

# The Causes and Consequences of the First Barbary War 1801-1805

Roel Monsieurs  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

**Erasmus  
University  
Rotterdam**



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Supervisor: F.M.M. de Goey  
Second reader: H.A.M. Klemann  
Student number: 358059  
Student E-mail: 358059rm@eur.nl

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This Master's thesis focuses on the Barbary Wars, and more specifically the First Barbary War that transpired between the years 1801 and 1805. The First Barbary War was fought between the North-African Barbary State of Tripoli and the United States. The war broke out because American trade vessels had come under repeated attacks from corsairs operating within the Regency of Tripoli, which was officially part of the Ottoman Empire but which many scholars believe possessed a great degree of autonomy. Although the Barbary Regency of Tripoli is often referred to as a 'state', its actual status as an independent state is debatable. Nevertheless, since modern scholars refer to the Barbary Regencies as states, I will follow this line of thought to avoid needless confusion. I will however further elaborate on the difference between a state and a regency and the reasoning behind this distinction in my historiography.<sup>1</sup>

The principal reason I had for choosing this subject is the fact that the First Barbary War is widely considered to be the first case of transatlantic American military intervention. As a result of this, the war had considerable implications for the development of American foreign policy and the ways in which American values were put into practice after the war was concluded. The second reason I had for choosing this subject was more practical, namely the fact that there is a lot of literature to be found on the First Barbary War. This has allowed me to conduct my research more efficiently and in greater detail. Other potential subjects for my thesis were an analysis of the broader American-Ottoman relations in the nineteenth century and the treaty of commerce that was signed between both powers in 1862. I have, however, chosen to place the First Barbary War at the center of my research as this allowed me to make my analysis more focused while still being able to elaborate on the broader American policies in the same period, because naturally these wars did not exist within a vacuum. In addition, I would also like to mention beforehand that this thesis is an examination of American foreign policy during and after the First Barbary War, and it thus does not include larger amounts of research on the Barbary States' motivations than is necessary to answer the research questions.

In the below part I will give some important background information on the chosen subject. The Barbary Wars were two separate conflicts that transpired at the beginning of the

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 9-14, Perspectives on the legality of the Barbary Wars (Specifically p. 12, Christian Windler).

nineteenth century. They were fought between the United States and the semi-autonomous Barbary States of the Ottoman Empire: Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers. The Barbary States had great influence over Mediterranean commerce resulting from their activities in privateering (the raiding of foreign ships, including their cargo, with permission from the state)<sup>2</sup> and the kidnapping of foreign sailors and ship passengers. For decades, European nations and the Americans had been forced to pay ransom for the safe return of these passengers, and a great deal of precious cargo was lost due to the seizing of their ships.<sup>3</sup>

The final straw for the Americans came when Thomas Jefferson was sworn in as president in 1801. Jefferson was fundamentally against paying the Barbary States for the safe return of American hostages, and shortly after he became president he dispatched the American fleet to the Mediterranean and waged war on the Barbary State of Tripoli. While the war did not result in an outright victory and even resulted in the loss of a U.S. warship (the USS Philadelphia), the bombardment of the North-African city of Tripoli forced the Pasha of that city to sign a treaty which would lead to the return of all American hostages and a cessation of attacks on U.S. shipping vessels.<sup>4</sup>

The treaty did not end hostilities permanently however, and in 1815 the U.S. navy and other European nations once again found themselves in a war against the Barbary States, namely the Second Barbary War. This time victory on the seas was permanently achieved for the United States, as full shipping rights were part of the resulting peace treaty. The Barbary corsairs however continued to harass other Western nations until the 1830's, after which it turned out they were no longer able to resist European and American technological superiority and were forced to capitulate after their cities repeatedly came under intense naval bombardment.<sup>5</sup>

I will now formulate the research questions for my Master's thesis concretely. My main question is: *Why and how did the early United States directly and violently intervene in 1801 against a transatlantic power; the North-African Barbary State of Tripoli, for the first time in its existence?* My second question is: *What role did Thomas Jefferson play in the American*

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed explanation on the distinction between pirates and privateers in nineteenth century International Law, see the historiography on page 8-9 (Frank Lambert).

<sup>3</sup> Martin N. Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 4 (2013) 34-36.

<sup>4</sup> James R. Sofka, *The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security: Commerce, The Atlantic Balance of Power, and the Barbary War, 1786 – 1805* (Oxford 1997) 543.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 37-39.

*intervention against the Barbary State of Tripoli in 1801?* Finally, my third and last question is: *What long term effects did the Barbary Wars have on American society and foreign policy?*

These questions have allowed me to examine the conflict in a complete and thorough manner. I start my thesis with an introductory chapter which includes this introduction, a historiography, an explanation on the nature of the used sources, an outline of the used research method and the intended academic contribution. The second chapter then explains the complete history of both the First and Second Barbary Wars in greater detail. The third chapter focuses on the main question of why and how the United States intervened against the Barbary State of Tripoli. This includes the political convictions of Thomas Jefferson and the role those played in the outbreak of the war, thus also answering the second research question. The fourth and final chapter then puts the conflict into a broader context in order to find an answer to the third question, hopefully revealing what implications the war had on the evolution of the American political system, American foreign policy and the American self-image. I finish with a conclusion in which all findings are summarized and contextualized.

