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Barbary Pirates: Thomas Jefferson, William Eaton, and the Evolution of U.S. Diplomacy in the
Mediterranean

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

by

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ABSTRACT

Barbary Pirates: Thomas Jefferson, William Eaton, and the Evolution of U.S. Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

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This study analyzes U.S. relations with the Barbary States from 1784 to 1805. After the American Revolution, the young nation found its commerce menaced in the Mediterranean by North African pirates sponsored by the rulers of Morocco, Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli. As the U.S. sought to find a solution to end piracy and the practice of paying tributes or ransom to free Americans held captive, Thomas Jefferson proposed several solutions as a diplomat, vice president, and as president when he authorized the Tripolitan War (1801-1805). Thus, this look at U.S. relations with the Barbary States focuses on Jefferson's evolving foreign policy proposals and argues that William Eaton's secret mission in 1805 eventually reshaped U.S. policy in the Mediterranean and brought Jefferson's ideas for a military solution to fruition. This change in policy would soon bring about the end of piracy against U.S. merchant vessels and the nation's involvement in tributary treaties.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear sister Dinah Tetteh and Mrs. Angelina Matey whose support and inspiration made this dream a possibility.

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Many people supported me in various ways throughout this study. First of all, my sincere appreciation to Dr. Dinah Mayo-Bobee, my advisor, mentor, and thesis director for her professional skills in guiding me through this research. I also appreciate my pastors, Dr. Arnold Nyarambi and Dumisa Nyarambi, for spiritual and emotional support. Thanks to sisters Fredricka Quarshie and Tsitsi Nyabando. Brother Joseph Morgan I am grateful for all the support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1783, when the United States gained independence from Great Britain under the Treaty of Paris, hopes were high that American trade would expand into new markets around the world. The much detested British regime had been toppled and some Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, were optimistic that goods from the U.S. could be shipped wherever good markets could be found.¹ This proved to be a mere dream however, until Americans adopted the practice of paying tributes to North African corsairs or their leaders in order to trade in Mediterranean ports. Until then merchant ships were raided, their cargoes stolen, and the crews and passengers held hostage for ransom or sold into slavery. The U.S. having lost British protection during the revolution enjoyed a brief period of French protection made possible through the Franco-American Treaty of Alliance signed in 1778. Yet, when the Revolutionary War ended in 1783, the French left the U.S. merchant fleet on its own making Americans easy prey for pirates in the Mediterranean.²

Attacks on merchant vessels raised concerns about how to protect maritime commerce among the nation's congressional representatives and diplomats. Jefferson, at this time a diplomat, and later a secretary of state and vice president advocated the use of military force against the Barbary States and their privateers. He proposed fighting piracy through a coalition with European states whose commerce in the Mediterranean was also threatened by pirates. However, Congress and the first two presidents, George Washington and John Adams,

¹ Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 4.

² Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 20-21.

concluded that paying ransoms and tributes would cost less than war. Therefore, between 1785 and 1800, the U.S. entered treaties with Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli that cost more than \$1 million.³

When Jefferson became president, he had the opportunity to implement the policy he had long advocated with the Barbary States. On the eve of his inauguration in March 1801, the Bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, declared war on the U.S. and demanded an increased tribute. The Bashaw was dissatisfied with the existing treaty because he claimed the Dey of Algiers interfered in its negotiation and that led to the U.S. paying less money as price of peace and nothing for annual tribute.⁴ Jefferson responded by dispatching a navy squadron to the Mediterranean. However, his initial aim was not to end the practice of paying tribute but to coerce the Bashaw into honoring the existing treaty along with a bribe of \$10,000 from the U.S. government.⁵ Because Jefferson was undecided on a policy with the Barbary States, the Tripolitan War lasted until mid 1805.

Since it ended in 1805, historians have analyzed the Tripolitan War from different perspectives and often credit Jefferson for taking a courageous step at fighting piracy in the Mediterranean. An aspect of the war that has attracted the least attention is whether Jefferson was committed to using military force to end the practice of paying tributes at least with Tripoli. The purpose of this study is to analyze Jefferson's solutions to Barbary piracy throughout his

³ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008), 98.

⁴ James L. Cathcart, "Journal of our Negotiations" ed. J.B. Cathcart in *Tripoli: First War with the United States, Inner History, Letter Book by James Leander Cathcart, First Consul to Tripoli and Last Letters from Tunis*. Newkirk: Herald Print, 1901. D.A.R. LaPort Ind. 2-3. Microfilm,

⁵ See text of instructions to Richard Dale, quoted in Ray Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers, 1776-1816* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 104.

career. The study concludes that though Jefferson advocated the use of military force against the piratical states, he sought to do so in concert with European nations whose maritime trade also suffered attacks in the Mediterranean. When he failed to secure the cooperation of any European nation, he resorted to using military force merely to secure less expensive treaties and enforce existing treaties.

Jefferson's modified position culminated in negotiating a treaty with Tripoli in 1805 to end the war and pay \$60,000 as ransom. This solution was, to the chagrin of some, including William Eaton who believed that the U.S. could have concluded a treaty with Tripoli without any expense if the war had been executed on a full scale. Jefferson had previously argued against paying ransom, insisting that this would only lead to more captures and extortion. This study also argues that Eaton's successful capture of Derne, the second most important province of Tripoli, in a secret operation secured a treaty without provisions for tribute payments and signaled a crucial change in U.S. foreign policy with the Barbary States.

Scholars such as Frank Lambert have expanded the knowledge on the significance of United States' first war after independence. Lambert argues that the Barbary Wars were economic. He provides a chronology of the conflicts between the U.S. and the Barbary States from 1784 to 1816 and concludes, "The Barbary Wars were primarily about trade, not theology, and that rather than being holy wars, they were an extension of America's War of Independence."⁶ Lambert proved that the driving force behind the Barbary Wars and for that

⁶ Lambert, 8.

matter the Tripolitan War was economic, and that by winning the war of 1805 and 1815 against Tripoli and Algiers the U.S. opened the Mediterranean up for free trade.⁷

In a contrary view, Frederick C. Leiner argues that Barbary piracy was as much a religious practice as it was economic. Leiner distinguishes the practice of piracy among the Barbary States from other parts of the world and claims that it was religiously motivated. To Leiner, Barbary piracy was an extension of a holy war of Muslim pirates against Christian infidels for violence against the moors in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. He concludes that by waging war against Algiers in 1815, the U.S. demonstrated its determination to spend millions for defense but nothing for tribute.⁸

George C. Herring argues that the U.S. gradually emerged into a superpower by pursuing a foreign policy that protected its commercial and territorial interests. Herring maintains that Jefferson took the initiative to reverse the Federalists' policy of ransoming Americans held hostage by Barbary pirates or leaders by paying tributes. However, Jefferson's desire to hold down federal expenditures limited the conflict. Herring explains, "Jefferson kept the conflict strictly limited and did not provide sufficient forces to patrol the Mediterranean due to his desire to hold down federal expenditure."⁹ By not sending adequate forces or supplies to the Mediterranean, the President protracted the conflict for five years. Herring concludes that the

⁷ Ibid, 154

⁸ Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

⁹ Herring, 99.

Tripolitan War was unimportant in practical terms because, “It cost far more than the price of tribute.”¹⁰

A.B.C. Whipple traces the birth of the United States Navy and the Marine Corps to the wars with the Barbary States. He credits William Eaton and his forces for the capture of Derne and observes that Derne’s capture was significant in the outcome of negotiations with Tripoli. He criticizes Jefferson on his policy with the Barbary States, observing that though Jefferson advocated war against the piratical states, he “would later be known as the man who preferred peaceful negotiations to war.”¹¹ Whipple argues that the desire of the U.S. to win its wars against the Barbary States led to the establishment of the navy and marine corps.

Joshua London holds a similar view to that of Whipple on the establishment of the navy. London also traces the establishment of the U.S. Navy to America’s wars with the Barbary pirates and claims that the U.S. did not have enough funds in the years immediately after independence to emulate the European nations by paying tributes to the Barbary rulers. As a result, the government decided to establish the navy, hoping that the sight of U.S. naval vessels “would help raise America’s standing in the Barbary and go some way towards persuading the various deys, beys, and pashas who ruled this region that the United States of America would not be mistreated with impunity.”¹² London concludes that the U.S. struggled to achieve independence in the Mediterranean due to Jefferson’s lack of resolve.¹³

¹⁰ Herring, 100.

¹¹ A.B.C. Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and the Marines* (New York: Marrow, 1991), 19.

¹² Joshua London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America’s War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2005), 2.

¹³ London, 242.

Other writers have argued the significance of Eaton's victory in Derne in securing for the U.S. its first treaty with a Barbary power with no provision for tribute. Samuel Edwards chronicles Eaton's exploits in the Mediterranean region, giving him credit for America's victory in Tripoli. Edwards argues that Eaton was a hero who was not given much credit. Eaton was a short-term hero. Edwards observes, "William Eaton's overnight rise to renown was equaled only by his swift decline to anonymity. Rarely [has].....Like sports stars of a later era, he was a hero one day and a bum the next."¹⁴ Zack Richard holds a similar view to that of Edwards. Zack credits Eaton for America's first victory against a Barbary power and argues that if Eaton had been allowed to carry through his plan to capture Tripoli, the U.S. could have secured the release of American captives in Tripoli without paying a ransom.

Louis B. Wright and Julia H. Macleod also argue that through the Tripolitan War the United States set an example to other maritime nations by exacting at the point of cannon a lasting peace from the corsairs.¹⁵ Wright and Macleod credit Eaton with establishing a vigorous policy against tribute payments to the Barbary regencies. They hail Eaton for his exploits in Derne, which secured the first favorable treaty for the United States with a Barbary State. This study agrees with Wright and Macleod, Zack, and Edwards on the impact of Eaton's mission on United States policy with the Barbary States. This is a key point that this study seeks to make as a contribution to the discourse on Barbary piracy.

¹⁴ Samuel Edwards, *Barbary General: The Life of William H. Eaton*. (Eaglewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, 1968), 267.

¹⁵ Louis B. Wright and Julia H. Macleod. *The First Americans in North Africa: William Eaton's Struggle for a Vigorous Policy Against the Barbary Pirates, 1799-1805*. (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1945), 3.

This study analyzes Jefferson's evolving position on U.S. foreign policy with the Barbary States in three chapters. The second chapter provides a brief history of Barbary piracy. It assesses American trade in the Mediterranean during the colonial period and the period after independence through the end of the Tripolitan War. The third chapter assesses the debate among U.S. diplomats and members of Congress regarding the best foreign policy with the piratical states. The analysis shows that although Jefferson advocated the use of force to end the tradition of paying bribes to the various Barbary regencies as a means of securing safe navigation and trade in the Mediterranean, he eventually resorted to the old practice when he failed to secure support for his plan.

The fourth chapter deals with the Tripolitan War and the significance of Eaton's secret mission to Derne, which resulted in negotiating the first favorable treaty concluded between the U.S. and a Barbary regency prior to Madison's treaty with Algiers in 1816. The chapter argues that Eaton's capture of Derne and threat of overthrowing the reigning Bashaw of Tripoli was the most important factor in the outcome of U.S. negotiations with Tripoli in 1805. The chapter demonstrates that Jefferson's decision to end Eaton's mission after Derne was captured, and payment of a \$60,000 ransom to free American prisoners was a further indication of his modified stance on the use of force to end the practice of paying tributes and ransom to the Barbary States.

This study disagrees with Herring's conclusion that the Tripolitan War was not important because it cost more than the price for peace. Though it was expensive, the Tripolitan War provided a unique opportunity for the U.S. to set a precedence of defeating a

conventional foe and make Jefferson's idea of a military solution to the menace of Barbary piracy a future possibility. Eaton's victory in Derne marked a change in U.S. foreign policy with the Barbary States from negotiating tributes to insisting on free trade in the Mediterranean. Ten years after the victory in Tripoli, President Madison used military force against Algiers in 1815 and ended the practice of tribute payment to Barbary States.

Finally, this study enhances our understanding of Thomas Jefferson's foreign policy with the Barbary States and shows that contrary to his advocacy for the use of military force as the sole solution to the menace of Barbary piracy, Jefferson actually combined military force with diplomacy in his dealings with the Barbary regencies. The study brings to light the significance of William Eaton's capture of Derne in 1805, in reshaping U.S. policy with the Barbary States and eventually ending the practice of paying tribute through naval force.

CHAPTER 2

BARBARY PIRACY AND U.S. TRADE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

British Admiral Captain Henry Kappel wrote in 1837 after his assignment in the Mediterranean region, “As surely as spiders abound where there are nooks and crannies , so have pirates sprung up wherever there is a nest of islands offering creeks and shallows, headlands, rocks and reefs – facilities in short for lurking, for surprise, for attack, for escape.”¹ Kappel was commenting on the menace of piracy in the Mediterranean where corsairs from the states on the Barbary Coast of North Africa; Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli raided merchant vessels from Europe and North America. The U.S. experienced similar situation before President Madison ended pirate attacks and tributes in 1815. Pirates authorized by the leaders of those states plundered merchandize and ransomed crews from captured ships for huge sums. From the beginning of maritime travel of trade, piracy has evolved through various stages and assumed national status in the Barbary States by the mid seventeenth century.

