> Clearly, a consensus existed that the 1815 conflicts, although brief, were significant for permanently resolving America’s longstanding problems with North Africa.

However, several pre-Civil War books on U.S. naval history offered little or no interpretation of the Algerine War. Surprisingly, even though the *Naval Monument* (discussed in chapter 7) included a picture of Bainbridge’s squadron returning from the Mediterranean, it overwhelmingly focused on the War of 1812’s naval battles against Britain. It spent but two sentences on the Algerine War, saying that it had an “honorable termination”

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<sup>1208</sup> Frost, 290.

<sup>1209</sup> Watson, 789.

<sup>1210</sup> Tucker, *The History of the United States, from their Colonization to the End of the Twenty-Sixth Congress, in 1841*, vol. III (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.), 151, 154.

<sup>1211</sup> Spencer, 298; Peterson, 286.

and that “we have room to insert only the following documents relative to it.”<sup>1212</sup> Similarly, Hildreth’s multi-volume *History of the United States of America* (1856) contained just one paragraph about the conflict.<sup>1213</sup> It summarized Decatur’s actions without offering any commentary on their significance. Several works entirely omitted the Algerine War, including Cooper’s 1839 two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States of America*.<sup>1214</sup> *Daring Deeds of American Heroes* contained dozens of chapters about various naval and military exploits, but ignored the Algerine War.<sup>1215</sup> *Thrilling Incidents of the Wars of the United States* had sections about the Revolutionary War, Quasi-War, Tripolitan War, War of 1812, and Mexican-American War, but nothing about the 1815 conflicts.<sup>1216</sup> Likewise, the two-volume *Battles of the United States, by Sea and Land* spanned events from the Revolutionary War to the Mexican-American War, but omitted the Algerine War.<sup>1217</sup> These works considered the Algerine War an unimportant sideshow with little, if any, relevance for present-day Americans.

Around the time of the Civil War, a change occurred in the historical memory of the 1815 conflicts—writers made greater claims for their significance than did antebellum authors. Denison’s *A Pictorial History of the Navy* (1862) included an entire chapter about the 1815 conflicts and offered a hefty dose of patriotism: “an American may well be proud

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<sup>1212</sup> Abel Bowen, *The Naval Monument* (Boston: George Clark, 1838), 297. It included various letters and the text of the U.S.-Algiers treaty; 297-315.

<sup>1213</sup> Hildreth, *The History of the United States of America*, vol. III, revised ed., (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), 577-578.

<sup>1214</sup> Cooper, *History of the Navy of the United States*, vol II. (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1839).

<sup>1215</sup> Brayman, *Daring Deeds of American Heroes* (Auburn: Derby & Miller, 1853).

<sup>1216</sup> Neff, *Thrilling Incidents of the Wars of the United States* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1848).

<sup>1217</sup> Henry Dawson, *Battles of the United States, by Sea and Land*, vol. II (New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company), 1858.

when he reflects, that it was reserved for this free republic to bestow upon these enemies of mankind the chastisement demanded by their crimes.”<sup>1218</sup> Shaffner similarly devoted extensive space to discussing the Algerine War in his 1864 *History of the United States* (even mentioning the *Epervier* loss) and praised Decatur for causing “the fall of a system of piratical depredations that had rendered the high seas in that quarter of the world insecure for several centuries, and which had been a disgrace to European civilisation” [sic].<sup>1219</sup> McCabe’s *Centennial History of the United States* (1874) lionized Decatur as well, averring that he “settled all the difficulties, and had so humbled the Barbary powers that they never again renewed their aggressions upon American commerce.”<sup>1220</sup> *The Story of the United States Navy for Boys* (1881) proclaimed the 1815 conflicts “one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of the American Navy” and asserted that America’s reputation among European countries became “greatly exalted.”<sup>1221</sup> Schouler’s *History of the United States under the Constitution* (1882) proudly noted that the government unleashed “the largest squadron that had ever sailed from the United States” in order to permanently crush Barbary piracy.<sup>1222</sup> *Lester’s History of the United States* (1883) celebrated Decatur’s “brief but brilliant cruise,” contending that it provided “immeasurable service to the interests of civilization” by defeating “barbaric outrage.”<sup>1223</sup> *A History of the People of the United States* (1895) praised Decatur for making the American flag “respected” by both the Barbary States

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<sup>1218</sup> Denison, 266. The chapter spans from pages 256 to 269.