## **1.1 Historiography**

### **1.1.1 Introduction of debates**

In order to be able to gather enough relevant information for the purpose of answering the research questions, I have decided to focus my attention on four separate debates within academia concerning the Barbary Wars. In the examination of the first debate I look at the numerous explanations for the outbreak of the wars that have been proposed. In the second debate I examine the proposed reasons that have been presented as to why the United States was able to go to war against the Barbary States without involving the Ottoman Empire itself. The third examined debate outlines the different opinions on the role of Thomas Jefferson in the wars. Finally, the last debate concerns the different views on the long-term effects the Barbary Wars had on American society.

### **1.1.2 Proposed reasons for the intervention against the Barbary States**

Multiple reasons for the United States' intervention against the Barbary States have been presented in academic literature. In 'White Slaves, African Masters', Paul Baepler argues that

the intervention was largely grounded in the Barbary captivity narratives that existed in the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These narratives consisted of recollections from American citizens enslaved by the corsairs of the North-African Barbary States. Most of the captives were eventually freed through the payment of ransom, and the stories they told after being freed were immensely popular during the time of the Barbary Wars. In these stories, the Arab inhabitants of the Barbary States were often portrayed as savages and their culture was seen as degenerate. The fact that white U.S. citizens were enslaved by these corsairs thus caused uproar in the United States, and according to Baepler this forced the U.S. government to increase funding to the Navy, pay tribute to the corsairs and eventually even go to war.<sup>6</sup>

Baepler thus seeks the reasons for the wars within the cultural domain. But political, economic and even religious incentives have been presented as well. In 'The Costs of State-Sponsored Terrorism: The Example of the Barbary Pirates', Thomas G. Woodward seeks an explanation in the economic dimension and examines the annual costs the U.S. incurred as a result of the Barbary corsairs. He divides these expenditures in three categories, namely protection payments, naval protection and insurance costs. Protection payments refer to the transfer of capital to the rulers of Tripoli and Algiers in order to stop them from using their corsairs to raid U.S. shipping vessels. Naval protection refers to the use of military escorts to protect against attacks by the corsairs. And finally, examining insurance costs allows for a relatively accurate representation of the total value of the goods seized by the Barbary privateers from U.S. merchants. After grouping all these expenditures together, Woodward comes to the conclusion that the resulting costs were so high, about ten to twenty billion American dollars annually in modern terms, that the U.S. government had no other choice than to intervene militarily to stop the raids on their ships.<sup>7</sup>

A more ideologically based explanation is presented by Martin N. Murphy. He states that the belief in free trade was one of the main pillars of the new-born American identity. The fact that the Barbary States actively disrupted U.S. trade routes thus not only caused economic damage, but also attacked the very core of American values. Furthermore, paying tribute to the Barbary States was seen as submitting to the demands of a foreign power. This

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Baepler, 'White Slaves, African Masters', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588, *Islam: Enduring Myths and Changing Realities* (2003) 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas G. Woodward, 'The Costs of State-Sponsored Terrorism: The Example of the Barbary Pirates', *National Tax Journal* 57.3 (2004) 611.

damaged the American sense of independence that had been fiercely fought over several decades earlier. And since the American navy had been slowly growing in the decades before the Barbary Wars, the U.S. government now had the ability to actively pursue their values and interests. Finally, Murphy mentions that attacking the Barbary States would send a clear message to European powers that the United States was no longer to be trifled with, thus increasing American prestige in the eyes of its rivals.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, a terminologically and culturally based reason is proposed by Frank Lambert in his book *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*. In the fourth chapter of this book, Lambert examines the terminological difference between the concepts of pirates and privateers. He states that pirates were regarded as criminals in nineteenth century International Law, while privateers were regarded as state-endorsed tools of economic and military power. In the case of the Barbary States, the distinction was however not so easily made. Since the Barbary States had some autonomy from the Sublime Porte, the Ottoman government, it was often uncertain if their activities were endorsed by the Ottomans or not. And the fact that protection treaties signed directly through the Sublime Porte often had no actual effect on the Barbary States made the distinction even more difficult.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, most European nations such as Britain and France decided to regard the Barbary corsairs as state-endorsed privateers, and thus made sure that their ships were not attacked by paying tribute to the leaders of the Barbary States. On this issue however the United States did not follow suit. Instead, the United States' government branded the Barbary corsairs as pirates and thus did not see them as legitimate international actors. They instead viewed them as outlaws and they saw the states that harbored them as 'piratical states'. Lambert finds one explanation for these views in the democratic principles of the United States, which fundamentally disagreed with the tyrannical oppression that the Barbary leaders utilized. He also states that the fact that the European monarchies accepted the Barbary corsairs as legitimate actors further reinforced the American's view of the Barbary States as 'barbaric' and representative of old-world authoritarianism. Eventually the American's view on the Barbary States did shift, towards the end of the 1790's they no longer saw them as a legitimate, vicious threat but rather as leftovers of a lifestyle that became increasingly

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<sup>8</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, Chapter 4: The Cultural Construction of the Barbary Pirates (New York 2007) (E-book).



irrelevant. But Lambert states that while cultural reasons were at the core of the American distaste for the Barbary corsairs, it was their condemnation of these corsairs as pirates instead of privateers that allowed them to undertake action.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.1.3 Perspectives on the legality of the Barbary Wars**

The Barbary States of Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli were all territories that fell under the authority of the Ottoman Sultan. During the Barbary Wars, however, the United States fought against the Barbary States but never officially went to war against the Ottoman Empire itself. How can it be possible to wage a war against parts of an empire without declaring war against the empire itself? Multiple explanations for this seemingly contradictory state of affairs have been presented in academic literature.