Records show that State sponsored piracy existed among the Barbary States from at least the late 16th centuries. Therefore, Barbary pirates posed a major threat to merchants long before the North American colonies gained independence from Great Britain. Algerian, Tripolitan, Tunisian, and Moroccan pirates commissioned by Barbary rulers also raided the coastal areas of Southern Europe including Andalusia, Sicily, Calabria, Tuscany, and the Greek islands and seized anything they considered valuable. This included humans who were often

¹ Captain the Hon. Henry Keppel, “The Great Hunter of Oriental Pirates in the Nineteenth Century” in Philip Goss, *The History of Piracy*, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1932), 1.

enslaved or held hostage for ransom.² Human plunder represented greater wealth than other properties for rulers who auctioned the prisoners at whatever price they decided. Journalist Zack Richard narrates a story in which the Bey of Tunis commissioned seven ships and a thousand men to raid San Pietro off the coast of Italy in September 1798. The reason for the raids was that San Pietro refused to pay tribute to the Bey to navigate the Mediterranean. The Tunisian pirates hauled the entire community including animals to their country as booty.³

Piracy practiced by the North African pirates differed slightly in ideology and practice from those of other areas. The practice was as much a religiously motivated as it was an economic venture. Historian Frederick C. Leiner notes that for many Muslim pirates raids on Christian vessels was a form of revenge or jihad for previous violence against the Moors and their expulsion from Spain in the early seventeenth century. The pirates legitimize preying on perceived Christian sailors by citing Surah 47 of the Koran, which permitted Islamic leaders to enslave non-believers. Consequently, the corsairs considered Christian captives infidels and treated them with cruelty, and if enslaved made them work under the most inhuman conditions. On the other hand, prisoners who converted to Islam were treated more humanely and occasionally became assistants to their Muslim masters.⁴

Piracy also served as a quick way for North African corsairs to make fortunes by selling plunder and captives to Arab and Egyptian slave traders. Like their rulers, pirates also demanded ransom for hostages. The amount usually depended on a prisoner's social status,

² Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-2

³ Richard Zack, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 1-3.

⁴ Leiner, 2-3.

sex, and sometimes age. Persons considered to be of high social status were ransomed for the highest sums. Likewise, younger persons attracted higher ransoms than did older or weak persons.⁵ Robert C. Davis estimates that North African corsairs captured and enslaved from 1 to 1.25 million Europeans between 1530 and 1780.⁶ Human captives were an important source of revenue for the Barbary regencies and corsairs. Hostages from captured vessels or raids on coastal communities were either ransomed or enslaved. Either way, the captors made a lot of money. Enslaved hostages who were not sold were put to work on construction sites, stone quarries, or in corsairs to generate income for their masters. A few of them served as domestic slaves.⁷

By the mid seventeenth century, piracy was handled diplomatically with some European states, including England, France, Spain, Denmark, and Netherlands forming treaties of Amity and Commerce with the Barbary regencies. The treaties required these nations to pay tributes to the Barbary regencies for the right to peacefully navigate and trade in the Mediterranean. Even so, from time to time Barbary States leaders repudiated existing treaties and resumed depredations on European merchant vessels to demand more money. This occasionally resulted in the deployment of navy squadrons to the Mediterranean to either enforce treaties or negotiate new ones. Apparently, most European powers had concluded that the cost of the tributes was less expensive than constantly waging war or forever providing naval escorts in

⁵ Zack, 5-6.

⁶ Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500-1800*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 45.

⁷ *Ibid.* 47-55.

order for merchant vessels to participate in the expanding and lucrative markets of the Mediterranean.⁸

Until independence, merchant ships from the North American colonies benefitted from Britain's payment of tributes because colonial ships sailed under the protection of British treaties with the Barbary States or the British Navy. In 1682 for instance, Charles II secured a treaty of Peace and Commerce with the Bey of Algiers that covered all the dominion and subjects of either side. The treaty provided safe passage for all English ships to ports in Algiers and any other ports in the Algerian Kingdom with the permission to trade feely without harassment.⁹ This enabled merchant vessels from the American colonies to trade in the Mediterranean.

Though the colonies enjoyed trade under English and then British protection, they detested the colonial mercantile system established by England. Simply put, mercantilism is an economic theory that national wealth is based on the amount of resources a country possesses. In practice, colonial powers monopolized import of raw materials from their colonies and in return exported manufactured goods for colonial consumption. Based on this principle, the English parliament passed a series of laws referred to as the Navigation Acts in 1660 and 1696 to regulate trade in its Empire. Frank Lambert insists that the Navigation Acts, which were the brainchild of mercantilism, were a major factor in the American Revolution.¹⁰

⁸ Leiner, 13-15.

⁹ Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 7.

One reason is that the Navigation Acts restricted the North American trade to English ships and ports. Certain enumerated colonial products including tobacco, sugar, indigo, cotton, and wool, among others had to be exported to ports within the empire and could only be shipped to foreign countries from England and British ports after the start of the 18th century.¹¹ Parliament intended these measures to eliminate Dutch and French competition in the maritime trade and secure high benefits for the seat of the empire. Though the regulations significantly achieved their goals, the acts pushed colonial merchants into competition with their British counterparts.¹²

The clash of commercial interests between the colonies and the British helped sow the seeds of dissent and rebellion that precipitated the American Revolution.¹³ Larry Sawers notes that, "Colonial merchants believed that an end to the Navigation Acts would lead to American commercial dominance of the nation's commodity export."¹⁴ Frank Lambert also shows that Americans hoped that independence would create a new system of free trade in which every country would benefit.¹⁵ Thomas Jefferson demonstrated this optimism when he declared in July 1785, "I would say then to every nation on earth, by treaty your people shall trade freely with us and ours with you paying no more than the most favored nation in order to

¹¹Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 10.

¹²Larry Sawers, "The Navigation Acts Revisited" *The Economic History Review*, New Series 45, no. 2(May 1992), 272.

¹³Ibid, 277.

¹⁴Ibid, 268.

¹⁵Lambert, 16.

put an end to the right of individual states acting by fits and starts to interrupt our commerce or to embroil us with any nation.”¹⁶

When the colonies declared independence on July 4, 1776, and Britain recognized the United States as an independent nation in 1783, not only were North Americans breaking away from the Navigation Acts and British mercantilism, they were also severing themselves from British commercial treaties and naval protection. It was therefore not surprising that John Adams expressed frustration in August 1785 following Algerian Attacks on American merchant vessels. He lamented, “Instead of becoming an equal partner in the Atlantic world after independence, the United States [was].....and defenseless against the Barbary pirates”¹⁷ Independence presented the U.S. with the challenge of fighting for a share of the Mediterranean trade.

In May 1784, Congress adopted a resolution to form treaties with Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli and issued commissions to John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson to negotiate with these regencies.¹⁸ Before negotiations began, however, Morocco unleashed its first attack on U.S. shipping in the Mediterranean by capturing the brig *Betsey* in October 1784 and holding its ten-man crew captives. The Emperor, Sidi Mohamed, then announced that he was holding the sailors until the U.S. negotiated a treaty with Morocco. Algerians followed Morocco’s example and captured the Boston brig *Dauphine* and the

¹⁶ Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, June 17, 1785, in *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1, 1651-1827*. American Memory.

¹⁷ Ibid, 15.

¹⁸ Continental Congress, *Journal of the Continental Congress 1784*, Vol. 6, 362-364.

Philadelphian schooner *Maria* in July 1785, holding a combined crew of 21 captives for whose release they demanded ransom.¹⁹

The seizure of American-owned cargo and enslavement of U.S. citizens raised concerns among Congressmen and diplomats about how to protect commerce in the Mediterranean. As the Congress deliberated over the best policy to adopt, two options became viable. The U.S. had the choice of negotiating treaties with the piratical states and making the customary tribute payments or face the Barbary States with force, attempt to defeat them in war, and avoid paying any ransoms or tributes. Deciding this led to an informal debate among the diplomats.

Jefferson proposed using naval force, but Adams argued against that measure on grounds that the U.S. did not have a naval force adequate to engaging the Barbary States. Instead, he proposed peaceful settlement with the various regencies. Most of the other diplomats and Congress supported Adams's option and from 1785 to 1800 the government appropriated over 1 million dollars to form treaties with Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.²⁰ Even so, ship seizures and kidnappings in the Mediterranean did not stop. As Ray Irwin writes, piracy was the foundation of the economic and political systems of the Barbary regencies. Therefore, everything was done by the North Africans to ensure that revenue continued to flow into the states from foreign merchants and their governments. Sometimes Barbary rulers were unwilling to enter treaties with certain nations so that their corsairs would have vessels to prey

¹⁹ Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs Hamden*, (Connecticut : Archon Books, 1965),14.

²⁰ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 98.

upon.²¹ As mentioned above, even when treaties were formed, Barbary rulers did not always honor them and occasionally repudiated treaties altogether.²²

An idea to end the Mediterranean trade as proposed by Franklin did not stand because the trade was so important to the U.S. In January 1791, Jefferson, who was now secretary of state, submitted a report on the trade to Congress and described the status of the nation's commerce in that region. He reported that one-sixth of the country's wheat and flour was exported to Mediterranean markets. A quarter of dry and pickled fish and an unspecified quantity of rice also found their best markets in that region. Jefferson's report stated that about 80-100 ships navigated by over twelve hundred seamen transported more than 20,000 tons of goods to the Mediterranean annually.²³ Obviously, the Barbary Coast was an important market and should not be abandoned. Consequently, Congress and the nation's first two presidents continued to pursue peaceful negotiations for the right to navigate and trade in the Mediterranean.

After Algiers captured American vessels in 1785, the U.S. government attempted on several occasions to negotiate with that regency and secure the release of its prisoners but failed. In 1786, John Lamb became the first agent appointed to negotiate a treaty with Algiers. Lamb arrived in March 1786 to begin negotiations but Hasan Pasha refused to discuss a treaty

²¹ Ray Irwin, 8.

²² Herring, 34.

²³ U.S. Congress, Congressional Records 1791, *American State Papers*, 1st Cong. 3rd Sess. Foreign Relations Vol. 1. 104.

and demanded ransom for the American hostages instead. Several attempts to persuade the Pasha to negotiate proved futile and Lamb's mission failed.²⁴

When George Washington became president in 1789, the U.S. still had no treaty with Algiers and the crews of the merchant vessels captured in 1785 remained in slavery. In 1793, Washington authorized David Humphreys, who was then the minister to Portugal, to negotiate a treaty with Algiers and secure the release of the American prisoners. Before Humphreys could commence negotiations with the pasha, Algiers secured a truce with Portugal, which was at war with that regency and had blockaded the Straits of Gibraltar. The Portuguese truce that was mediated by Britain made it possible for Algerian corsairs to have access to the Atlantic where the Algerians captured eleven more U.S. merchant vessels.²⁵

Britain's involvement in the Portuguese-Algerian truce led to suspicion of a British conspiracy. Lawrence A. Peskin notes that from the late 1780s discussions of British conspiracies against U.S. commerce in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean were very common.²⁶ Americans were highly suspicious that Britain encouraged Algeria to capture their ships with the aim of decreasing the growing competition from the U.S. for the Mediterranean markets. John Adams thought this as early as December 1784.²⁷ U.S. diplomat to North Africa, Nathaniel Cutting, believed that the British consul to Algiers, Charles Logie, had arranged the Algerian-Portuguese truce to make it possible for the Algerians to capture

²⁴ Irwin, 37-39.

²⁵ Ibid 58-60.

²⁶ Lawrence A. Peskin, "Conspiratorial Anglophobia and the War of 1812" *The Journal of American History*, 98, no. 3 (December 2011): 648.

²⁷ John Adams to John Jay, December 15, 1784. In *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America From the Signing of the Definitive Treaty, 10th September 1783 to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789*. Vol. 1, 543.

American ships.²⁸ Humphreys's mission also failed because the Bashaw refused to receive the American diplomat.²⁹ The U.S. did not secure its first treaty with Algiers until 1795 when Joseph Donaldson Jr. negotiated a treaty providing for \$26,000 as an annual tribute to Algiers.³⁰

Jefferson had stated in his report in 1791 that until the U.S. secured peace with Algiers, treaties with Tunis and Tripoli would be of no value because Algiers poses the greatest threat in the Barbary region. Therefore, agents were not appointed to negotiate with Tunis or Tripoli until the treaty with Algiers was ratified. Then, on November 4, 1796, Joel Barlow signed a treaty of peace and friendship with Tripoli at the cost of \$56,486.³¹ This treaty did not involve annual tributes, but Tripoli agreed for the U.S. to pay the price for peace in installments. Soon, a treaty of peace and friendship was also concluded with Tunis on August 28, 1797, at the cost of \$107,000.³² These treaties assured the U.S. safe navigation and trade in the Mediterranean without harassment. The treaties also paved the way for the government to appoint consuls to the Barbary regencies.

In March 1797, John Adams became the second president of the United States and appointed consuls to Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. William Eaton and James L. Cathcart were assigned to Tunis and Tripoli respectively in July 1797. Eaton and Cathcart sailed from the U.S. on board the brig *Sophia* on December 4, 1798. Their first destination was Algiers, from where they sailed to their respective posts. The *Sophia* was part of a convoy of five ships, three of

²⁸ Ibid, 651.

²⁹ U.S. Congress, Congressional Record, 1793. *American State Papers*, 3rd Congress, 1st Sess. Foreign Rel. Vol. 1: 414

³⁰ Treaty of Peace and Amity with The Dey of Algiers. *American State Papers*, 3rd Congress, 1st Sess. 1796. Foreign Rel. Vol. 1. 531.