<sup>1219</sup> Shaffner, vol. II, 415. The chapter spans from 412-416.

<sup>1220</sup> McCabe, 644.

<sup>1221</sup> Lossing, *The Story of the United States Navy for Boys*, 279, 282.

<sup>1222</sup> Schouler, 455-456.

<sup>1223</sup> Lester, *Lester’s History of the United States*, vol. II (New York: P.F. Collier, 1883), 3.

and Europe and wished that his accomplishments were better remembered—the public “soon forgot the significance of his victories.”<sup>1224</sup> Maclay’s two-volume *A History of the United States Navy* contained twenty pages about the Algerine War but oddly refrained from making any grand statements about the conflict (it instead emphasized the Tripolitan War’s importance).<sup>1225</sup> Similarly, Spears’s multi-volume history of the U.S. Navy featured an entire chapter on the 1815 conflicts but lacked any commentary about their significance—it simply observed that “from that time to this there has been no war between the United States and the Barbary pirates.”<sup>1226</sup> Still, these two works clearly suggested that the public needed to understand the details. More positively, Morris’s *The Nation’s Navy* (1898) argued that the United States did more “than any other nation” to end Barbary piracy, while Clare’s 1898 *Library of Universal History* declared that Decatur ended that “system of piratical depredations... which had been a disgrace to European civilization.”<sup>1227</sup> Likewise, Brown’s *American Naval Heroes* (1899) extolled the treaty with Algiers for containing “terms never obtained from any of the Barbary powers by any of the great nations of Europe.”<sup>1228</sup> Altogether, post-Civil War authors believed that the 1815 conflicts accomplished more than

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<sup>1224</sup> McMaster, *A History of the People of the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War*, vol. IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 356.

<sup>1225</sup> Edgar Maclay, *A History of the United States Navy from 1775 to 1894*, vol. II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894). The chapter spans from pages 85 to 104. Regarding the Tripolitan War, Maclay argued that the United States “by means of its navy, threw off the ignoble yoke of the piratical States of Barbary, and frustrated the intrigues of Great Britain against the development of our commerce in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic.” Maclay, *Ibid.*, vol. I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), 302.

<sup>1226</sup> Spears, *The History of Our Navy from its Origin to the End of the War with Spain, 1775-1898*, vol. III (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899, 358. The chapter spans from pages 339-358.

<sup>1227</sup> Morris, 42; Clare, 169.

<sup>1228</sup> Brown, 227.

simply ending the United States' problems with Barbary piracy—they proved America's exceptionalism by resolving an issue that had plagued Europe for centuries.

To be sure, not every post-Civil War history book extolled the Algerine War. Abbot's two-volume *Naval History of the United States* omitted it.<sup>1229</sup> Both Schuyler's *American Diplomacy and the Furtherance of Commerce* (1886) and Windsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America* (1888) provided few details. The former concluded that "the United States was the first to obtain from the Barbary powers the abolition of presents and the proper treatment of its prisoners of war," while the latter simply observed that since 1815 "there have been no serious difficulties with the Barbary powers."<sup>1230</sup> Similarly, *Uncle Sam's Ships* (1899) discussed the Algerine War in a short paragraph and remarked that "from that day to this nothing has been heard of the Barbary pirates" and *The Yankee Navy* (1898) remarked that Decatur "practically settled" problems with North Africa.<sup>1231</sup> Overall, though, post-Civil War treatments of the 1815 conflicts demonstrated more enthusiasm and made grander claims about their significance. Authors (especially those in the late-nineteenth century) surely found the 1815 conflicts useful in demonstrating the importance of having a strong navy to protect commerce, to ensure national defense, and to impress Europe.