Alejandro Colás seeks to find an explanation by looking at the development of International Law and the ‘standard of civilization’ in the area of the Mediterranean. In ‘Barbary Coast in the Expansion of International Society: Piracy and Corsairing as Primary Institutions’, he presents the Mediterranean corsairs of the Barbary States as a ‘derivative institution’ of early-modern international society which eventually clashed with 19th century notions of International Law. He mentions that the mechanism of privateering was not solely used by the Barbary States, but that for centuries European powers had also employed these informal actors to further causes of war, diplomacy and commerce. It was only after European states had centralized their military power and the idea of ‘International Law’ began to gain traction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the continued practice of Mediterranean privateering became unwanted and unacceptable in the eyes of western powers.<sup>11</sup>

Colás explains that the international demonization of privateering coincided with the spread of the European Standard of Civilization and with it the ideas of state sovereignty, International Law and free trade. He emphasizes that the Barbary Corsairs acted as a ‘lightning-rod’ which was used to legitimize and spread the European Law of Nations (also known as International Law). While privateering had been internationally accepted by states

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<sup>10</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, Chapter 4 (E-book).

<sup>11</sup> Alejandro Colás, ‘Barbary Coast in the Expansion of International Society: Piracy and Corsairing as Primary Institutions’, *ISA Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA* (2013) 3-4.

as an informal projection of power for centuries, with the rise of the Standard of Civilization it became an unacceptable occurrence. This presented western powers with an excuse to subdue the ‘Barbarians’ of Northern Africa that clung to the old system, eventually integrating them through the process of colonization.<sup>12</sup>

How then does this answer the question of how the United States could fight the Barbary States without declaring war on the Ottomans? According to Colás, European powers were unable to stop raids by the corsairs through direct negotiation with the center of Ottoman power because the Barbary States possessed a certain degree of autonomy within the empire and were politically fragmented, which resulted in the states not always heeding Ottoman commands. To end the activities of the corsairs, European powers were thus forced to resort to other measures.<sup>13</sup>

Couple this with the transitional nature of the period in which the wars took place and an explanation can be extracted. On the one hand, western nations including the United States sought to eradicate privateering as part of their efforts to spread the Standard of Civilization and to outlaw practices deemed to be ‘barbaric’. On the other hand, Ottoman rulers still saw the Barbary corsairs in the context of the early-modern international system in which they could be used to further state interests but were not directly tied to the state itself. When the United States thus fought an undeclared war against the Barbary States, it was not interpreted as an attack on the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire but as a conflict between an illegitimate and informal actor that provided revenue and occasionally furthered Ottoman interests and a Western nation. While the Barbary States were thus officially seen as part of the Ottoman Empire, their informal activities made them fair game in the context of the Natural Law of early-modern international society. That the Barbary Wars were part of a wider push to integrate Northern Africa with western notions of public International Law was not considered by the Ottomans at that time.<sup>14</sup>

Colás thus seeks to explain how the Barbary Wars were legitimized by examining the position of the Barbary corsairs in early-modern International Law, and by looking at how this position eventually clashed with the western Standard of Civilization. Other explanations have however also been presented. In ‘The Treaty of Paris and Turkey's Status in

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<sup>12</sup> Colás, ‘Barbary Coast in the Expansion of International Society’, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Colás, ‘Barbary Coast in the Expansion of International Society’, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Colás, ‘Barbary Coast in the Expansion of International Society’, 9-12.

International Law', Hugh McKinnon Wood seeks to explain the outbreak of the Barbary Wars on the North African Regencies of the Ottoman Empire by examining the evolution of the European concept of sovereignty.<sup>15</sup> Admittedly the article is from 1943 and is thus not in direct response to more recent contributions, but the arguments made remain relevant for the examination of the Barbary Wars today.