³¹ Treaty of Peace Between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli, of Barbary. *American State Papers*, 5th Congress, 1st Sess. 1797. Foreign Rel. Vol. 2: 19

³² Congressional Record, 1798. *American State Papers*, 5th Congress, 2nd Sess. Foreign Rel. Vol. 2: 123.

which were used to pay the price of peace with Hassan Pasha the Dey of Algiers. The fourth vessel, *Hero*, was heavily laden with naval stores, meat, and other goods, all meant as gifts to the Pasha. When they arrived in Algiers on February 9, 1799, they met what Eaton described as a hostile welcome.³³

Eaton who was unhappy about the government paying so much as tribute to Algiers noted that, "We have been called every vile name known to man and threatened with extermination as though we were vile insects."³⁴ The Pasha refused to grant the diplomats audience until after three days. After the Americans presented their nation's gifts, the Pasha proclaimed the treaty of 1795 in full effect. He detained the *Sophia*, however, until March 2, before granting permission for the vessel to leave Algiers.³⁵ Eaton considered this treatment as humiliating to the United States.

Eaton arrived at Tunis on March 14 and assumed duty with immediate effect. By April 1800, he had secured a revision of the treaty of 1796 through a combination of diplomacy and courage. Two clauses of the existing treaty that the U.S. detested, one that permitted Tunisians to board American ships at will and the other that concerned the exchange of salutes, were deleted.³⁶ Eaton remained observant not only of developments in Tunis but also in Tripoli and soon concluded that only war could end North Africans' attacks on U.S. commerce.³⁷

³³Samuel Edwards, *Barbary General: The Life of William H. Eaton* (Eagle Wood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1968), 67.

³⁴Ibid, 68.

³⁵Ibid, 72.

³⁶Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Tunis, 1796. *American States Papers*, Senate 5th Congress, 1st Sess. Foreign Relations. Vol. 2: 18-19.

³⁷Edward, 95.

In January 1801, Eaton went to Tripoli to assist Cathcart in mending strained relations between the U.S. and Tripoli. By that time, the galleys of Murrad Reis, Tripoli's minister for harbors, had captured three American vessels and stolen their cargo. Eaton confronted Reis while he visited the U.S. consulate to announce that Tripoli had suspended diplomatic ties with the consulate until the U.S. negotiated a new treaty. Reis gave the U.S. four months to negotiate a new treaty or said that Tripoli would declare war, capture more vessels, and enslave U.S. citizens, possibly even the consul. Eaton warned Reis that U.S. would dispatch squadrons to bombard Tripoli. He then sent a report to the State Department and requested that the government dispatch a powerful naval fleet to the Mediterranean.³⁸ In June 1801, Jefferson who had just assumed the office of president dispatched a naval squadron to the Mediterranean to protect American commerce.

Eaton could not mend the strained relations with Tripoli and returned to his post at Tunis in February. Consul Cathcart had faced difficulties in Tripoli since he first arrived in April 1799. Tripoli was under the rule of Yusuf Karamanli who secured the throne in 1795 after killing other claimants to the throne and exiling his bother Hamet Karamanli, and kept it. Hamet acceded to the throne when his father Ali died in 1793 until his brother Yusuf dethroned him. Once he became Bashaw, Yusuf refused to allow the consul's vessel to dock in the harbor. He sent messages through Bryan McDonough, an Irishman who was then the charge-de affairs of nations that did not have resident consuls in Tripoli, including Britain, Sweden, and the United

³⁸ William Eaton to Secretary of State, March 2, 1801. *In The life of the Late General William Eaton, Several Years an Officer in the Army, Consul at the Regency of Tunis on the Coast of Barbary, and commander of the Christian and other forces that marched from Egypt through the Desert of Barca, in 1805.* Ed. Charles Prentiss, (Brookfield: Merriam E, 1813), 186.

States. The Bashaw said that he would not receive the consul because the U.S. did not send naval stores and a brig promised to him two years earlier and reassured by Mr. O'Brien, the U.S. Consul General at Algiers. The Bashaw insisted on not granting audience to Cathcart until the U.S. had fully paid everything it promised him.³⁹ Cathcart denied knowledge of a brig promised to Tripoli by the U.S. and offered to pay for the other items in cash, but the Bashaw refused.

Karamanli ordered Cathcart to leave. Tripoli would wait for forty days after which it would declare war on the U.S. The irate Bashaw was unhappy that the U.S. had the Dey of Algiers guarantee the treaty of 1797 and threatened that upon declaring war on the United States, "The world would see that the Bashaw of Tripoli was an independent prince and would be respected as such, in spite of Algiers, Tunis or even the Grand Signore."⁴⁰ When he finally agreed to meet with Cathcart on April 6, the Bashaw swore to punish O'Brien, not only for his failed promise of a brig but because the Consul General reportedly claimed that Tripoli was dependent on Algiers.⁴¹ When Tripoli and the U.S. finally reached a settlement on April 10, Cathcart agreed to pay \$10,000 in lieu of the undelivered stores and \$8,000 for the so-called promised brig.⁴²

The brief period of tranquility between the U.S. and Tripoli that followed the settlement did not end the Bashaw's harassment of Cathcart. The Bashaw and his agents consistently pestered Cathcart for gifts of all kinds ranging from wristwatches to alcoholic beverages and

³⁹ James L. Cathcart, "Journal of our Negotiations" Ed. J.B. Cathcart in *Tripoli: First War with the United States, Inner History, Letter Book by James Leander Cathcart, First Consul to Tripoli and Last Letters from Tunis*. Newkirk: Herald Print, 1901. D.A.R. LaPort Ind. Microfilm, 2-3.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 3.

⁴¹ Ibid, 12.

⁴² Ibid, 19-20.

linen. On April 18, 1800, Karamanli invited Cathcart to a meeting at which he complained that U.S. was not treating Tripoli on terms equal with Algiers. He said that America's friendship had been nothing more than compliments, which were of little value to him. "The heads of the Barbary States knew their friends by the value of the presents they receive from them," he told Consul Cathcart. The gift of a cruiser or a brig of war from the U.S. government would convince the Bashaw that the friendship was genuine.⁴³ Attempts by Cathcart to discourage this line of thought and to prevent further demands on the U.S. were unproductive.

Bashaw Karamanli became more displeased when he learned in May 1800 that the Bey of Tunis, Hammuda Pasha, had received valuable gifts from the United States. He instructed Cathcart to write to the President regarding its "indifference" to Tripoli and to request a frigate or a brig of war as a proof of the genuineness of the nation's friendship in line with what the U.S. had done for Algiers and Tunis.⁴⁴ When Cathcart refused, the Bashaw had a letter written directly to President Adams dated May 25, 1800, in which he admonished, "We could wish that these, your expressions, were followed by deeds, and not by empty words. You will therefore endeavor to satisfy us by a good manner of proceeding." "But," he continued, "if only flattering words are meant without performance, everyone will act as he finds convenient". The Bashaw then warned Cathcart that if Adams did not satisfy his request, he would declare war against the United States.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid, 35

⁴⁴ Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation*. (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2005), 78.

⁴⁵ Yusuf Karamanli to John Adams, May 25, 1800. In Cathcart, 182-183.

Amid the threats of war, a Tripolitan Cruiser under the command of Rais Amor Shallie captured the American brig *Catherine* on September 25 and held her until October 15. On October 16, Cathcart met with the Bashaw to discuss the attack. The Bashaw claimed that he did not sanction the capture of the *Catherine* and then ordered his Marine Minister to return the articles plundered from the brig. Yet, Karamanli now demanded that the U.S. pay a tribute to him annually to maintain peace. Cathcart replied that America had paid everything stipulated under the Treaty of 1797, but the Bashaw said that the prior arrangement was for the establishment of peace, he now required an annual sum for maintaining the peace. He told Cathcart to inform the U.S. government that the Swedes, French, English, and the Spanish have always done the same to maintain peace. He would wait six months for the president to answer his letter after which time if he did not receive any response or received an unsatisfactory reply, he would declare war on the U.S.⁴⁶

After much effort by Cathcart to persuade the Bashaw to rescind his decision to declare war, the Bashaw agreed to wait for the response before taking any further action but said he would not wait any longer than the six months before commencing hostilities if the response was not satisfactory.⁴⁷ Throughout the rest of 1800, the Bashaw maintained his threat of war as he eagerly waited for a response from the president. Frustrated by the warlike preparations and the persistent threats from the Bashaw, Cathcart wrote to O'Brien on November 22, "I have given it my unalterable opinion that the best manner of maintaining peace of the United States of America with the Regency of Tripoli upon honorable and equitable terms is by force of

⁴⁶ Cathcart, 184-185.,

⁴⁷ Ibid, 190.

arms. I persist in that opinion and nothing but ocular demonstrations will ever convince me to the contrary.”⁴⁸ Cathcart waited for a response which never came, and the Bashaw soon started fitting out his corsairs to carry out his threats. In January 1801, the Bashaw informed Cathcart through Reis that his palace was closed to the American diplomat and that he would soon declare war on the U.S.⁴⁹

Eaton’s intervention in Tripoli was unproductive and he returned to Tunis in February. On February 26, 1801, with a few days to Jefferson’s inauguration, Bashaw Karamanli carried through his threats and resumed hostilities towards the U.S. by sending out his corsairs to cruise for American merchantmen. He later followed his threats by officially declaring war on the U.S. on May 14, when his troops ceremoniously cut down the flagpole of the American consulate.

Meanwhile, Eaton also faced similar troubles in Tunis. By March, Ahmed Bey considered Tripoli’s hostilities toward the U.S. as an opportunity to make new demands. He invited Eaton to review his tributes and demanded that the Americans should supply him with \$100,000 worth of high quality timber and \$50,000 worth of grains annually in addition to his tribute. These gifts would strengthen Tunis-U.S. relations and prevent the Tunisians from joining its neighbors in a holy war against the U.S. Eaton rejected the demands outright calling the Tunisian friendship “enmity.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cathcart to Richard O’Brien, November 22, 1800. In Cathcart, 210.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 264.

⁵⁰ Edward, 93.

Eaton hatched an elaborate scheme in 1801 for the U.S. to deal with Tripoli. The plan involved collaboration with the exiled and rightful claimant to the throne of Tripoli, Hamet Karamanli, the current Bashaw's exiled brother. In spring 1801, Hamet Karamanli visited Tunis and Eaton seized the opportunity to strike acquaintance with him. In one of their meetings, Hamet expressed sympathy for the strained relations between the U.S. and Tripoli. Eaton was very excited about their meeting and came up with a plan in which America would assist Hamet to overthrow their common enemy, his brother Yusef Karamanli who had usurped the throne. Eaton divulged the plan to Cathcart in April and Cathcart approved the idea.⁵¹

On September 5, 1801, Eaton suggested his plan with the exiled heir apparent to secretary of state James Madison. Eaton assured Madison that with minimum support from America the unfriendly Yusef Karamanli could be overthrown and the rightful ruler installed. He proposed that the United States provide military support and money for the project. If Hamet Karamanli was installed, he would no doubt be favorable to the American trade.⁵² Without receiving any response from the State Department, an opportunity came for Eaton to implement his plan. Eaton learned of an uprising in parts of Tripoli and Derne against the reigning Bashaw. Thereupon, he wrote to Madison on August 5, 1802, suggesting that it was time for the U.S. to help Hamet Karamanli reclaim the throne.⁵³

By the summer of 1802, Eaton had also picked up information about a plot in which Yusuf would lure Hamet to Dearn with promises of a post in Derne, the second largest city in the regency of Tripoli, and have him murdered. Around that time, Hamet had started

⁵¹ Ibid, 25

⁵² William Eaton to James Madison, September 5, 1801. In Edwards, 208-209.

⁵³ Ibid, 222-223.

demanding money from Eaton for his personal sustenance. On August 6, Eaton told Hamet Karamanli that he had asked Mr. Joseph Pulis to remit two thousand dollars on the U.S. account while he awaited more funds. Meanwhile Eaton warned Hamet about his brother's plot to assassinate him. "You cannot be safe therefore, in any part of your regency, unless you enter it in your true character of sovereign."⁵⁴

By December 1802, Hamet had accepted his brother's offer to go to Derne. Eaton tried to prevent him from leaving Tunis, but he could no longer guarantee Hamet's safety in Tunis. Ahmed Bey of Tunis got wind of Eaton's plot with Hamet and was determined to get the exiled Bashaw out of his regency.⁵⁵ Eaton's attempt to secure safe passage for Hamet to Derne compelled him to purchase the vessel *Gloria* from Tunisian Pirates for \$1,000 and then to spend another \$15,000 to fit the ship with arms and recruit a crew to get Hamet safely to Derne. Hamet arrived to a rousing welcome in Derne in January 1803.⁵⁶

By spring 1803, Eaton's persistent refusal of the Bey's demand for gifts from the U.S. had created a rift between the Bey and himself. His dealings with Hamet Karamanli further compounded the problems and affected Eaton's personal relations with the Bey. On March 6, Eaton entered into a fierce argument with Sapatapa, one of the Bey's ministers and called the minister a liar in the Bey's presence. The Bey declared that he could no longer work with Eaton and called for his immediate withdrawal from Tunis.

⁵⁴ William Eaton to Hamet Karamanli, Bashaw of Tripoli, August 6, 1802. In Prentiss, 223. Eaton mentioned Puiis in his letter, but it is most likely that he was referring to Joseph Pulis.

⁵⁵ London, 181.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 183.

Eaton left Tunis and arrived in Boston on May 5, 1803, still determined to wage war against Tripoli. He had noted in his diary while on his way home, "I fear that all that the United States has tried to accomplish in Barbary has been in vain. Unless something drastic is done to reverse the decline in our fortunes, and I know not what it might be, the United States will soon be forced to abandon the entire Mediterranean Sea."⁵⁷ By this time, the U.S. was already waging an undeclared war with Tripoli. As chapter four will demonstrate, Eaton was correct in his assessments regarding making a drastic change in U.S. foreign policy with the Barbary States. Eaton would have another opportunity to return to the Mediterranean in 1804 to execute his plan.