### **Presidential Speeches & the Barbary Conflicts**

Following the Madison Administration, presidents rarely mentioned North African affairs in official speeches. The Barbary pirates ceased to be threats following the 1815

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<sup>1229</sup> Abbot, *The Naval History of the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1890, 1896).

<sup>1230</sup> Schuyler, *American Diplomacy and the Furtherance of Commerce* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 232; Justin Winsor, ed., *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. VII, part II (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company: 1888), 406.

<sup>1231</sup> Hall, 59; Masson, 97.

conflicts and presidents apparently did not see much purpose in referencing them. This neglect sharply contrasted the schoolbooks and general and naval histories that portrayed the Tripolitan War as a seminal moment in naval history.<sup>1232</sup>

In the 1820s and 1830s, presidents John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson occasionally mentioned (in State of the Union addresses) that peaceful relations existed between the United States and North Africa. Speaking in December 1825, Adams nevertheless advised against complacency and called for “the constant maintenance of a small squadron in the Mediterranean” in order to avoid “the humiliating alternative of paying tribute for the security of our commerce in that sea.” He thought that the Barbary pirates could revive their predatory behavior if the U.S. did not remain vigilant: “it were, indeed, a vain and dangerous illusion to believe that in the present or probable condition of human society a commerce so extensive and so rich as ours could exist and be pursued in safety without the continual support of a military marine.” Adams also addressed concerns that the navy presented a threat to the public’s freedom. In rhetoric redolent of Jefferson’s in the 1780s, he described the navy as “the only standing military force which can never be dangerous to our own liberties at home.” To Adams (the chief author of the Monroe Doctrine), a strong navy was essential to national security.<sup>1233</sup>

Andrew Jackson disagreed with Adams on many issues, but he concurred about the need for sufficient naval protection in the Mediterranean. In his First Annual Message, he noted that although U.S. relations with the Barbary States were “of the most favorable

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<sup>1232</sup> This section rests on research done through the University of California, Santa Barbara’s online database *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/>.

<sup>1233</sup> John Quincy Adams, First Annual Message, December 6, 1825, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29467>.

character,” the country needed to retain “an adequate force” in order to ensure “the continuance of this tranquility.”<sup>1234</sup> Jackson again referenced North African affairs in his December 1834 Annual Message, noting that he had withdrawn the United States’ consul from Algiers now that France had colonized that country. He also remarked upon the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.-Morocco treaty, praising its “just and liberal” qualities.<sup>1235</sup> Jackson’s final two Annual Messages briefly mentioned peace with the Barbary States.<sup>1236</sup> Twenty-nine years later, Abraham Lincoln became the last president to mention a peaceful state of relations with North Africa in an Annual Message.<sup>1237</sup>

On other occasions, presidents sometimes invoked the Barbary conflicts as perspective on or precedents for current issues. They celebrated the Tripolitan War as evidence of America’s longstanding commitment to free trade. Franklin Pierce, in his December 1855 Annual Message, condemned Denmark for demanding a toll on American ships trading in the Baltic Sea and drew a parallel to the early nineteenth-century conflicts with North Africa. He praised government leaders for successfully using force against the Barbary pirates in order to liberate “the commerce of the world” and guarantee “the freedom of the seas.” As Pierce saw it, Denmark was emulating the Barbary States by infringing upon the United States’ “natural right” of free trade. He considered the Barbary conflicts very

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<sup>1234</sup> Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message, December 8, 1829, Ibid., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29471>.

<sup>1235</sup> Andrew Jackson, Sixth Annual Message, December 1, 1834, Ibid., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29476>.

<sup>1236</sup> Andrew Jackson Seventh Annual Message, December 7, 1835, Ibid., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29477>; Andrew Jackson, Eighth Annual Message, December 5, 1836, Ibid., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29478>.