In his article, Hugh McKinnon Wood argues that the European concept of sovereignty based on the Law of Nations was never supposed to include non-European and non-Christian nations. It was only after major European powers started interacting to a large degree with non-western states such as the Ottoman Empire that excluding said empires from the Western-based Law of Nations became counter-productive to the interests of these states. Following the Crimean War of 1853, the European powers thus finally endowed the Ottoman Empire with international recognition according to the European model of International Law through the 1856 Treaty of Paris. The United States on the other hand had already formally recognized the Ottoman Empire in 1830 and had also signed a treaty of trade between the two powers. While the major European powers had already concluded many similar trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire before 1830, they did not yet see the Ottoman Empire as their international equal until 1856, which means that the Americans were one step ahead in this regard.<sup>16</sup>

More importantly however, because the western powers had been so cautious in recognizing Ottoman sovereignty, by the time the conflict with the Barbary corsairs reached a boiling point in 1801, no western state saw the Ottomans as the formal rulers of the Barbary territories in Northern Africa. According to McKinnon Wood, this meant that the United States was free to go to war against the Barbary States without officially declaring war on the Ottoman Empire. And the fact that the Barbary States acted as semi-autonomous political units within the Ottoman Empire meant that all official blame could be laid on them and not the Ottoman Empire itself. These two factors allowed the United States to circumvent the modern notion of sovereignty and declare war on the Barbary corsairs without entangling the Ottoman Empire.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> More explanation on the conceptual meaning of the word 'regency' will be given later in the examination of this debate under the perspectives of Asma Moalla and Christian Windler.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh McKinnon Wood, 'The Treaty of Paris and Turkey's Status in International Law', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1943) 272-273.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, 'The Treaty of Paris', 272-273.

In 'Representing a State in a Segmentary Society: French Consuls in Tunis from the Ancien Regime to the Restoration', Christian Windler adds to the discussion on the sovereignty of the Barbary States by looking at the distinction between the nomenclatures of 'regency' and 'state'. He mentions that since the Barbary States were officially part of the Ottoman Empire, they were not to be referred to as states by the European powers because that would signal their complete independence. Instead, they were referred to by the term of regency, which meant that they were seen as political entities in which the true ruler (the Ottoman Sultan) was largely absent and not in direct control.<sup>18</sup>

The European States consciously made the decision to uphold this distinction because of the power dynamics involved. For decades, the Ottoman Sultans had refused to appoint representatives in the European capitals because that would in their eyes signal a decrease in religious legitimization, as they were not to interact with non-believers on equal terms. But by the end of the eighteenth century, the European system of International Law had become so dominant that this attitude became counter-productive for the Barbary States, since they had become increasingly dependent on their interactions with Europe. The Barbary rulers in turn attempted to instate their own representatives in the European capitals, a request which was repeatedly refused. The European States denied these requests because this ensured that the Barbary States retained the status of 'regency', meaning that they would not be seen as fully autonomous. This in turn put the Europeans in a better bargaining position. Windler states that this also allowed for wars to be fought against the Barbary States without requiring official declaration and full involvement by the Ottoman Empire, thus legalizing such conflicts in the context of early-modern International Law.<sup>19</sup>

A perspective on the legality of the Barbary Wars with a completely different outlook is offered more by Asma Moalla. In her book *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte, 1777-1814. Army and government of a North-African Ottoman eyalēt at the end of the eighteenth century*, Moalla argues that the Barbary States were not as autonomous from the Sublime Porte (center of power) of the Ottoman Empire as is widely believed in the West. Instead of being forced into giving the provinces or eyalēts of the Maghreb (North Africa) special privileges, she believes that the decentralization of the Ottoman state was a deliberate

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<sup>18</sup> Christian Windler, 'Representing a State in a Segmentary Society: French Consuls in Tunis from the Ancien Regime to the Restoration', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (2001) 233-234.

<sup>19</sup> Windler, 'Representing a State in a Segmentary Society', 235.

strategy which was not only pursued in the case of the Barbary States, but also in other eyalēts of the empire. This thus did not mean that the Barbary States saw themselves as completely autonomous units. Instead, the Barbary States still had certain imperial duties such as the combatting of ‘Christian fleets’ and the participation in imperial wars, and paying tribute (gifts) to the Sultan. Furthermore, the continued use of Ottoman customs, symbols, military structures and the nature of diplomacy between the Sublime Porte and the Maghreb all indicated that life in the Barbary States was heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup>

Moalla thus claims that “the autonomy narrative” that is still dominant in the historical debate regarding the Barbary States is false and was actually used as a justification for European colonialism. According to her, the autonomy narrative attempted to prove that the Ottomans were unable to govern over their own territories on the one hand, and on the other hand that friendly ties between the leaders of the Barbary States and Western nations like France had existed long before colonial rule was enacted. This allowed the West to justify their takeover of the formerly Ottoman territories by pointing to the apparent incompetence of the Ottomans in ruling their own lands and the willingness of the inhabitants to be incorporated into the western empires.<sup>21</sup>

In the case of the Barbary Wars the autonomy narrative also played a leading role because it allowed the United States to deny the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire by pointing out the Ottoman’s inability to control their own North-African eyalēts. Many European powers even went as far as calling them regencies instead of provinces (or States) under direct control of the Sultan. Using the term regencies meant that European nations did not see the Barbary States as direct subjects of the Sublime Porte, but rather as areas that had been abandoned and were only still Ottoman in name after having long reverted to local administration instead. It was true that the Barbary States had considerable autonomy when it came to their military affairs according to Moalla, but she mentions that this was simply the Ottoman way of ruling their territories by adjusting their rule to local circumstances. When it came to economic and cultural affairs the integration with the wider empire was stronger. The loose military and political integration however meant that western nations like the United

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<sup>20</sup> Asma Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte, 1777-1814. Army and government of a North-African Ottoman eyalēt at the end of the eighteenth century* (London 2004) 140.