⁵⁷ William Eaton, quoted in Edward, 123.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEBATE OVER USING NAVAL FORCE OR DIPLOMACY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The question over the United States' response to Barbary States piracy was the subject of debate among the nation's legislators and ambassadors from 1774 to 1805. The issue involved safe navigation and trade in the Mediterranean and whether or not the U.S. should use military force against Morocco, Tripoli, Algiers, and Tunis or follow the traditions set by major European nations. Great Britain, France, and Holland had been paying tribute to the North African nations for over a hundred years for safe passage through the Mediterranean. When the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain in 1776, they automatically lost the opportunity to navigate and trade under British protection in the Mediterranean. From 1784 onward, the Barbary States started to seize American merchant ships and enslave sailors to blackmail the U.S. government into negotiating treaties with their governments that included tribute payments. This raised concerns about how to protect U.S. commerce in the Mediterranean.

Ambassadors Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson played key role in deciding United States foreign policy with the Barbary Powers in the 1780s. Franklin and Jefferson were serving as Ministers Plenipotentiary in France and Adams was Minister to Great Britain. In the important debate over diplomacy with the Barbary States, Jefferson preferred the use of military force to end the practice of piracy in the Mediterranean. He proposed entering into a coalition with European nations that were also at war with the Barbary

regencies.¹ After his plans for a coalition failed, Jefferson advocated employing the navy to secure less expensive treaties and enforce these agreements, as was the practice of maritime powers such as Great Britain and France. This chapter analyzes Jefferson's propositions and actions from the time that he was an ambassador through his presidency. This analysis will show that Jefferson modified his stance on the use of force to end the tradition of paying tributes using a show of force to secure less expensive treaties.

On February 20, 1778, the Emperor of Morocco, Sidi Mohamed, recognized American Independence in a public declaration. In the declaration, the Emperor assured the U.S. that there would be no Moroccan hostilities against American vessels.² He followed this assurance with a message through his agent D'Audibert Caille in April 1780, stating that Morocco wished to establish a peace treaty with the United States.³ In December 1780, Samuel Huntington, then president of the Continental Congress, responded to the Emperor's friendly offers and said that the U.S. was committed to establishing perpetual peace and friendship with Morocco.⁴ However, Huntington's offer did not immediately result in a treaty because Congress was engrossed in fighting the War for Independence.⁵

The 1783 Treaty of Paris between Britain and the United States marked Britain's official recognition of the new nation. Congress now shifted its attention to other issues including

¹ Thomas Jefferson, Proposal for War Powers Against the Barbary States, 1786. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series* 1. General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

² Ray Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers, 1776-1816* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1970), 25.

³ D'Audibert Caille to The Continental Congress, April 21, 1780. In *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of The United States, Vol 4*. Ed. Francis Watson. 170-171.

⁴ Samuel Huntington to Sultan of Morocco, December 1801. *Letters of Delegates to Congress* Vol.16, September 1 1780 – February 28, 1781.

⁵ Lambert, 51.

diplomatic relations with the Barbary States. The U.S. was unable to protect commercial vessels in the Mediterranean and could get no help from Europe's maritime powers. Therefore, U.S. diplomats found it necessary to form treaties of amity and commerce with Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis. Congress adopted a resolution on May 7, 1784, issuing commissions to Adams, Franklin, and Jefferson to form the necessary treaties.⁶

Before Congress and the commissioners could finalize a strategy for forming the treaties, Sidi Mohamed concluded in October that the U.S. government was not responding to his friendly gestures with alacrity and ordered corsairs to capture the brig *Betsey* and detain the ship in Tangier. As the *Betsey* was returning from the Spanish port Cadiz on October 11, the *Salle Rovers* attacked and held the vessel and its ten-man crew hostage as ordered.⁷ The Emperor then announced that he was merely holding the vessel, cargo, and crew hostage until the U.S. negotiated a treaty with Morocco.⁸

Congress stipulated that all or any two of the three commissioners could conduct the negotiations and submit the results for final approval. After preliminary investigations on the cost of negotiating peace with the Barbary States, the commissioners submitted recommendations on November 11, 1784. After receiving the recommendations, Congress authorized the diplomats to use agents to assist them with the treaties and set a ceiling on their expenses. Though only Morocco had captured American vessel at this time, Congress was aware that ignoring any of the North African regencies exposed U.S. merchant vessels to attacks in the Mediterranean and authorized treaties to be formed with all the Barbary States.

⁶ Continental Congress, *Journal of the Continental Congress 1784*, vol 6. 362-364.

⁷ Lambert, 52-53.

⁸ Irwin, 28.

The cost of this diplomatic effort became a matter of great concern among the commissioners. Historian Ray Irwin has written that New England merchants clamored for war with the Barbary States.⁹

Jefferson argued against paying tributes to any of the Barbary States. He wanted the United States to enter into commercial agreements with other nations solely on basis of “equality and reciprocity.” By this, Jefferson called for the U.S to form only free and fair commercial treaties that would assign equal privileges and obligations to the treating parties and save the U.S. from offering anything more than it would gain. He suggested that the U.S. should compel any state that would not accept commercial agreement on this basis through war. He also considered the payment of tribute to any state as form of dependence and warned that a nation that had just won its independence from Great Britain ought not to subordinate itself to another nation. To Jefferson, paying tribute would amount to reverting to the colonial period.¹⁰

Adams responded that warmongers had “more spirit than prudence” and cautioned John Jay, then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, that the Barbary issue was intertwined with European politics and required diplomacy rather than war. On December 15, 1784, Adams warned Jay that a decision to go to war with Morocco would be unwise though it may show bravery. Adams stressed that, “The contest would be unequal. They can injure us very sensibly, but we cannot hurt them in the smallest degree. We have or shall have a rich trade at sea

⁹ Irwin, 28-29.

¹⁰ Lambert, 54.

exposed to their depredations; they have none at all upon which we can make reprisals.”¹¹ He held England, France, and Holland responsible for the U.S. predicament because they had a history of paying tributes to the Barbary States instead of employing naval strength to end piracy.¹²

Benjamin Franklin was neither in favor of war nor of payment of tributes to the Barbary States. He thought that the volume of U.S. commerce in the Mediterranean did not merit such payments. Franklin, however, did not propose war with Morocco but encouraged merchants to seek other markets such as the East Indies. He also thought it reasonable for the United States to allow European carriers to transport American produce to Mediterranean ports.¹³ This option appeared sound to enterprising merchants such as New England’s John Ledyard and Robert Morris, along with their business agents Samuel Shaw and Thomas Randall who sent the *Empress of China* on its first Successful voyage to the East Indies in 1785. This voyage raised the hopes of some, including John Jay who commended the sailors’ spirit and the prospects of a lucrative trade in the East.¹⁴

Though the Emperor of Morocco kept his word and released the *Betsey*, its cargo, and crew on June 9, 1785, he did not allay Americans’ fears of trading in the region. In October 1786, Adams and Jefferson confirmed that Thomas Barclay would be the first U.S. agent to negotiate a treaty with Morocco. By this time, Franklin had retired from his post in France

¹¹ John Adams to John Jay, December 15, 1784. *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America From the Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Peace, 10th September 1783 to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789. Vol. 2: 543.*

¹² Lambert, 55.

¹³ Ibid, 56.

¹⁴ Ibid, 53.

leaving Jefferson as the only Minister Plenipotentiary in that country. Despite Barclay's appointment, Jefferson still preferred war to paying tributes. He proposed offering the Emperor a commercial agreement without tribute. He argued that if Morocco truly sought the U.S.'s friendship, the Emperor would accept the offer, if not "why not go to war with them?"¹⁵

Based on his knowledge of the cost of the negotiations, Jefferson argued that even if the U.S. secured a favorable treaty with Morocco, diplomacy with the other Barbary States would be expensive. Even before he agreed to Barclay's appointment, Jefferson estimated the amount that the U.S. could pay each country as prize for peace in correspondence to Adams dated September 4, 1786. "My idea as to the partition of the whole sum to which we are limited (eighty thousand dollars), was, that one half of it should be kept in reserve for the Algerines. They certainly possess more than half of the whole power of the piratical states. I thought then, that Morocco might claim the half of the remainder, that is to say, one fourth of the whole." Jefferson later drafted instructions for Barclay pending Adams's approval in which he implored seeking U.S. interests and making judicious use of the funds allocated for the mission.¹⁶

Jefferson's prediction regarding the difference between U.S. negotiating a treaty with Morocco and achieving a diplomatic solution with the other Barbary States came true. Barclay negotiated the nation's first treaty with Morocco in January 1787. The terms were generally favorable to the United States and included provisions for a tribute and other expenses amounting to about \$20,000. Emperor Mohamed agreed to elevate the U.S. to most favored

¹⁵ Ibid, 54.

¹⁶ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams September 4, 1785, in *Memoirs, Correspondence and private Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Late president of the United States* Vol. 1, Ed Thomas Jefferson Randolph(London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1829), 205-207.

nation status, which removed trade restrictions, and vowed not to demand tributes in the future. Congress ratified the treaty on July 18, 1787.¹⁷

The next state to enter negotiations with the U.S. was Algiers after corsairs from that regency captured the schooner *Maria* and the brig *Dauphin* in July 1785, enslaved their combine crews of twenty-one men, and demanded ransom.¹⁸ The *Maria* was heading towards Cadiz from Boston when Algerian corsairs intercepted the ship around Cape St Vincent on the 24th and imprisoned its six-man crew. A week later, the Algerians captured the *Dauphin* of Philadelphia as it was returning from Ubes. The Algerians held its fifteen-man crew hostage.¹⁹

Historian Ray W. Irwin writes that the seizure of these vessels increased war mongering among New England merchants. Nonetheless, Adams remained firm in his preference for tributes instead of waging war. He maintained that the cost of war would place a heavy burden on the U.S. and continued to advocate peaceful settlements with the Barbary rulers until such time that the United States could build a formidable navy to protect its merchant marine. Adams also warned that as long as leading maritime powers including England, France, and Holland continued to pay tributes and possibly conspire with the Barbary States to attack American vessels, a unilateral declaration of war against the piratical states would not be the best option for the U.S.²⁰

Adams told Jefferson In June 1786 that U.S. would not be practicing “good economy” by waging war. He estimated that United States would spend between \$700,000 and \$1,000,000

¹⁷ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Continental Congress*, Vol. 3, 263-264.

¹⁸ Joshua London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America’s War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and shaped a Nation*. (Hoboken N.J. : John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2005), 27-28.

¹⁹ Lambert, 6.

²⁰ Irwin, 47-48.

to negotiate peace with the Barbary States. However, the consequence of not seeking a peaceful solution through diplomacy would be higher insurance rates and loss of the Mediterranean trade in addition to the Levant trade and portions of the Spanish and Portuguese trades. The losses would run into millions of dollars. Waging war in the Mediterranean would cost about a million dollars per annum and would still disrupt the trade because U.S. merchant vessels could not safely sail into the Mediterranean during a naval war. Therefore, the best option was for the U.S. is to pay tributes.²¹

U.S. diplomats William Carmichael and John Lamb, who were both involved in negotiations with Algiers, supported Adams's Position. Carmichael was assigned to Spain and negotiated with Algiers for the release of the twenty-one American hostages in July 1786. He was familiar with the situation in Algiers through personal contacts with the Dey Hassan Pasha. In a letter to Jefferson on July 31, he determined that it was not realistic for the U.S. to wage a war against the Barbary States and advocated a diplomatic solution to the problem.²² Lamb, who was also appointed U.S. agent, argued that war with the Barbary powers would be a bad option because the U.S. did not have the naval power to enforce compliance of peace. He therefore suggested paying tributes as Europe's naval powers have done.²³

Attempts to negotiate a treaty with Algiers in 1787 proved futile and further fueled the debate over the best foreign policy for the U.S. Algiers, which had been holding the crews of

²¹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, June 6, 1786. *The Jefferson Paper Series*, 1. General Correspondence, 1651-1827. Library of Congress.

²² William Carmichael to Thomas Jefferson, July 31, 1786. in *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America From the Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Peace, 10th September 1783 to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789. Vol.1*, Ed. F.D. Bair (Washington DC: U.S. State Department, 1833), 806.

²³ John Lamb to Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. July 18, 1786. In Bair, 803.

the *Maria* and *Dauphine* demanded \$6,000 for each captain and \$4,000 for mates or passengers. In total, Hassan Pasha demanded \$59,496 to ransom twenty-one American hostages.²⁴ Lamb was given no instructions to pay a ransom for the hostages because Congress had not allocated appropriations to do so. The Pasha refused to negotiate with Lamb until the ransom issue was settled.

Adams and Jefferson agreed that the government needed to redeem kidnapped U.S. citizens, but their course of action was restricted because Congress had authorized no such transaction. They conferred and instructed Lamb to proceed with negotiations for ransom provided he not pay more than \$200 per head. The Dey rejected the offer and retained the hostages. The mission ended up a failure, and war seemed likely as Adams and Jefferson discussed the next course of action.²⁵

On July 3, 1786, Adams sought Jefferson's opinion on a proposal to ransom the prisoners. Adams feared that war in the Mediterranean would not attract the support of the American people, especially southern planters who feared that disturbances in the Mediterranean would disrupt markets for their produce. To Adams the best option was to negotiate with Algiers and pay tribute.²⁶ Jefferson rejected that proposal and enumerated the reasons for war: He preferred war because justice and honor favored it. War would earn the

²⁴ Irwin, 37-38.