<sup>1237</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Fourth Annual Message, December 6, 1864, Ibid., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29505>.



relevant to modern affairs and interpreted them in a triumphalist manner by stressing the United States' role in ending North African piracy.<sup>1238</sup>

Franklin Roosevelt invoked the Tripolitan War in a May 1941 radio address that discussed the importance of having a strong navy to prevent the Axis Powers from conquering the world. The president argued that “all freedom...depends on freedom of the seas” and praised the U.S. Navy for making “commerce safe from the depredations of the Barbary pirates” and for defending “the right of all Nations to use the highways of world trade.”<sup>1239</sup> Roosevelt wanted the public to take pride in American naval triumphs and recognize that, without a strong navy to oppose Nazi Germany, Hitler could easily conquer areas in the western hemisphere. Also, at an April 1945 Q&A session, FDR responded to a reporter's question about precedents for arming merchant ships by discussing such occurrences in the Quasi-War, the War of 1812, and the Barbary conflicts.<sup>1240</sup>

Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, considered the Barbary conflicts as especially pertinent to his vision for the Korean War. In an April 1951 speech, he lionized Jefferson for opposing North African “robbery and human slavery.” Truman vaunted that the U.S. Navy had “won the praise and gratitude of the world,” cited Pope Pius VII's grateful remarks (see chapter 4), and concluded that the conflicts illustrated the fundamental truth that “there are times when our country has to fight for law and order.” Truman portrayed the Soviets as modern-day Barbary pirates, determined to “conquer the civilized world” and destroy

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<sup>1238</sup> Franklin Pierce, Third Annual Message, December 31, 1855, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29496>.

<sup>1239</sup> Franklin Roosevelt, Radio Address Announcing an Unlimited National Emergency, May 27, 1941, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16120>.

<sup>1240</sup> Franklin Roosevelt, Excerpts from the Press Conference, September 23, 1941, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16013>.

“democratic nations.” Truman admonished Americans to “meet this threat just as firmly as Jefferson met the threat of the Barbary pirates.”<sup>1241</sup> For Truman, such vigilance entailed supporting intervention in Korea as necessary to prevent the Soviet Union from conquering Japan, the Middle East, Europe, South America, or the United States. Truman’s analogy is strained, however, since the Tripolitan War was primarily a naval affair against a relatively weak opponent. Still, Truman clearly held a triumphalist view of the Barbary conflicts and found inspiration in them for his vigorous anticommunism.

1987 marked the bicentennial of the U.S.-Morocco treaty, an occasion that both governments celebrated. In an April speech, Ronald Reagan acclaimed it as “the longest unbroken friendship treaty of the United States” (subsequent generations of commentators did not consider the 1803 troubles, discussed in chapter 3, as having ruptured the treaty) and praised both nations’ “deep commit[ment] to world peace and the principles of democracy, liberty, and justice.”<sup>1242</sup> The bicentennial also drew notice from the U.S. Postal Service, which issued a special stamp (figure 4).<sup>1243</sup> Moreover, King Hassan II of Morocco even offered to fund a monument (in Washington D.C.) to commemorate the treaty.<sup>1244</sup>



**Figure 4: 1987 Stamp;**  
*photo by the author*

President Reagan endorsed the idea and Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-NY) introduced a bill in

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<sup>1241</sup> Harry Truman, Address at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner, April 14, 1951, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14062>.

<sup>1242</sup> Ronald Reagan, Statement on the Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the Morocco-United States Treaty of Peace and Friendship, April 24, 1987, *Ibid.*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34173>.

<sup>1243</sup> John Dunn, “Stamps; Bicentennial for an International Treaty,” *The New York Times*, July 19, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/19/style/stamps-bicentennial-for-an-international-treaty.html>.

<sup>1244</sup> Wayne King and Warren Weaver Jr., “BRIEFING; From Morocco with Love,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1986, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/28/us/briefing-from-morocco-with-love.html>.