<sup>21</sup> Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte*, 140.

States could abuse these fault lines to their advantage.<sup>22</sup>

#### **1.1.4 The influence of Thomas Jefferson on decision-making**

Since Thomas Jefferson was U.S. president at the time of the Barbary Wars, it was ultimately his decision which caused the United States to go to war. But what exactly motivated Jefferson to take this decision? Did he have a clear and concise general policy or was his rule marked by inconsistency and opportunism? What motivated Thomas Jefferson during the early nineteenth century still inspires debate amongst historians today.

James R. Sofka is in favor of the idea that Thomas Jefferson had a clear policy which he put into practice during the Barbary Wars. In ‘The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security: Commerce, the Atlantic Balance of Power, and the Barbary War, 1786-1805’, he argues that the Jefferson administration was based around three central concepts. These were the securing of American trade routes, promoting American commercial rights, and defending these right through economic and military force.<sup>23</sup> By going to war against the Barbary States, Jefferson merely put these central concepts into practice according to Sofka.

By explaining Jefferson’s decision-making through these three central concepts, Sofka puts into question a number of more established theories that attempt to clarify Jefferson’s policies. The most established of these theories is the idea that Jefferson based his decisions on ideas from the Enlightenment that encouraged pacifist and idealist thinking. One of the proponents of this theory is Robert W. Tucker. In ‘Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson’, he explains Jefferson’s concept of ‘Conquest without War’. This concept entails that the United States would spread its values and defend its interests through economic and political coercion rather than military force.<sup>24</sup>

Tucker acknowledges that the concept stands in contrast to Jefferson’s actions during the Barbary Wars, but explains that the wars initially started as what today would be classified as a ‘police action’. It was only after an initial projection of force failed to persuade the corsairs to stop attacking American commercial ships that Jefferson decided to escalate. Tucker hereby also explains that Jefferson’s ‘Conquest without War’ thus only applied to

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<sup>22</sup> Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Sofka, *The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security*, 543.

<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Tucker, David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York 1992) 10.

established European rival states and not to secondary powers like the Barbary States, which were not necessarily receptive to traditional diplomacy.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, another perspective is offered by Michael B. Oren in the book *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East: 1776 to the Present*. Oren is of the opinion that Thomas Jefferson was not necessarily guided by any sort of principles, but that he instead was a ‘ganglion of contradictions’. On the supposed pacifism of Thomas Jefferson, Oren states that he claimed to be a pacifist but nevertheless admired the blood-soaked French revolution. When it came to the Barbary Wars the contradictory nature of Thomas Jefferson was no different.<sup>26</sup>

Oren also mentions the hypocritical stance Jefferson had on the issue of slavery. Jefferson himself was the owner of African-American slaves, but on the other hand he could not accept the idea of a North-African inhabitant of the Barbary States owning a white slave. Even on the issue of building an American fleet Jefferson was contradictory. In some instances, he was firmly against the building of a navy out of fear that it would be too costly, but then some time later he would exclaim that a navy was necessary for the protection of U.S. commerce.<sup>27</sup> According to Oren there was only one ideal that Jefferson was consistent on, and that was his opposition to paying tribute to the Barbary corsairs. He repeatedly mentioned that he would rather fight the privateers than bow to them. Oren thus characterizes Jefferson as a very inconsistent figure, who was only predictable when it came to upholding American honor in the eyes of the world.<sup>28</sup>

In *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror 1801-1805*, Joseph Wheelan further understates President Jefferson’s consistent opposition to the Barbary corsairs and questions his reputation as a ‘pacifist’ president. He does not touch upon the supposed contradictory nature of Jefferson on other matters. Wheelan instead focuses on the argument that Jefferson unquestionably knew what he wished to accomplish on the matter of the Barbary States already before he became president. Since the 1780’s he had insisted that ‘America had not thrown off one tyrant to bow to a lowlier one’, meaning that he valued American

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<sup>25</sup> Tucker, Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 295.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East: 1776 to the Present*, Chapter 1: A moral and mortifying threat (New York 2007) (E-book).

<sup>27</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy*, Chapter 1 (E-book).

<sup>28</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy*, Chapter 1 (E-book).

independence first and foremost and saw the paying of tribute and ransom as merely replacing one tyranny (of the British) with another. In an argument with John Adams during Jefferson's time as minister to France he clearly stated that 'force was the only sure antidote to terror'. Adams agreed, but was still opposed to the use of force because of the costs involved and because he believed the American public would not support it.<sup>29</sup>

Wheelan goes on to state that Jefferson was proven to have correctly calculated the Barbary States' intent in 1801 when the treaties signed under the Adams administration started to fall apart. In that year Jefferson decided to send a naval squadron to Tripoli to ward off any Tripolitan aggression. Interestingly, Tripoli had already declared war on the United States by that time. This was still an unknown turn of events in the United States since news took quite some time to cross the Atlantic. To sum up, Wheelan thus does not believe that Jefferson was inconsistent when it came to the Barbary Wars. Instead he focuses on Jefferson's strong commitment to American independence, a stance which was incompatible with the demands for tribute by the Barbary States.<sup>30</sup>

### **1.1.5 The long-term effects of the Barbary Wars on American society**

While the Barbary Wars are often seen as small and insignificant conflicts, they did have a lasting impact on the further development of the United States. More specifically, the wars altered the way in which Americans viewed their place on the international stage. While small, the wars thus had a lasting impact on American values and U.S. foreign policy. However, debate still continues on what those effects were exactly.