²⁵ Ibid, 39.

²⁶ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 3, 1786. In *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series*, 1. General Correspondence, 1651-1827.

United States respect in Europe and enable the federal government to use the necessary force to protect the commercial interest of the U.S.²⁷

Jefferson proposed establishing a small marine force, which by his estimate would cost about half of what the U.S. would spend to maintain peace with Algiers through tributes. His plan involved the formation of a league with European countries including Naples, Portugal, Sweden, Malta, and Venice and then waging a coalition war against Algiers. Jefferson thought his plan would ease the burden of war because Europeans allies would join in the fight.²⁸

Jefferson's plan fell through, however, when Sweden and Portugal complained that the U.S. had no war ships to contribute to a coalition fleet and withdrew.²⁹ Afterward, he never proposed war as means of ending Barbary piracy. At best, he considered the use of force merely as a means of securing favorable treaties with Barbary powers. As Joshua London writes, "Jefferson's Barbary policy was not to obliterate the Barbary regencies and overhaul the long established system of diplomacy and commerce in the Barbary, but merely to control it as the stronger European powers did, and to discourage abuses."³⁰

On February 1, 1787, Jefferson wrote John Jay, who was then the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a proposal to adopt a covert plan for ransoming American hostages through the Mathurians, a French religious order that rendered humanitarian services so that the U.S. would not pay exorbitant rates.³¹ Jefferson's support for paying ransom following the failure of

²⁷ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 11, 1783. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series*, 1. General Correspondence, 1651-1827

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Whipple, 22.

³⁰ London, 146.

³¹ Jefferson to John Jay, February 1, 1787 In Randolph, 321.

his coalition plan shows a modification of his stance. Ransoming U.S. prisoners through a neutral negotiator may only lesson the cost of ransom but not end it all together.

In September 1787, members of a delegation in Philadelphia drafted a new constitution that would soon replace the Articles of Confederation. After each state debated its merits, the Constitution was ratified in 1788. The new government became operational in March 1789, with a new executive office that vested the president with the power to appoint public ministers and consuls and make treaties with the advice and consent of the Senate.³² When George Washington took office as the first president in 1789, he appointed Jefferson Secretary of State in September.³³

As Secretary of State, Jefferson had direct authority over U.S. diplomats including those appointed to the Barbary regencies. He pursued a policy that combined paying tributes with the demonstration of military force. In May 1791, Washington appointed former agent Barclay the Consul to Morocco. This became possible because the U.S. was at peace with Morocco and could establish a consulate in that country. Barclay's mission was to reaffirm the existing treaty with the successor of Sultan Mohammed who died in 1790. Jefferson admonished Barclay to use his knowledge of the Barbary States to secure the least expense treaty for the U.S. because the regency would set a precedent for future negotiations.³⁴ Barclay's instructions clearly did not abolish tributes. However, disputes among the Sultan's sons over succession prevented Barclay from returning to Morocco until Barclay died in January 1793.

³² U. S. Constitution, Article 2, section 2.

³³ U.S. Senate, *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America* Vol.1, 33. Library of Congress.

³⁴ Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Barclay, May 13, 1791 In Randolph, 109-1

On January 3, 1791, Jefferson submitted a report on the Mediterranean trade to the House of Representatives. He emphasized the importance of the trade and described U.S. relations with the Barbary powers. Jefferson refrained from proposing a specific policy for the U.S. but instead identified three alternate policies, namely paying ransoms and annual tributes, in addition to using force against the Barbary powers and asking Congress to decide between war, tributes, and ransoms. On the option of war against Algiers, Jefferson stated that the legislature might “think it prudent to possess a force equal to the whole of that which may be opposed to them” if it contemplated war. On the other hand, Congress should make provisions for funds to negotiate for peace.³⁵ Since Congress was not in a position to immediately build a navy that could meet the standards Jefferson proposed necessary to engage Algiers, the only option was to pursue a peaceful solution. Congress did this by appropriating funds to pay a ransom and tribute to Algiers in February 1792.³⁶

President Washington also exhibited a preference for peaceful negotiations over the use of force. In 1792, he followed Jefferson’s report with a request for Congress to appropriate funds to pay the ransom and free U.S. citizens held hostage in Algiers. Washington was troubled by the plight of the twenty-one men taken from the *Maria* and *Dauphine*, held hostage since 1785 and resolved to redeem them. Congress approved \$40,000 and an additional \$20,000 in annual tributes to Algiers.³⁷ In 1793, Washington authorized David Humphreys, the minister to

³⁵ U.S. House, *American State Papers*. 1st Congress, 3rd Sess. Foreign Relations Vol.1: 104-105.

³⁶ U.S. Senate, *American State Papers*, Second Congress, 1st Sess. Foreign Relations Vol.1: 133.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 133.

Portugal, to negotiate a treaty with Algiers. Humphreys's effort also failed because the Dey refused to receive the American envoy.³⁸

After months of serious debate on the need for a navy, Congress Passed "An Act to Provide a Naval Armament", in March 1794 with a proviso that the shipbuilding would stop if peace was established with Algiers. The act allocated \$688,888 to build three 44-gun frigates and three 36-gun frigates. Washington signed the bill that marked the birth of the U.S. Navy on March 27, 1794.³⁹ Secretary of War Henry Knox selected Joshua Humphreys, a distinguished ship builder from Philadelphia, and Josiah Fox a marine architect, to build the frigates. Though Humphreys and Fox worked hard, an inadequate supply of timber delayed the completion of the ships.⁴⁰

Before the end of 1794, fourteen Americans died in Algiers raising serious concerns about the safety of the remaining captives. The president authorized David Humphreys to send Joseph Donaldson Jr. of Philadelphia to act as a deputy to Algiers to assist in peace negotiations. Donaldson negotiated a treaty in September 1795.⁴¹ On May 6, 1796, Congress made appropriations to pay tribute to the Dey of Algiers.⁴² At the time of the settlement, none of the frigates was completed. Since the bill that authorized the frigates stipulated that building of the navy would halt if the U.S. secured peace with Algiers, Congress decided to complete only three

³⁸ U.S. Congress, *American State Papers*, 3rd Congress, 1st Sess. Foreign Rels. Vol. 1: 414.

³⁹ U.S. Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America*. Vol.2, 51.

⁴⁰ Whipple 44-45

⁴¹ Frank E Ross, "The Mission of Joseph Donaldson Jr. to Algiers, 1795-1797" *The Journal of Modern History*. 7, no.3 (1935): 422-427.

⁴² U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large*. Vol. 1, 4th Congress, 2nd Sess. 460.

of the frigates after the treaty with Algiers was signed in February 1796. Construction of the *United States*, *Constellation*, and *Constitution* was soon completed.⁴³

The presidential election of 1796 was the first election contested along party lines. The Constitution provided that a candidate who received a majority of the electoral votes would become president and the runner-up vice president. The result in 1796 was that John Adams, a Federalist, was elected president and Thomas Jefferson, who was a Democratic Republican, became vice president.⁴⁴ When Adams took office in March 1797, none of the navy frigates was yet completed. Meanwhile, French hostilities against American shipping had reached an alarming level. France and the U.S. had been allies since the American Revolution and expected American support during the Anglo-French War of 1793-1802, but the U.S. proclaimed neutrality. France began to seize American merchant vessels, primarily in the Caribbean. At the same time, Tripoli and Tunis were harassing U.S. merchantmen in the Mediterranean. Consequently, in his first annual message President Adams called on Congress to “place our country in a suitable posture of defense.”⁴⁵ After much debate, Congress created the Department of the Navy on April 30, 1798.⁴⁶

Jefferson opposed the naval building program. More than any other security institution, the U.S. needed a formidable navy if Jefferson’s determination to use force against the Barbary States was to become a reality. Contrary to his previous advice to Congress to strengthen the

⁴³ Ian W. Toll, *The Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 62.

⁴⁴ Forrest McDonald, *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History*. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 174.

⁴⁵ John Adams, Annual Message to Congress, 1797. *Annals of Congress*, House 5th Cong. 2nd Sess. 632.

⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large*, 5th Congress, 2nd Sess. 553.

navy, if it would consider using force against the Barbary States, in 1799 he complained to his friend Elbridge Gerry, about building a large navy. He wanted a navy large enough only to protect of the nation's coast and harbors. To Jefferson, a large navy was too expensive to maintain and had the potential of involving the U.S. in wars with other nations.⁴⁷ Jefferson's concerns did not promote the idea of repelling "force by force", because without a strong navy the U.S. would have no means of protecting its commerce in the Mediterranean other than appeasing the Barbary regencies with tributes. No wonder he never relented on the idea of forming an international coalition, without which he would take no decisive measure aimed at ending the practice of paying tribute to the Barbary powers.

Notwithstanding Jefferson's criticism and opposition to the building program expressed by some congressmen, including John Nicholas of Virginia and Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania, ship building continued until 1800 when the Treaty of Mortefontaine ended hostilities between the U.S. and France. By the time peace was established, the U.S. navy was comprised of twenty-five vessels including twelve merchantmen hired by the government.⁴⁸ Having established peace with France, Congress passed "An act providing for a Naval peace establishment, and for other purposes", on March 3, 1801. The act required seven of the Navy's thirteen ships to be decommissioned and crews reduced by one-third.⁴⁹ Even so, Jefferson would have six naval vessels with which to work.

Jefferson won the presidential election of 1800 and took office in March 1801. Soon, the ruler of Tripoli, Bashaw Yusuf Karamanli, tested the president's resolve on the use of force to

⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry January 26, 1799. In Randolph, 414.

⁴⁸ London, 50.

⁴⁹ U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large*, 6th Congress, 2nd Sess. 110.

end Barbary piracy. The Bashaw was dissatisfied with the U.S.-Tripolitan treaty of 1797 because it named the Dey of Algiers as guarantor and did not involve an annual tribute. Karamanli also complained that the U. S. gave more gifts to Algiers and Tunis than to Tripoli. After the U.S. Consul James Cathcart arrived in Tripoli in April 1799, the Bashaw made several demands for the U.S. to treat Tripoli on a basis equal to Algiers and Tunis. In October 1800, during the presidential race, Bashaw Karamanli issued an ultimatum. The nations had to negotiate a new treaty within six months or he would declare war. In February 1801, the Bashaw repudiated the existing treaty and demanded \$250,000 as an initial term of peace and an annual tribute of \$25,000 thereafter.⁵⁰ To carry out his threat the Bashaw fit out cruisers to attack U.S. merchant vessels on the eve of Jefferson's inauguration.⁵¹

Jefferson responded by dispatching a navy squadron to the Mediterranean in June 1801. However, he did not intend to engage in actual warfare but merely display an overwhelming naval force to compel the Bashaw to negotiate a treaty favorable to the U.S.⁵² He had written to Madison in May 1801 and expressed frustration over the manner in which the Barbary powers extorted money from ransoms and tributes. Jefferson said that only the presence of an armed force "would stop the eternal increase." As a diplomat, Jefferson had proposed commercial treaties based solely on equality and reciprocity. After his coalition efforts failed, his focus shifted from ending the practice of paying tribute to securing favorable treaties, which nonetheless involved paying tribute and stopping abuses.

⁵⁰ James L. Cathcart, "Journal of our Negotiations" ed. J.B. Cathcart in *Tripoli: First War with the United States, Inner History, Letter Book by James Leander Cathcart, First Consul to Tripoli and Last Letters from Tunis*. Newkirk: Herald Print, 1901. D.A.R. LaPort Ind. Microfilm 228-229.

⁵¹ Cathcart, 264.

⁵² James Madison to James L. Cathcart Esq. Consul at Tripoli, May 21, 1801. *American States Papers*, Foreign Relations, Vol. 2:348.

Jefferson did not believe that the U.S. could single handedly protect its commerce in the Mediterranean. Indeed, he even contemplated abandoning the trade in the region altogether because Barbary rulers broke agreements and kept demanding more in tributes. On June 11, 1801, he told Virginia Senator Wilson Cary Nicholas, "The real alternative before us is whether to abandon the Mediterranean or to keep up a cruise in it, perhaps in rotation with other powers who would join us as soon as there is peace." As commander in chief Jefferson had the opportunity with congressional support to apply the type of force he had advocated in order to stop paying tributes to the Barbary States. Yet, he was frustrated and considered abandoning the lucrative trade altogether.

In his message to Bashaw Karamanli in the summer of 1801, Jefferson did not demonstrate the level of strength needed for a president who advocates the use of force to achieve his goal. He offered assurances of friendship and emphasized U.S. commitment to peaceful relations with Tripoli. Jefferson explained to the Bashaw the reason for sending the navy squadron to the Mediterranean and further expressed the hope that the Bashaw would not interpret the presence of the U.S. navy in the Mediterranean as an attempt to wage war against Tripoli.⁵³ This was a time that Tripoli had already resumed hostilities against the U.S. Instead of ceasing the opportunity to make his intentions clear to the Bashaw, the president rather chose to assume a more conciliatory approach in dealing with Tripoli. He was willing to make peace with Tripoli if the Bashaw would accept a reasonable prize.⁵⁴

⁵³ Lambert, 128.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, *American States Papers: Foreign Relations* Vol. 2: 248-249.