February 1986 to find suitable land for it. Although ninety-seven congressmen and congresswoman endorsed the bill and it received a hearing by the Task Force on Libraries and Memorials, its momentum stalled and it died in committee.<sup>1245</sup> The project received little public support and became a target of ridicule. The *Chicago Tribune* remarked that Washington D.C. was already “so choked with statuary” and satirically suggested that the statue depict either Humphrey Bogart’s iconic character in “Casablanca” or Houston socialite Joanne Herring (“who has made herself a diplomatic fixture...as Morocco’s honorary consul to Houston”).<sup>1246</sup> Part of the problem lay in the timing of the idea: Congress had received a plethora of various monument proposals that exceeded the amount of available land.<sup>1247</sup>

### **Creating the *Naval Documents* volumes**

Truly, the most prominent monument to the Barbary conflicts is the six-volume compendium of primary sources issued by the United States Government Printing Office from 1939 to 1944.<sup>1248</sup> The *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers* set contains a plethora of primary sources (such as correspondence, diary and log book entries, government records, and images) spanning from 1785 to 1807 (but mostly devoted to the Tripolitan War). In recent years, it has been digitized and made free to

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<sup>1245</sup> All Actions: H.R.2287—99<sup>th</sup> Congress (1985-1986), <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/2887/all-actions/>.

<sup>1246</sup> Michael Kilian, “From the President, Warmest Personal Regards: ‘Phhhht!’,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1986, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-06-13/news/8602120325\\_1\\_methanol-victor-borge-phonetic-punctuation](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-06-13/news/8602120325_1_methanol-victor-borge-phonetic-punctuation).

<sup>1247</sup> Sandra Evans, “A Monumental Task of Statuesque Proportions: Congress between Rock and Hard Place on Statues,” *The Washington Post*, March 18, 1986, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpwashingtonpost/docview/138732911/105DD357DAFC45D2PQ/3?accountid=14522>.

<sup>1248</sup> A seventh volume lists each officer and tars who served in the Tripolitan War and provides details about the U.S. naval vessels.

the public at <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000367640>. The impetus behind the creation of *Naval Documents* has not been discussed by scholars of the Barbary conflicts. The Dudley Knox Papers at the Library of Congress shed important light on it and reveal that President Franklin Roosevelt deemed public knowledge of America's conflicts with the Barbary States essential to understanding the United States' role in the world and to gaining important perspective on modern-day events. FDR wanted the United States to continue defending the freedom of seas.

Captain Dudley Knox was an inspired choice for heading the project. A graduate of the Naval Academy and veteran of the War of 1898 and World War I, Knox began working as an archivist in the Navy Department in the 1920s and wrote several books about naval history.<sup>1249</sup> Roosevelt and Knox initially envisioned a large project in which government archivists would collect and publish primary sources from all of the early republic's foreign conflicts: the Quasi-War, the Barbary Wars, the War of 1812, and the Mexican-American War. Roosevelt pressured Congress to authorize the project, promising that it would pay for itself through selling the volumes at cost to the public. Knox recalled that one "hard-boiled Budget official cross-examined me for half an hour," after which "he smiled and said he wanted the specific information because he had 'orders from the White House to give Dudley Knox all he asked for.'" <sup>1250</sup> The bulk of the documents came from East Coast libraries and personal holdings, with Roosevelt contributing material from his own collection.<sup>1251</sup> Once

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<sup>1249</sup> Biography of Dudley Wright Knox, Naval History and Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/bios/knox-dudley-w.html> (accessed August 25, 2015).

<sup>1250</sup> Dudley Knox, Association with Franklin D Roosevelt of Dudley W Knox, September 1948, page 2, box 24, "Miscellany" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>1251</sup> Ibid., page 3; Memorandum for Captain Dudley Knox (photocopy), May 24, 1939, box 24, "Addition" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

the United States entered World War II, however, Congress ceased funding the project—only the Quasi-War and Barbary Wars volumes were completed. Although the grand scope of the project was never realized, Knox still took pride in what was accomplished and appreciated Roosevelt’s patronage. Indeed, he remarked that FDR had “had few if any peers” regarding knowledge of naval history.<sup>1252</sup>