One of the most spoken about effects of the Barbary Wars is the manner in which the conflicts spurred the United States to develop its own navy. Before U.S. independence the colonies and their vessels had always been protected internationally by the vast British fleet. After independence this was no longer the case and the United States was left to fend for itself. In *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates, To the Shores of Tripoli: The Rise of the US Navy and Marines*, Gregory Fremont-Barnes argues that it were not the Barbary Wars that initially motivated the U.S. to create a standing navy with its own governmental department, but that tensions with revolutionary France at the very end of the eighteenth century were the catalyst.

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror 1801-1805*, Chapter 1: The "Pacifist" president (New York 2004) (E-book).

<sup>30</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 1 (E-book).



However, after hostilities with France ceased the Adams administration once again decided that a standing navy was no necessity and sold seventeen warships. It was only after Tripoli declared war on the United States that the newly-initiated Jefferson administration halted the budget cuts and once again pursued the policy of constructing a stronger navy.<sup>31</sup>

Barnes thus mentions that it were not the Barbary Wars that spurred the creation of the U.S. navy, but he does believe that the Barbary Wars once and for all showed the U.S. government that it could not do without the ability to project force beyond its shores. Furthermore, he states that the Barbary Wars were important for the fledgling U.S. navy in the sense that they provided it with the experience necessary to become a cohesive fighting force.<sup>32</sup>

In his book *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East: 1776 to the Present*, Michael B. Oren reiterates Barnes' viewpoint that the wars were instrumental in the establishment of a standing U.S. navy. He however also touches upon other aspects of the wars that shaped the American identity. For example, the fact that Thomas Jefferson went to war without congressional approval remains a controversial decision that current-day presidents are often still confronted with. In some ways it could be argued that Jefferson set a precedent in this regard, as modern presidents sometimes still feel they are obliged to do so today.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Oren sees the Barbary Wars as the period that defined how the U.S. would later deal with hostage situations and demands for tribute. Although the Washington and Adams administrations had for many years attempted to negotiate peace treaties with the Barbary States and had even paid vast sums of money for the release of U.S. captives, no lasting treaties were ever achieved. It was only after Thomas Jefferson made the decision to deploy force against the Barbary States that tangible gains were made. This success reinforced the United States' commitment to the ideas of free trade and independence and proved to U.S. policymakers that military force was an indispensable tool on the international stage.<sup>34</sup>

Lastly, Oren mentions the impact the wars had on the self-image of not only the United States government, but indeed the entire nation itself. National pride was reinvigorated and

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<sup>31</sup> Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates. To the shores of Tripoli: the rise of the US Navy and Marines* (Oxford 2006) 27-29.

<sup>32</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

<sup>34</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

became a central part of the American identity as a result of the outcome of the wars. National symbols like the bald eagle and the American flag became more widespread, and the Americans felt that they had garnered respect in the eyes of their European rivals. Oren thus sees the wars as one of the first steps in the development of American self-confidence in international affairs.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, another noteworthy contribution to this debate is made by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger in their book *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History*. Kilmeade and Yaeger argue that the fact that the United States proved itself capable of standing up for its foreign interests during the Barbary Wars meant that other nations and especially European powers were no longer so inclined to treat the United States as a lesser nation. They state that this had large ramifications for the future of the United States, because in this early period any sign of weakness could have resulted in Europe once again attempting to recolonize their former North-American colonies. The show of force that the Barbary Wars were in essence thus may have well saved American independence or at the very least secured it in the short term.<sup>36</sup>

Kilmeade and Yaeger also mention another long-term effect of the wars on American society. They argue that the American effort to depose the Bashaw of Tripoli in order to reinstate his brother who was the rightful heir to the throne set in motion an American tradition to help other countries in need. It should be mentioned that the book by Kilmeade and Yaeger is quite patriotic in tone and whilst they see the American intervention as ‘helping’, others may see it as an invasion instead. However, the authors do make a good argument by pointing out that American interventionism was first introduced to the world during the Barbary Wars and in this respect the wars thus had great influence on the development of the American identity.<sup>37</sup>

## **1.2 Research method used and nature of sources**

The research performed during the writing of this thesis on the Barbary Wars has primarily been of a qualitative nature. This because the qualitative approach is simply more suitable for the purpose of answering the research questions mentioned earlier. The Barbary Wars may

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<sup>35</sup> Oren, *Power, Faith and Fantasy*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

<sup>36</sup> Brian Kilmeade, Don Yaeger, *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History*, Author’s Note (New York 2015) (E-book).