Commander Richard Dale who was in charge of the squadron in the Mediterranean, followed the president's example with a similar letter of friendship, but neither Jefferson nor his commander's diplomacy appeased the Bashaw. He replied to Dale's letter justifying the hostilities against the United States. The Bashaw was attempting to extort more money from the U.S. in violation of the treaty, which he now called unjust. He claimed that the U.S. had been more generous to Tunis and Algiers than to Tripoli and had failed to pay annual tribute to him.⁵⁵

Jefferson preferred the U.S. to join forces with European states to fight Barbary piracy and end the practice of paying tributes. However, he was unsuccessful in getting the cooperation of any European state in a coalition against the Barbary powers. He therefore resorted to employing naval force to secure favorable treaties and enforce existing treaties, as has been the practice among European maritime powers such Britain, France, and Holland. This marked a modification of Jefferson's policy with Barbary States until Tripoli was defeated in 1805.

⁵⁵ U.S. Congress, *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, Vol.1:560-561.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRIPOLITAN WAR

The Tripolitan war was an undeclared naval war between the United States of America and the Barbary Regency of Tripoli from May 1801 to June 1805. It was the first of two wars between the U.S. and a Barbary State for the right to navigate and trade in the Mediterranean. U.S. diplomats considered Tripoli to be the most primitive and weakest among the Barbary States in the late eighteenth century. Its military consisted of untrained and ill-equipped Mumelukes and the navy was made up of only a few corsairs. The Dey of Algiers also exercised a great deal of authority over Tripoli. Once they secured the Dey's friendship through a treaty in 1795, the U.S. exploited the situation by seeking Algiers's support in its negotiations with Tripoli.¹

In the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States and Tripoli signed on January 3, 1797, U.S. officials had the Dey of Algiers guarantee the preservation of peace between the U.S. and Tripoli and require all treaty violations to be appealed to Hassan Pasha, but the treaty did not involve the payment of annual tributes.² Tripoli's Bashaw, Yusuf Karamanli, had insisted that the U.S. pay annual tributes and provide additional gifts of military stores, but the U.S. agent Richard O'Brien, with the intervention of the Dey of Algiers managed

¹ Samuel Edward, *Barbary General: The Life of William H. Eaton* (Eagle Wood Cliff, N.J: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1968), 80-82.

² U.S. Senate, Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli. January 3, 1797. *American State Papers*, Foreign Relations Vol. 2, 18-19.

to negotiate \$12,000 in lieu of the military stores and a one-time payment of \$40,000 for peace but no annual tributes.³

Bashaw Karamanli interpreted this arrangement as the subordination of Tripoli to Algiers, asserting that Tripoli was not a vassal state of Algiers and vowed to change U.S.-Tripolitan relations.⁴ In October 1800, the Bashaw demanded a new treaty that involved an annuity and was devoid of any interference from Algiers. He demanded \$125,000 as an immediate payment for peace, and payment of a \$25,000 tribute annually. He then threatened to declare war if the U.S. failed to meet his new demands within six months.⁵

By April 1801, the U.S. had not reopened negotiations and the Bashaw had become convinced that his threats would not yield the desired response. He then hastened preparation of the Tripolitan navy in order to carry through on his threats. Meanwhile, the U.S. Consul James Leander Cathcart, who was stationed in Tripoli, had also concluded that the Bashaw would actually commence hostilities against the United States. Cathcart began circulating letters to other consuls and U.S. agents throughout the Mediterranean warning of probable hostilities against American merchant vessels by spring 1801 and cautioned against merchantmen sailing without a naval convoy.⁶

On May 13, Cathcart sent a final circular warning U.S. consuls and agents to detain all merchant vessels, as the Bashaw was likely to declare war within sixty days. He organized

³ Ray W. Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of The United States with the Barbary Powers: 1776-1816*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 84-85

⁴ James L. Cathcart, "Journal of our Negotiations" ed. J.B. Cathcart in *Tripoli: First War with the United States, Inner History, Letter Book by James Leander Cathcart, First Consul to Tripoli and Last Letters from Tunis*. Newkirk: Herald Print, 1901. D.A.R. LaPort, 2-3. Microfilm.

⁵ *Ibid*, 190-195.

⁶ *Ibid*, 228-229.

himself to hand over the affairs of the U.S. to the care of Nicholas Nisan, the Danish Consul General in Tripoli, in case the Bashaw should declare war and he needed to leave Tripoli.⁷ By this time, Tripolitan cruisers were being fitted out openly and the Bashaw had cut off all communications with the American consulate in Tripoli. On May 14, Tripolitan troops marched to the U.S. consulate and cut down the flagstaff, which signified a formal declaration of war. On May 24, Cathcart left for Leghorn, Italy.⁸

Karamanli's official declaration of war came only two months after Thomas Jefferson assumed office as president in March 1801. Jefferson had been arguing against the payment of tributes and ransoms to Barbary State regencies since 1785. He advocated war to end this practice and open the Mediterranean for free trade. Meanwhile, the U.S. government was informed about the imminent war with Tripoli and the need to show military force in the region. Five days after his inauguration, Jefferson held a cabinet meeting to discuss the propriety of sending naval force to the Mediterranean. Though the President and a majority of the cabinet including secretary of state appointee, James Madison, favored a naval expedition, there was major concern about the constitutionality of taking such actions. The Attorney General appointee, Levi Lincoln, warned that the Executive had no powers to declare war and cautioned against taking any warlike actions.⁹

Discussions on the appropriate reaction to the Tripolitan threats continued for the next two months during which Madison received confirmed reports from Cathcart about the

⁷ Ibid, 298.

⁸ Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1965), 91.

⁹ A.B.C. Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines*. (New York: Marrow, 1991), 64.

Bashaw's hostilities and requested deployment of a naval force to the Mediterranean. At the next meeting on May 15, the cabinet resolved to send a naval squadron as per Cathcart's request.¹⁰ The purpose of the expedition was to ensure the safety of the U.S merchant fleet and train the seamen in nautical duties.¹¹ On May 22, President Jefferson commissioned Commodore Richard Dale to take charge of the squadron comprised of the 44-gun frigate *President*, the 38-gun frigate *Philadelphia*, the 32-gun frigate *Essex*, and the 12-gun schooner *Enterprise*. The fleet set sail to the region on June 2, 1801.¹²

Jefferson became the first U.S. president to deploy a naval force against a Barbary power. However, his aim was not to end the payment of tributes and ransom as he previously advocated. He hoped to display overwhelming naval power that would compel Tripoli to negotiate a favorable treaty with the U.S.¹³ Jefferson's message to the Bashaw was friendly and emphasized America's commitment to peaceful relations with Tripoli. He went as far as to explain that the squadron was merely on observation and hoped that it would give umbrage to no power.¹⁴

This chapter analyzes the Tripolitan War and concludes that Jefferson did not wage the war with the aim of ending tribute payment. His aim was to coerce Tripoli to negotiate a favorable treaty with the United States. William Eaton's capture of Derne in 1805 and threat to dethrone the reigning Bashaw, however, scared the ruler and compelled him to conclude a

¹⁰ Whipple, 65.

¹¹ Ian W. Toll, *The Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 169.

¹² Whipple, 66-67.

¹³ Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 124.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 128.

treaty involving no tribute with the U.S. Eaton's victory in Derne changed U.S. policy with the Barbary States from seeking less expensive treaties to free navigation.

Besides Jefferson's friendly overture, Secretary of the Navy, Robert Smith, instructed Commodore Dale to use the forces under his command to punish Tripoli if that regency had declared war by the time he arrived in the Mediterranean Sea. Otherwise, Dale should make a present of \$10,000 to the Bashaw, if the ruler had "conducted himself peaceably towards the United States."¹⁵ By these actions, Jefferson was modifying the most current treaty arrangement by submitting to the Bashaw's request for tribute.

Dale and his squadron entered Gibraltar Bay on July 1, 1801, at which time he learned that Tripoli had declared war on the U.S. six weeks earlier. His squadron encountered two Tripolitan corsairs under the command of Murad Rais, the most notorious pirate cruising at the harbor, and Dale had the corsairs quarantined. Though Rais lied that the corsairs were not cruising for American vessels, Dale ordered Samuel Barron, captain of the *Philadelphia*, to remain at the harbor and prevent the corsairs from escaping.¹⁶ Acting on his orders, Dale deployed the *President* and *Enterprise* to blockade Tripoli. However, because of uncharted reefs and rocks, Tripoli was inaccessible and the blockade was ineffective. Natural barriers made it dangerous for the deep-shaft frigates to approach the shore and block the main channel, so Commodore Dale's squadron provided escorts for American merchant vessels.¹⁷

¹⁵ Text of Instructions quoted in Irwin, 104.

¹⁶ Whipple, 76.

¹⁷ Ibid, 79.

By the end of July, the *President* and the *Enterprise* were running low on supplies. On July 30, Dale sent the *Enterprise* commanded by Lieutenant Andrew Sterrett to Malta for supplies. On the morning of August 1, the *Enterprise* encountered the 12-gun *Tripoli*, a Tripolitan war ship off the coast of Tripoli. In a short, but fierce fight, the *Enterprise* overpowered the *Tripoli*. The *Tripoli* surrendered by noon with thirty killed and thirty wounded. The crew of the *Enterprise* stripped the *Tripoli* of its guns before releasing it because their commission did not permit them to take an enemy ship as prize.¹⁸ This was the only major victory of Dale's squadron. The smaller Tripolitan vessels were often able to run the blockade because the U.S. navy's frigates could not pursue them through the harbor's shallow water.

Jefferson reviewed U.S. relations with the Barbary States in his annual message to Congress in December 1801. He observed that his dispatch to the Mediterranean was only a defensive measure because Congress did not sanction it. Congress had to decide how to deal with the Barbary hostilities against the U.S. He also reported that he discovered the U.S. was in arrears with its tributes to some of the Barbary States and he thought it his duty to pay the outstanding amounts so that the U.S. might not be guilty of violating the treaties.¹⁹ Jefferson's message did not incite Congress to seek an end to the practice of paying tribute. Rather, it sought to enforce the existing treaties through naval force.

In March 1802, Jefferson commissioned Commodore Richard V. Morris to replace Dale whose commission had expired. By this time, Congress had passed an Act for the Protection of Commerce and Seamen of the United States against the Tripolitan Cruisers on February 6. This

¹⁸ Lambert, 129-130.

¹⁹ Thomas Jefferson, Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1801. *Senate Journal* Vol. 3, 157.

law made it possible for Jefferson to deploy more naval ships to maintain the blockade in Tripoli. It also enabled Jefferson to instruct the squadron to use every necessary force to defeat the enemy and take her ships as prize.²⁰ By this action, Congress seemed to have endorsed the president's plan of using the navy to coerce Tripoli to negotiate a treaty that would be favorable to the U.S. but not to wage a full-scale war. The act merely enabled the U.S. to protect its commerce in the Barbary and did nothing to end the payment of Tributes. Dale left the Mediterranean on March 9, but Morris did not depart from the U.S. until April 27, even though he received his commission on February 18.²¹

Morris's instruction did not show any determination to end the practice of paying tributes by military force. In his instructions of April 20, Madison revealed that the president deemed the time favorable to open negotiations with Tripoli. Morris was directed to cooperate with Cathcart who had been authorized to negotiate a treaty.²² Madison told Cathcart two days earlier that the government would have liked to continue the war, but cost and the increased risk of other Barbary powers uniting with Tripoli against the U.S. had made it prudent to consider a peaceful settlement.²³

The only significant achievement so far is the capture of the Tripolitan corsair *Tripoli* by the U.S. schooner *Enterprise*. In June 1802, Tripolitan pirates managed to run the blockade and capture the *Franklin* an American merchantman en route to Marseille from the West Indies. The Captain and crew of the *Franklin* were paraded through the streets of Tripoli to expose

²⁰ U.S. Congress, *Statutes at Large*, 7th Congress, 1st Sess. 129-130.

²¹ London, 109.

²² Irwin, 112.

²³ James Madison to James Cathcart, May 10, 1802. Quoted in Irwin, 108.

American “impotence in the face of Tripolitan prowess.”²⁴ No doubt, Bashaw Karamanli became convinced that his corsairs could withstand the U.S. navy and strengthened his demands for a new treaty and an annual tribute.

The Second Mediterranean squadron under the command of Morris failed to achieve any spectacular success. Morris had gone to the Mediterranean with his pregnant wife who required most of his attention. Instead of proceeding to maintain the Tripolitan blockade, Morris chose to spend more time at the British garrison at Gibraltar. His private life had a detrimental effect on the expedition. William Eaton, who was the Consul at Tunis at this time, expressed his frustration at Morris’s unprofessional character when he complained to the Secretary of State, that it was because of Morris’s lack of professionalism that the mission was failing.²⁵

Despite the fact that the second squadron did not blockade Tripoli until May 1803, Morris opened negotiations with the Bashaw on May 23, a few days after he arrived in Tripoli without cooperating with Cathcart. Morris offered the Bashaw \$5,000 as a consular gift and another gift of \$10,000 to be paid after five years if Tripoli did not violate the treaty. Morris hoped that such a provision would entice Tripoli to abide by the treaty. The Bashaw rejected the offer and negotiations ended in June.²⁶ In April 1803, Madison complained to Cathcart that the war was dragging. He urged Cathcart not to be adamant about paying the consular gift and to offer the Bashaw a \$20,000 down payment and \$8,000 or \$10,000 annuity. Cathcart was to

²⁴ London, 110-111.

²⁵ William Eaton to James Madison. In James Madison, *The Secretary of State Series*, Vol. 1, 347.