Why did Roosevelt care so much about naval affairs and the Barbary conflicts more specifically? He had both a professional and personal interest in naval history, having served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1920 and boasting an impressive collection of naval primary sources. The forward to volume I of *Naval Documents*, attributed to FDR, argues that the Barbary conflicts offered “permanently valuable lessons” to Americans: they illustrated a fierce and honorable commitment to “national independence and just rights of the United States, especially on the great neutral highways of the sea.”<sup>1253</sup> One senses that Roosevelt considered the Barbary Wars very relevant to contemporary debates over the extent to which the United States should get involved in world affairs. Yet Roosevelt did not actually write this forward—Knox did on behalf of the president. Knox sent FDR a draft for review in December 1938 and, a few days later, Roosevelt approved it and provided instructions for making it official (using the president’s facsimile signature and putting “The White House” on the bottom).<sup>1254</sup> Understandably, the president would have been occupied

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<sup>1252</sup> Knox, *Association with Franklin D Roosevelt*, page 7.

<sup>1253</sup> *Naval Documents*, I: iii.

<sup>1254</sup> Knox to Roosevelt, December 20, 1938 (photocopy), box 24, “Addition” folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Memorandum for the President from Stephen Early, December 21, 1938 (photocopy), box 24, “Addition” folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Roosevelt to Knox (photocopy), December 27, 1938, box 24, “Addition” folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Knox also wrote, on behalf of the president, the forward to the Quasi-War naval documents series.

with running the country at an especially trying time (the Great Depression and the eve of World War II).

Knox handled logistics and presented plans for Roosevelt's approval. In an April 1934 letter, he sent an "outline plan" for the projected volumes that included titles of various series and a list of archives to mine.<sup>1255</sup> For his part, Roosevelt's letters to Knox reveal a deep excitement for the endeavor and suggest that it served as a respite from the rigors of the presidency. For instance, the president referred to the overarching project as "peculiarly my own child" and "my pet child" in letters.<sup>1256</sup> Roosevelt also sensed that undertaking a project of this magnitude would only become more difficult with time. In a February 1935 letter to the Director of the Budget, he acknowledged that many documents were "in very fragile condition" or were "scattered through the country." He wanted to complete the project "before it is too late."<sup>1257</sup> FDR saw the government as an essential steward of the nation's past, uniquely able to preserve primary sources for current and future generations to study.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

A brief word is in order about a topic that does not permeate this manuscript: the role of religion in the Barbary conflicts, a topic handled quite differently by modern-day popular writers and academics. The former have often portrayed the Barbary pirates as religious

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<sup>1255</sup> Dudley Knox to Marvin McIntyre (photocopy), April 4, 1934, box 24, "Addition" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>1256</sup> Roosevelt to Knox (photocopy), February 5, 1934, box 24, "Addition" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Roosevelt to Colonel McIntyre (photocopy), February 12, 1935, box 24, "Addition" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

<sup>1257</sup> Roosevelt to the Director of the Budget (photocopy), February 22, 1935, box 24, "Addition" folder, Dudley Knox Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

zealots who shared the same goal as modern-day Muslim terrorists: the destruction of non-Islamic civilizations and peoples.<sup>1258</sup> Is this view correct? In one sense, the Barbary pirates were religiously motivated—they targeted ships from (Christian) Europe and the United States. However, the documentary record as a whole undercuts the religion-based argument. Its proponents base their case upon one source: a March 1786 letter written by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson which describes their meeting with the Tripolitan Ambassador to Great Britain (a man named Abdurrahman). The Americans wondered aloud why the Barbary Powers “make war upon Nations who had done them no injury.” The diplomat reportedly replied “that it was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Koran, that all Nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make Slaves of all they could take as Prisoners, and that every Mussulman who should be slain in the battle was sure to go to Paradise.”<sup>1259</sup> In this instance, the Tripolitan diplomat indeed provided an overtly religious rationale for Barbary piracy. Notably, though, his defense of it made no mention of killing enemies (a goal of modern Islamic terrorists). Moreover, Abdurrahman provided a non-religious justification of Barbary piracy in another meeting: “Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, were the Sovereigns of the Mediterranean, and that no nation could navigate that Sea, without a Treaty of Peace with them.”<sup>1260</sup> In this instance, the Tripolitan Ambassador stressed that because the Barbary States claimed jurisdiction over the Mediterranean Sea outsiders must pay to travel on it. According to

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<sup>1258</sup> Whipple, 5; Wheelan, 8, 40-41; London, 23-24; Leiner, 18, 51; Kilmeade and Yaeger, 14-15.