<sup>37</sup> Kilmeade, Yaeger, *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates*, Author’s Note (E-book).

have had underlying reasons that can also be answered through quantitative research, but the fact of the matter remains that the wars were first and foremost a human affair. To solely rely on the quantitative approach would mostly pass by these human factors such as individual opinions, ideologies and motivations. I have however included a small amount of existing quantitative research of economic nature in order to be able to properly assess the state of the American economy at the end of the eighteenth century. It must be taken into account that the majority of this quantitative data has merely been quoted from existing research, while most of my own research has been in the qualitative form. This approach has proven to be more than adequate, and I do not believe my thesis would have benefited from additional quantitative material.

On the subject of the nature of the used sources, it must be noted that most sources are in the form of written texts. This is simply a result of the period I have examined, as there are naturally no photos, videos or oral sources to gather from the early nineteenth century. I however found that the written sources I previously gathered from libraries, archives and the internet were of sufficient quantity and quality to enable me to answer the earlier-mentioned research questions.

On the subject of primary sources, one of the most valuable primary sources proved to be a large collection of naval documents from the time of the First Barbary War written from 1785 until 1801. The collection included ransom letters, official governmental documents, military correspondence and consular communication. It helped me to not only answer the question of why and how the United States went to war, but it also helped me clear up the role Thomas Jefferson played in the outbreak of the wars. Furthermore, of equal importance have been the 'Works and Papers of Thomas Jefferson', two collections of original letters that were written by Thomas Jefferson to his different contacts in government and the military. Both these sources included correspondence by Jefferson on policies enacted during the time of the First Barbary War, and as a result they have been very helpful in identifying Jefferson's motivations at the time. Lastly, the 'Washington Papers' have also been of help in finding out why George Washington's policy towards the Barbary States differed to a large extent from Jefferson's approach.

To conclude, I have used the qualitative approach during my research and have not found major difficulties in doing so. Some quantitative data has been quoted where necessary, but not in any major form. Furthermore, most of my sources have been in the form of written

texts, and I have used multiple primary sources that helped to shed light on my research questions. Finally, I have utilized a vast array of books and articles in order to gather the necessary information to write this thesis.

### **1.3 Limitations of research**

As is the case with most historical research, the subject of the First Barbary War also brings with it a host of limitations that must be acknowledged. The first limitation has to do with the nature of the used primary (textual) sources as outlined above. The fact remains that these sources originate from more than two centuries ago, meaning that many of them are damaged, incomplete and often hard to decipher. A majority of them are also personal accounts given by individuals involved in the Barbary Wars, meaning that certain details could have been left out deliberately. It thus cannot be guaranteed that the information that is contained within them is completely accurate or paints the whole picture.

Furthermore, in terms of statistical sources the limitations are even more apparent. Many authors who have already performed statistical research on the subject of the Barbary Wars acknowledge that it is difficult but not impossible to find reputable statistical information from the period concerned. This refers to the fact that the information that can be extracted from nineteenth' century statistical sources is limited and not always completely reliable. For this reason, I chose to base this thesis on qualitative research primarily. However, since certain arguments can best be supported by a combination of both qualitative and quantitative sources, some statistics have also been included. I am certain that corroboration from both these forms of sources has increased the trustworthiness of my arguments.

### **1.4 Academic Contribution**

As can be read in the historiography on the previous pages, much has already been written on the different aspects of the Barbary Wars that have been examined during the course of this research. This thesis however differs in that it combines many of these divergent insights in order to form a comprehensive overview of the different viewpoints. Scholars often present diverse and sometimes conflicting explanations in regards to the research questions concerned. Most of these explanations are quite limited in that they do not include other fields of study. For example, economists solely present economic explanations, anthropologists present cultural motives and historians seem to favor ideological insights. Combining all these

different explanations into one has allowed this research to come to new observations while also acknowledging contributions made previously by others.

Furthermore, I believe this research to be of value to the current academic debates due to the clear link that is presented between the outbreak of the Barbary Wars and the persona of Thomas Jefferson. There already exists a general understanding on the fact that Jefferson played an important role in the outbreak of the wars. Previously however, scholar either focused on the influence of Thomas Jefferson alone or presented alternative reasons that made the wars unavoidable. This research has focused on combining these two factors in order to yield the best explanation on how the wars unfolded, thus providing a new angle on the current academic debates.

## **Chapter 2: The historical context of the Barbary Wars**

As the first overseas military intervention in the history of the United States, the Barbary Wars are an often overlooked but important period in the history of that country. Another aspect that is often ignored is the history of the Barbary States themselves as part of the Ottoman Empire, and the impact that the wars had on their future. In this chapter the general state of the United States as a nation in the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries will be examined from a foreign policy and economic perspective. Furthermore, the history of the Barbary States themselves will be examined in order to be able to properly analyze the conflict from all viewpoints in later chapters.