²⁶ Irwin, 126-127.

make a similar offer to Tunis that was also demanding a review of its treaty with the U.S. Cathcart had been directed to serve as consul to Tunis after Eaton left in March.²⁷

In June 1803, Morris raised the blockade of Tripoli and ordered the entire squadron proceeded to Messina near Italy. By this time, reports of Morris's insubordination had reached the government. President Jefferson ordered his suspension and he was subsequently court-martialed.²⁸ Historian Frank Lambert argues that the U.S. fleet of 126 guns was well capable of annihilating Tripolitan forces but chose to maintain a blockade that proved ineffective.²⁹ George C. Herring also argues that Jefferson's indecision and desire to hold down federal expenditure made him to keep the conflict strictly limited and consequently dragged it for five years.³⁰ Jefferson's believe in a coalition as only means of defeating the pirates, made him to dispel the possibility of a unilateral victory against Tripoli. Soon after the war began, he told his Republican friend, Wilson C. Nicholas, that the only way to wage a successful war against the Barbary pirates was through a coalition with European nations, otherwise the U.S. might as well consider abandoning the Mediterranean trade.³¹

In June 1803, Jefferson commissioned Commodore Edward Preble to replace Morris. Preble had served in the U.S. navy since 1777 starting at age 16. He had risen through the ranks and distinguished himself during the Quasi War with France (1798-1800). He arrived at the harbor of Tripoli in September 1803 and ordered his captains to blockade Tripoli. His strategy to

²⁷ James Madison to James Cathcart, April 9, 1803. In Madison, 416.

²⁸ Lambert, 139.

²⁹ Ibid, 128.

³⁰ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99.

³¹ Thomas Jefferson to Wilson Cary Nicholas, June 11, 1801. In *The Jefferson Papers*.

outsmart the Tripolitan cruisers was to chase corsairs and run them down before they could get to the shallow waters.³² This plan would soon result in the biggest disaster of the Tripolitan War.

On October 3, Preble dispatched the *Vixen* a 16-gun brigantine commanded by Lieutenant John Smith and the *Philadelphia* a 36-gun frigate under the command of Captain William Bainbridge to maintain the blockade. The vessels arrived at Tripoli on October 7 and cruised in the area for two weeks without encountering an enemy ship.³³ On October 20, Captain Bainbridge sent the *Vixen* towards Cape Bon off the shore of Tunisia in search of two Tripolitan warships reported to be cruising the area. After dispatching the *Vixen* the *Philadelphia* spotted a corsair off the coast of Tripoli in the early morning of October 31 and chased her.³⁴

As it pursued the Tripolitan corsair, the frigate came too close to the shore and ran aground. After spending hours in a fruitless effort to dislodge the ship, the *Philadelphia's* 307 crew and officers were forced to surrender and were taken captive. Yusuf Karamanli referred to the *Philadelphia* as "The gift of Allah" and demanded a \$250,000 ransom.³⁵ These men remained in captivity until June 1805 when Tobias Lear, the U.S. Consul General in the Barbary stationed at Algiers, concluded a treaty with the Bashaw after Eaton had captured Derne and threatened to capture Tripoli.

³² Lambert, 139.

³³ London, 155.

³⁴ Richard Zack, *The Pirate Coast; Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805*. (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 15-19.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 48.

The loss of the *Philadelphia* and 307 Americans to Tripoli worsened U.S. efforts for peaceful settlement of the conflict. Prior to the accident, in October, the Bashaw had indicated that he was willing to accept \$50,000 as the price for peace and a tribute of \$20,000 annually. By January 1804, Yusuf Karamanli was now asking for three million dollars as a ransom and the price for peace.³⁶ Preble had sixty Tripolitan prisoners and intended to exchange them for as many American prisoners as possible. He opened negotiations for peace through Mohammed Dghies, Tripoli's Foreign Minister, who indicated the Bashaw's commitment to a peaceful settlement. Dghies assured Preble that the Bashaw would agree to a treaty without tributes, a reasonable consular gifts and a ransom of \$500 per prisoner³⁷. This arrangement seemed possible until Lieutenant Stephen Decatur led U.S. forces to burn the *Philadelphia* in harbor of Tripoli on April 16, 1804.

Stephen Decatur, a Maryland born Navy officer, had a successful career prior to his victory in Tripoli. Decatur joined the Navy in 1798 as a midshipman. During the Quasi War, he served on the USS *United States* under commodore John Barry. Decatur distinguished himself when he captured the French privateer, the *Croyable*, on July 7, 1798, off Egg Harbor near New Jersey. He had just taken command of his first ship, the *Delaware*, on July 6, when the crew of a merchantman *Alexander Hamilton* reported to him that a French privateer had plundered her. Decatur went in search of the privateer, captured it, and took it as America's first prize of war.³⁸ He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in May 1799 after serving for only a year. When the Tripolitan War began, Decatur served under William Bainbridge on the USS *Essex*, a 32-gun

³⁶ Irwin, 135.

³⁷ Allan, 164.

³⁸ George C. Daughan, *If By Sea: The Forging of the American Navy from the Revolution to the War of 1812*. (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 318.

frigate. He transferred to the USS *New York*, a 36-gun frigate under the command of James Barron, and later took command of the USS *Enterprise*, a 12-gun schooner. On December 23, 1803, Decatur captured the Tripolitan ketch *Mastico* disguised in Turkish colors and took it as prize for the U.S. navy where it became the *Intrepid*.³⁹

On January 31, 1804, Preble sent Decatur on one of the most daring assignments of the expedition. Preble instructed Decatur to select seventy volunteers, “proceed to Tripoli in company with the *Siren*, Lieutenant Stewart, enter the harbor in the night, board the *Philadelphia*, burn her, and make good your retreat with the *Intrepid*.”⁴⁰ Decatur and his crew sailed from Syracuse on February 3 and arrived within sight of Tripoli’s minarets, tall narrow towers on mosques, on February 7, but the attack was delayed until the 16th due to bad weather. On the night of the attack, the Americans disguised the *intrepid* as a Turkish merchantman and sneaked into the harbor. Decatur and his men succeeded in boarding the *Philadelphia*, drove the Tripolitan crew into the sea, and set the ship on fire. They then withdrew on the *Intrepid*, escaping the Tripolitan batteries without a single casualty.⁴¹ The heroic deed not only scared the Bashaw but also angered him and made him fortify his defenses.⁴²

Throughout the winter of 1804, William Eaton was in Washington seeking President Jefferson’s support and later Congress’s to balance his consular accounts. He had returned from Tunis with a deficit of \$22,000, much of which he claimed was expended on his project with

³⁹ Allen, 163.

⁴⁰ Preble to Stephen Decatur, January 31, 1804. Quoted in Allen, 166.

⁴¹ Allan, 168-172

⁴² Lambert, 144.

Karamanli. Eaton incurred debt in providing safe passage for Hamet from Tunis to Derne and furnished Hamet with money for his personal up-keep without authorization and that led to his disputed bill. Jefferson considered the expenses Eaton's private expenditures and referred the case to an auditor who reviewed the accounts and presented Eaton with an even higher bill of \$40,803. Eaton gave Congress a detailed explanation of his dealings with Karamnli and insisted that the project was an official undertaking.⁴³ Although a committee of claims reviewed the accounts, praised him for his sacrifice, and justified the expenses, Eaton was sent back to the executive to resolve the problem with his consular accounts.⁴⁴

In May, Eaton returned to the president to discuss his accounts and happened upon an opportunity to redeem himself. His meetings with Jefferson coincided with the news about the *Philadelphia's* capture and the enslavement of its 307 crewmembers in Tripoli. Eaton seized the opportunity to discuss the possibility of overthrowing the reigning Bashaw of Tripoli in a secret mission by collaborating with the Bashaw's exiled brother, Hamet Karamanli, and setting up a puppet government in Tripoli. Eaton consistently argued the feasibility of this project until he finally convinced Jefferson.⁴⁵

On March 30, 1804, President Jefferson and his cabinet approved Eaton's secret mission. He would work under Commodore James Barron who was proceeding to the Mediterranean to take charge of the squadron. Eaton was to find Hamet Karamanli the exiled

⁴³ William Eaton to the Speaker of House of Representatives. In Charles Prentiss, *The life of the late General William Eaton; several years an officer in the United States' Army, consul at the regency of Tunis on the coast of Barbary, and the Commander of the Christian and other forces that march from Egypt through the desert to of Barca, in 1805.* (Brookfield: Merriam, E., 1813), 263-267.

⁴⁴ Zack,40.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 41-43.

brother of the reigning Bashaw and heir apparent to the throne of Tripoli. The plan was to cooperate with him to overthrow his brother and restore Hamet to the throne of Tripoli. In return, Hamet should free U.S. captives in Tripoli and conclude a treaty with the U.S.⁴⁶ Though Eaton had made his plans known to the House of Representatives in his petition, Congress did not authorize the mission. The cabinet, it appears, deliberately waited for Congress to be in recess before taking this line of action. Eaton's mission was the first covert operation in another country sponsored by the United States government.⁴⁷

On May 10, Eaton arrived in Washington to gather his supplies for the mission. He had spent a little over a month with his family at Brimfield, Massachusetts waiting for the vessels to be fitted out for the long voyage. By this time, the government had received letters from its official in the Mediterranean including one from Commodore Preble, the commander of the squadron. Preble described the situation regarding Hamet and expressed optimism over the plan to help him capture Tripoli. He also mentioned that Hamet Karamanli had fled from Derne to Alexandria and required ammunition and about \$90,000 for the project.⁴⁸

Jefferson, who interpreted Preble's dispatch to mean weakness on Hamet's part, became pessimistic about the success of the mission. He assumed that Hamet wielded little influence in Tripoli and considered the cost and the weapons required for the mission to be high. He therefore decided that a peaceful settlement with Tripoli would be more economical

⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, *American State Papers*, Foreign Rel. Vol. 2: 696-697.

⁴⁷ Zack, 43.

⁴⁸ Prentiss, 264-266.

and withheld supplies intended for the mission, hoping that the Bashaw could be persuaded to stick to the old treaty and accept a reasonable ransom for the captives.⁴⁹

Zack Richard writes that a cabinet meeting was held on May 26 where the decision was made to ransom American prisoners in Tripoli for \$500 each, and provision was made to pay tribute to Tripoli. The cabinet however allowed Eaton's mission to proceed and at the same time recommended a diplomatic solution.⁵⁰ By this time, some New Englanders desired for war with Tripoli and slogans like "Bash the Bashaw" and "Crush the lawless pirates" became common in New England newspapers.⁵¹ On the evening of May 26, Navy Secretary, Robert Smith, officially assigned Eaton the title "Navy Agent for the Several Barbary Regencies."⁵²

On July 4, 1804, Commodore Samuel Barron's squadron, the *President*, *Essex*, *Congress*, *John Adams*, and *Constellation*, set sail from the U.S. Eaton sailed on the *John Adams* with commodore Barron. The squadron arrived at Malta on July 29. While Barron stayed over for minor repairs on the other vessels, Eaton proceeded to Tripoli on the *John Adams* on August 9, to inform Preble about the arrival of the squadron and to learn firsthand about the situation in Tripoli. Samuel Edwards asserts that as more U.S. naval ships join in the blockade of Tripoli, it was hoped that the Bashaw would sue for peace, but he did not.⁵³

Eaton returned to Malta with Preble on October 23 to prepare and leave for Alexandria, Egypt to search for Hamet Karamanli.⁵⁴ Though he planned to leave on October 27, he could

⁴⁹ Prestiss, 266-267.

⁵⁰ Zack, 85.

⁵¹ Ibid, 87.

⁵² Ibid, 88.

⁵³ Edwards, 143-146.

⁵⁴ Prentiss, 269.

not do so because the *Argus* assigned for his voyage was reassigned. Finally, on November 14, Eaton left Malta with Captain Isaac Hull who had instructions to furnish Eaton with stores, ammunition, money, and anything available that he might require for the project.⁵⁵

Eaton arrived in Alexandria on December 2 and started his search for Hamet. By the first week in January 1805, Eaton had not found him and Captain Hull was getting impatient. Eaton had engaged the services of about five hundred Mumelukes while searching for Hamet in the hinterland of Cairo. Mumelukes were Arabs who were former slave soldiers. The *Argus* was running out of food and money. Hull informed Eaton that he could no longer meet his expenses and advised him to draw any further expenses on the U.S. Navy or the Department of State. Eaton had been sending letters to Hamet through various persons who claimed to have met the exiled ruler in one place or another. Finally, on January 8, Eaton received a letter from Hamet assuring him that he remained committed to the plan agreed upon in 1801.⁵⁶

On January 10, Hamet asked Eaton to provide him with \$15,000 for preparations. Eaton could afford only \$1,500, which Hamet accepted two days later.⁵⁷ Eaton and Hamet returned to the *Argus* on January 19 and started mobilizing camels and items for their expedition. On February 23, Eaton signed a convention with Hamet in which both parties agreed to maintain perpetual and reciprocal intercourse between the U.S. and Tripoli. The U.S. would support Hamet Karamanli with ammunitions and money to capture the throne of Tripoli in return for immediate release of the U.S. captives. Hamet would indemnify the U.S. through tributes from Sweden, Denmark, and the Batavian Republic. Hamet would regain fully charge of his regency,

⁵⁵ Zack, 120.

⁵⁶ Prentiss, 228.