<sup>1259</sup> Adams and Jefferson to John Jay, March 28, 1786, *Emerging Nation*, III: 135-136.

<sup>1260</sup> Adams to Jay, February 17, 1786, *Ibid.*, III: 96.

Abdurrahman's own explanations, Barbary piracy derived from a combination of religious and secular motivations.

Other North African policymakers did not claim that their countries targeted American ships because of Islam. When Tripoli's ruler Yusuf Karamanli described his frustrations with the United States in letters to John Adams he did not mention religion. Instead, he complained about the tardiness of tribute or accused the United States of treating other Barbary States better than Tripoli.<sup>1261</sup> When Tunisian Ambassador Sidi Soliman Mellimelli visited the United States during Jefferson's second term and interacted with policymakers and the general public, he likewise did not list Islam as a cause for Barbary piracy. Instead, he claimed that the United States needed to better respect the sovereignty of Tunis. When Algiers waged war against the United States from 1812 to 1815, it was not because of religious differences. Instead, the government saw an opportunity to profit from capturing and selling hostages and the Dey even appealed to "the laws of nations" in a letter to Madison.<sup>1262</sup> These North African policymakers wanted their countries to be treated like reputable nations, not as renegades. They insisted that the United States emulate the example of European nations by paying tribute and they did not use Islam to justify aggressions against American ships.

What about the experiences of American hostages in North Africa—did they consider themselves the victims of jihad? More than four hundred Americans spent time in North Africa as captives, and many discussed their experiences in letters and narratives. They

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<sup>1261</sup> Yusuf Karamanli to Adams, April 15, 1799, *Naval Documents I*: 323; Bashaw of Tripoli to the President of the United States, May 25, 1800, printed in *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore, MD), December 29, 1801.

<sup>1262</sup> Dey of Algiers to Madison, April 24, 1816, printed in Appendix E of Shaler, 278.



overwhelmingly argued that Barbary piracy was primarily motivated by the prospect of economic gain. Richard O'Brien spent nearly two decades in North Africa as a captive and a diplomat; he declared that "money is the God of Algiers & Mahomet their prophet."<sup>1263</sup> James Cathcart, reflecting upon his captivity in Algiers, blamed European powers for fueling the greed of North African rulers. He accused European governments of "feed[ing] their avarice and forg[ing] pretexts for them to commit depredations upon every nation which endeavors to share the commerce of the Mediterranean."<sup>1264</sup> To be sure, another captive in Algiers in the mid-1790s, John Foss, believed that the Algerines "are taught by the Religion of Mahomet (if that can be called a Religion which leads men to the commission of such horrid and bloody deeds) to persecute its oppressors."<sup>1265</sup> But what about the treatment of the American hostages? The ordinary seamen had a rough time in North Africa and endured hard labor, exposure to disease, and paltry food rations. Some died from exposure to the plague. Still, American captives in North Africa received much better treatment than did prisoners of war held by the (Christian) British during the Revolutionary War.<sup>1266</sup> Moreover, naval officers captured during the Tripolitan War had a much better captivity experience. Some even wrote fondly about their time in Tripoli, remembering good food, comfortable lodging, and an exemption from working. The bashaw abided by European and American standards for the treatment of enemy officers—hardly the behavior of a religious terrorist. Unlike modern Muslim terrorists, the Barbary pirates' goal was not to kill people. Instead, they wanted to make money by ransoming captives to their home countries.

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<sup>1263</sup> O'Brien to Jefferson, June 8, 1786, *Naval Documents*, I: 3.

<sup>1264</sup> Cathcart, *The Captives*, ed. J.B. Newkirk, 57.

<sup>1265</sup> Foss, 73.

<sup>1266</sup> Nearly 11,000 Americans died on British prison ships during the Revolutionary War.