⁵⁷ Zack, 156.

but the United States would no longer pay tributes to Tripoli. They also agreed that Eaton would command the expedition forces.⁵⁸

Once they signed the convention, Eaton took command of the troops. His party was comprised of nine Marines, three hundred Arab mercenaries, and thirty-eight Greeks. The rest were Mumelukes, making up a force of four hundred. A march from Alexandria to Derne started on March 8.⁵⁹ Derne was the second most important Tripolitan port city, about four hundred miles east of Tripoli. It was a distance of about five hundred miles from Alexandria through the desert. Hamet had convinced Eaton that a march across the desert was preferable to sailing. The *Argus* was to sail to a rendezvous point near Derne with provisions and reinforcements for the attack. Not long after the march began, the troops ran out of water, food, and money. The Arabs constantly harassed Eaton and Hamet and occasionally mutinied and threatened to abandon the project if their wages were not increased. It was with persistent persuasion and occasional deception with promises to pay them wages far above his budget that Eaton kept the troops advancing until they finally arrived outside the walls of Derne on April 25.⁶⁰

On April 26, Eaton received a signal that the U.S. navy had arrived. The *Argus*, the *Hornet*, and the *Nautilus* were within firing range and ready to bombard the city. Eaton received supplies and Hull prepared for the maneuver. On Saturday April 27, 1805, Eaton issued command for a full-scale attack on Derne. With cannon flowing from the *Argus* and the *Hornet*, Eaton's troops captured Derne by evening of April 27. United States had won its first war in the

⁵⁸ Prentiss, 297-299.

⁵⁹ Ibid,303.

⁶⁰ Ibid,302-309.

Mediterranean. The governor of Derne, Mustafa Bey, fled from his palace and Hamet took possession of it. The U.S. lost one marine, and two others were wounded along with Eaton. Ten of Hamet's troops were lost.⁶¹

Even though Derne fell to the attackers in a single day with few casualties sustaining the occupation proved more difficult. The deposed governor sought asylum in the harem of Sheik Mansur, a respected wealthy man in Derne. Sheik Mansur refused to release the governor based on tradition that grants sanctuary to endangered persons. The sheik reminded Hamet of a recent incident in which he had himself sought refuge in the same house. Meanwhile, Eaton feared that any attempt to take the Governor Bey by force might turn the people of Derne and the Arabs fighting with Eaton against the Christians as Hamet warned him.⁶²

The inability to capture the Governor became a major concern for Eaton. He had hoped that capturing Derne would result in a popular uprising against Yusuf Karamanli and incite support for the attackers to march on to Tripoli. Instead, Mustafa Bey retained his freedom and conspired with Yusuf Karamanli's loyalists. On the night of May 12, the Bey escaped to join a Tripolitan camp set up outside of the city preparing to attack it. The enemy launched its first attack on May 13, but Eaton's forces had adequately fortified the city and repelled them with many casualties in the enemy's camp. After they failed to retake Derne, the Tripolitans made several other unsuccessful attacks, but Eaton and his men managed to maintain their hold on the city.⁶³

⁶¹ Prestiss 309 -310.

⁶² Allen , 240-241.

⁶³ Ibid, 242-243.

On April 29, Eaton reported the capture of Derne to Commodore Barron. He followed his report with another letter on May 1, in which he argued the benefits of cooperating with Hamet.⁶⁴ On May 15, he wrote and asked Barron for reinforcements and preparations to attack Tripoli.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, when news of the fall of Derne reached Tripoli, the Bashaw became highly agitated and went into seclusion for a whole day.⁶⁶ As William Bainbridge, the enslaved captain of the *Philadelphia*, reported in a letter to Barron, “the Bashaw was so much agitated at the news of the approach of his brother, that he this day declared that if it were in his power to give up the American prisoners, he would gladly do so without the consideration of money.”⁶⁷ Barron had obviously observed the impact of Derne’s capture on the Bashaw and decided that this was the opportune time to open negotiations. Consequently, in his letter of May 19 to Eaton, Barron announced that negotiations with the Bashaw were about to begin and that Eaton and his forces may have to evacuate Derne soon.⁶⁸

Barron also indicated that he had instructions from the Department of the Navy to which Eaton was not privy, and that he considered Eaton’s mission “a measure too expensive and burthensome.”⁶⁹ Barron’s claim was true. Before he left the U.S., he received instructions from the Secretary of Navy Smith dated June 6, 1804. Smith informed him that, “Colonel Tobias Lear, our consul-general at Algiers, is invested by the President with full power and authority to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Pasha of Tripoli, and also to adjust such terms of

⁶⁴ William Eaton to Commodore Samuel Barron, April 29 and May 1, 1805. In Prentiss, 341-346

⁶⁵ William Eaton to Samuel Barron, May 15, 1805. In Prentiss, 347-349.

⁶⁶ Irwin, 153.

⁶⁷ William Bainbridge to Commodore Samuel Barron, quoted in Edwards, 219.

⁶⁸ Commodore Samuel Barron to William Eaton, May 19, 1805. 371-374.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 372.

conciliation as may be found necessary with any of the other Barbary powers.”⁷⁰ Another letter from the Secretary of State Madison to Lear had similar instructions: “Commodore Barron has orders to provide, at a suitable time, for your joining him, in order to the negotiating a peace with Tripoli.”⁷¹

The various instructions to the U.S. officials in the Barbary States expand our understanding on Jefferson’s true intension in sending a naval force to the Barbary Coast. The navy was intended to coerce the Bashaw to negotiate a treaty that would not be too expensive for the U.S. as some European powers have done. However, until Eaton captured Derne, this objective was not being achieved. The presence of a U.S. naval force in Tripoli since 1801 did not compel the Bashaw to back down on his demand for price for peace and annuity or negotiate a treaty on U.S. terms. It was only after Derne was captured that the Bashaw felt threatened and his resolve weakened. As soon as the Bashaw show signs of accepting a fair treaty, the U.S. would negotiate for peace and pay a reasonable tribute or ransom. Samuel Edwards argues, “Had the American Mediterranean squadron been prepared to follow William’s victory with a crushing naval attack on Tripoli, the war might have ended within twenty-four or forty-eight hours.”⁷²

On May 18, Barron suggested to Lear the propriety of opening negotiations for peace. He noted that Eaton’s victory in Derne would have a powerful effect on the reigning Bashaw.⁷³ Upon this suggestion, Lear sailed for Tripoli and arrived on May 26 to commence negotiations.

⁷⁰ Robert Smith to Samuel Barron, June 6, 1804. Quoted in Allen, 246.

⁷¹ James Madison to Tobias Lear. Quoted in Allen, 246.

⁷² Edwards, 219.

⁷³ Barron to Lear, May 18, 1805. *American State Papers*, Foreign Rels. Vol 2. 712.

The Bashaw had previously asked for \$200,000 as price for peace, ransom for all American prisoners, release of all Tripolitans captured, and a full restitution for all losses to Tripoli. Lear rejected this outright and informed the Bashaw that the U.S. would commence negotiations if he abandoned those demands.⁷⁴ When negotiations opened, the Bashaw relinquished his demand for tribute and asked for \$130,000 in ransom and the release of Tripolitan prisoners. Again, Lear rejected this and insisted on exchanging prisoners one for one. He would then ransom the remaining U.S. hostages for \$60,000 but pay nothing for tribute. The Bashaw accepted this proposal with a proviso that the U.S. would immediately withdraw its forces and Hamet from Derne. Lear agreed and proceeded to draft a treaty.⁷⁵

Barron's prediction about the impact of capturing Derne came true. A little past noon on Monday June 3, 1805, Bashaw Karamanli "pulled out his signet and pressed it upon the articles so far negotiated, It is peace he said."⁷⁶ The long awaited peace had come largely on U.S. terms after only nine days of negotiations. With a ransom of \$60,000 and a promise to withdraw from Derne and release Tripolitan prisoners, Lear had secured the release of some 207 American crewmembers, excluding those exchanged with Tripolitan captives that had been in slavery for 579 days.

Throughout the negotiations, Bashaw Karamanli did not seem bothered about tribute, his reason for waging war on the U.S., as he did about his brother's occupation of Derne. The Bashaw's determination to secure his throne and keep his regency intact was his focus in the

⁷⁴ Irwin, 151.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 152-153.

⁷⁶ Zack, 276.

negotiations.⁷⁷ Obviously, the capture of Derne by Eaton and his troops, and the threat of capturing Tripoli and possibly installing his rival as Bashaw, had shaken Yusef Karamanli. The most significant part of the treaty was that it provided for the last ransom the U.S. government would pay to Tripoli. Eaton's victory in Derne had initiated a change in U.S. foreign policy with the Barbary States.

On June 6, Tobias Lear instructed Eaton to withdraw his forces from Derne because he had negotiated peace with Tripoli.⁷⁸ Eaton was disappointed with Lear's treaty because the U.S. still paid ransom to Tripoli. The U.S. under Jefferson's leadership agreed to pay ransom to Tripoli even though Jefferson had argued against both tribute and ransom. Nonetheless, Eaton's modest achievement made a lasting impression that changed the course of U.S. diplomatic relations in the Barbary. Ten years after Eaton's victory in 1815, President Madison will take up arms against Algiers and totally end payment of tributes and ransoms to North African pirates. The all important peace terms was arrived at with Lear offering only a paltry thirty percent of what the Bashaw had demanded and nothing else for peace.

⁷⁷ William Bainbridge to Commodore Barron, quoted in Edwards, 273.

⁷⁸ Col. Lear to General Eaton, June 6, 1805. In Prentiss, 364-365.

CHAPTER 5

EPILOGUE

Thomas Jefferson failed to end the practice of paying tribute or ransom to the Barbary States through military force because he modified his stance from ending the practice through force to using military might as a bargaining tool. His objective became securing favorable treaties or enforcing existing treaties. From the commencement of Barbary depredations on U.S. trade in 1784 when he was a diplomat, through the end of the Tripolitan War in 1805 during his presidency, Jefferson exhibited major shifts in his policy.

In 1785, while a diplomat he advocated issuing a unilateral declaration of war on any Barbary State that would not accept a commercial treaty without extracting a tribute from the U.S. By 1786, he had come to terms with the fact that the U.S. was unprepared militarily to fight all of the Barbary States without allies. Jefferson then proposed forming a European-American coalition against the Barbary States, but this plan also failed because the European nations complained that the U.S. did not have a strong navy to contribute to the coalition fleet and withdrew. When he became president in 1801, he resorted to combining naval force with diplomacy in the Mediterranean, as has been the practice with Great Britain, France, and Holland.¹

Jefferson had hoped that apart from Naples, Portugal, Sweden, Malta, and Venice, other European powers would also join the coalition and ease the burden of war on the United States. He devoted much time and effort to gain support for the coalition when he was a

¹ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 11, 1786. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series, 1*. General Correspondence, 1651-1827.

diplomat, Secretary of State, and even president, but Congress did not support him and his efforts proved futile. At the beginning of the Tripolitan War, during his presidency, Jefferson still thought that his coalition plan was the only means for victory against the Barbary States. Without foreign aid, he feared that the U.S. might be forced to abandon trade in the Mediterranean altogether.² This led to a new policy by which he sought to use naval force to coerce Tripoli into entering a treaty with the U.S. at a reasonable expense but this proved ineffective until William Eaton's victory in Derne in 1805.³

Jefferson did not wage the Tripolitan War with the aim of ending the practice of paying tribute or ransom to Tripoli. His intension, which he explained on March 22, 1803, to Secretary of state Madison, was that the United States would continue to display naval force against Tripoli and simultaneously pursue a diplomatic solution until the Bashaw was willing to enter into a treaty with the U.S. at the least expensive solution. Jefferson called this a study course of justice aided occasionally by liberality.⁴ Throughout the war, Jefferson offered various amounts to make peace with Tripoli, which confirmed his policy of combining force with diplomacy. This was a common practice among major European powers trading in the Mediterranean by which negotiations for treaties were often accompanied by a naval force. Jefferson was the first president to negotiate a treaty with a Barbary power with the aid of military force.

² Thomas Jefferson to Wilson Cary Nicholas, June 11, 1801. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series*, 1. General Correspondence, 1651-1827.

³ Frank Lambert. *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 125.

⁴ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, March 22, 1803. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series*, 1. General Correspondence, 1651-1827.

As discussed in the previous chapters, each squadron commander dispatched to Tripoli between 1801 and 1804 had orders to offer a certain amount as tribute, which was usually higher than the payments agreed upon in the previous treaty but less than the Bashaw's new claim. This shows Jefferson's preparedness to pay some tribute in contradiction with his earlier insistence on absolute free trade.

The first four years of the Tripolitan War demonstrated that the Bashaw would not give up his demand for a tribute entirely. U.S. blockade of Tripoli was ineffective and the Bashaw was unyielding in his demands even in the face of increasing numbers of naval vessels assembling on the shores of Tripoli. It was only after Eaton captured Derne in April 1805 and threatened to overthrow the Bashaw that the issue was settled. The treaty negotiated by Tobias Lear completely ended the payment of tributes to Tripoli and significantly reduced the ransom for U.S. hostages from the \$130,000 that Bashaw Karamanli demanded initially, to a paltry \$60,000. This was the most favorable treaty negotiated with a Barbary State.

My argument agrees with those of Samuel Edwards and Joshua London, who argue that Eaton's victory in Derne was the most significant factor in securing a treaty eliminating tribute payments to Tripoli. Throughout the negotiations, Bashaw Karamanli expressed more concern about the occupation of Derne by U.S. forces and the return of his brother Hamet than with tribute or ransom payments for the Americans that he was holding captive. The Bashaw had at one point asked for three million dollars as his price for peace and ransom.⁵ However, after Eaton captured Derne, the Bashaw's only demand was for the U.S. to withdraw its forces and

⁵ Ray Irwin, *The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with the Barbary Powers: 1776- 1816* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 125.

persuade Hamet Karamanli, his dethroned brother and claimant to the throne to withdraw from the kingdom. Obviously, Bashaw Karamanli was shaken by Eaton's capture of Derne and the threat to capture Tripoli and possibly dethrone him.

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