Additionally, most American officials in North Africa rejected the premise that the Barbary pirates were primarily motivated by religious hostility. William Shaler, a diplomat in Algiers in the mid-1810s, declared that he never observed “any thing in the character of these people that discovers extraordinary bigotry, fanaticism, or hatred of those who profess a different religion.”<sup>1267</sup> Commodore Edward Preble, who orchestrated several attacks in the Tripolitan War, considered North African rulers driven by greed. He feared that paying tribute “would stimulate the avarice of the other Barbary Powers and probably induce them to make War upon us.”<sup>1268</sup> William Eaton, the volatile diplomat and leader of a coup attempt in Tripoli, thought a little differently. He considered North African men as motivated by a combination of religious zeal and economic opportunity: “taught by revelation that war with the Christians will guarantee the salvation of their souls, and finding so great secular advantages in the observance of this *religious* duty their inducements to desperate fighting are very powerful.”<sup>1269</sup> In another letter from the same time period, though, Eaton provided non-religious reasons for Barbary piracy: “nothing can be more absurd than to expect by presents to satisfy the demands of these marauding and beggarly courts, who have no sense of gratitude, no sentiments of honour, no respect for justice, no restraint from fear, and whose avarice is as insatiable as death.”<sup>1270</sup> Overall, the majority of American policymakers in North Africa believed that Barbary piracy stemmed from economic, and not religious, motivations.

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<sup>1267</sup> Shaler, 55.

<sup>1268</sup> Preble to Smith, *Naval Documents* III: 338.

<sup>1269</sup> Eaton to Secretary of State, June 15, 1799, *Ibid.*, I: 327.

<sup>1270</sup> Eaton to William Smith, July 18, 1799, *Ibid.*, I: 329.

U.S. government officials recognized that Muslims and European Christians had a long history of warfare and emphasized to North African policymakers that they did not view Muslims with hostility. During treaty negotiations with Algiers in 1795, Cathcart emphasized to the Dey that “in our country we have no religious test, nor enmity against those of your religion; you may build Mosques, hoist your flag on the tower, chant the symbol of your faith in public, without any person interrupting you, Mussulmen may enjoy places of honor or trust under the government, or even become president of the United States.”<sup>1271</sup> Similarly, article eleven in the 1797 treaty with Tripoli asserted that “as the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion,-as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen,-and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”<sup>1272</sup> By ratifying this treaty, the Senate disavowed any religious-based hostility against North Africa. Furthermore, Presidents George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison treated their North African counterparts as peers and not as rogue sponsors of terrorism. They considered the Barbary States reputable countries and, as did Europe, sent diplomats to broker treaties and maintain the peace. The Jefferson Administration even treated Tunisian Ambassador Mellimelli better than European diplomats by covering all of his trip’s expenses. Also, during this diplomat’s nearly year-long stay in the United States no one accused him of sponsoring jihad. On the contrary, many Americans

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<sup>1271</sup> Cathcart, *The Captives*, ed. J.B. Newkirk, 160.

<sup>1272</sup> Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Tripoli, ratified by the United States June 10, 1797, Yale Law School, “The Avalon Project,” [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/bar1796t.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/bar1796t.asp) (accessed March 2, 2016).

*liked* him—crowds thronged his public appearances and some elites vied to host him at parties. Mellimelli’s critics deemed him racially inferior, but they never claimed that he represented a group of religious terrorists.

In writing this manuscript I examined tens of thousands of primary sources, and the overwhelming majority of them make no mention of Islam as a cause of Barbary piracy. Instead, Americans viewed North Africans as insatiably greedy. Altogether, there is little evidence that Americans of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries considered themselves victims of religious zealotry. Americans despised North Africa’s predatory behavior, but they viewed it as primarily economic in nature and understood that the United States could obtain peace by paying ample sums of money. Those modern authors who claim that the Barbary pirates are analogous to twenty-first-century Muslim terrorists commit two interpretive errors. First, they treat the March 1786 letter by Adams and Jefferson as representative of North African perspectives. Secondly, they ignore the overwhelming amount of counterevidence.