### **2.1 The early United States: Foreign policy and military affairs**

#### **2.1.1 The origins of the United States in the late eighteenth century**

The United States at the end of the eighteenth century was still an infant nation in search for a place in the global system. Most attention was placed on the procurement of independence from the British Empire and the recognition of said independence from third parties. Later on priorities shifted to the westward expansion of the American frontier and the consolidation of North-American territory as part of the United States. It is thus important to note that the United States had not achieved the global superpower status that it is often associated with at present. In international terms it was instead a minor power that had a small and insignificant military footprint. However, as a nation the United States was already in many ways distinct from its European counterparts. Contrary to these nations, the United States was a republic built on the core principles of liberty, free commerce and independence. These ideals were entrenched in the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and had a significant influence on how the United States sought to insert itself into the global system.<sup>38</sup>

The early years of the United States were marked by the struggle for independence in the eyes of the European powers and in particular the British, of which they had been a colony. This culminated in the American War of Independence (also known as the

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<sup>38</sup> Marion Smith, 'The Myth of American Isolationism: Commerce, Diplomacy, and Military Affairs in the Early Republic', *Special Report from the B. Kenneth Simon Center for Principles and Politics No. 134* (2013) 7.

Revolutionary War, 1775-1783) against the British Empire. The primary cause for this conflict was new taxation enforced on the North-American colonies by the British crown, which invoked large scale resistance. After the British refused to recognize American autonomy on this matter, unrest first broke out in Massachusetts, only to spread to the rest of the colonies later on. Other European nations with interests in the America's such as the French were quick to exploit the conflict. Initially the French merely supported the American revolutionaries with munitions and weapons. However, in 1778 the French became the first nation to recognize American independence after having entered an official alliance to thwart British efforts to subdue the revolutionaries. This strategic choice was made by the French as part of their rivalry against the British Empire and as vengeance for the loss of their former colonies in North-America during the Seven Years War (1756–1763).<sup>39</sup>

It was only after the capture of 8,000 British troops during the battle of Yorktown and the loss of multiple major battles against the American rebels that the British finally conceded defeat and recognized American sovereignty. In 1783 the war officially ended with the Treaty of Paris, and soon after in 1789 the American Constitution was drafted. Not only was the independence of the United States cemented with the signing of this document, but it also contained the ideological basis on which the republic was formed. These included the principles of individual liberty, equality and popular sovereignty. The struggle that the United States went through during the War of Independence naturally had a major effect on the identity of the nation. Future foreign policy would be greatly influenced by the principles entrenched in the Constitution. For example, the avoidance of so-called 'entangling alliances' (treaties that could prove to constrain American policy) with foreign nations is a policy that can still be observed during modern times and has its origins in the American War of Independence.<sup>40</sup>

### **2.1.2 The early nineteenth century and the Barbary threat**

Despite these strong ideological underpinnings, in the years after the War of Independence the United States' future was still uncertain. It soon found itself in a quasi-war with its former ally, the revolutionary republic of France as a result of a rapprochement in relations with

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<sup>39</sup> David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence, A Global History* (Cambridge 2007) 80-85.

<sup>40</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower, U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York 2008) 15.

England and disagreements over the repayment of debt.<sup>41</sup> It was also able to procure the North-American territory of Louisiana from France after hostilities had ceased, which instantly doubled the territory of the United States. It is thus safe to say that the United States as a nation still went through large changes during this period, and many aspects of its identity were not yet set in stone.<sup>42</sup>

It was thus in this uncertain position that the United States found itself forced to confront the Barbary States. Before the War of Independence, American vessels had operated under protection of the British navy and were for this reason able to trade in the Mediterranean in relative safety despite suffering from sporadic attacks by the privateers. When the United States achieved independence however, this protection was revoked and American merchants became easy pickings for the corsairs from the Barbary States. Unable to respond because of the absence of a strong navy and economic misfortune, the American government under the Presidents Washington and Adams was forced to accept demands made by the Barbary States for the payment of tribute and ransom for the release of U.S. hostages.<sup>43</sup>

The United States lacked a decent navy because the construction of a navy was a controversial issue during this time. Republicans were firmly against the creation of a strong army and navy because they saw these as instruments of central state control that would serve to threaten personal liberty and reduce the sovereignty of individual states. Despite this opposition, the reality of international politics soon caught up with their ideals.<sup>44</sup> The quasi-war with France (1799-1800) had already demonstrated that the protection of commerce required the existence of a permanent military deterrent, which led to the creation of a peacetime navy in 1801. And with sporadic attacks on American trading vessels in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Corsairs continued to remind the United States of the necessity of that course of action.<sup>45</sup>

In table 1, an indication is given on the number of American ships built and purchased between the years 1793 and 1807. Both the Quasi-War with France and the threat of the Barbary corsairs required a significant naval expansion to occur. As can be seen from the

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<sup>41</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 83-92.

<sup>42</sup> Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 106-108.

<sup>43</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 1 (E-book).

<sup>44</sup> Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War against the Pirates of North Africa* (New York 2007) 4.

<sup>45</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 4 (E-book).



data, this is exactly what happened. The data in the table is divided between the type of ships built and purchased, with Frigates being the largest and Gun Boats, Bomb Ketches and Sloops being significantly smaller. The number of cannons present aboard is also shown along with the number of ships that were acquired.

**Table 1: Number and types of American ships acquired between the years 1793-1807.**

Type of ship	Number of cannons	Number acquired (1793 - 1807)
<b>Frigate</b>	28-44 cannons	13
<b>Brig</b>	8-18 cannons	5
<b>Schooner</b>	10-12 cannons	4
<b>Bomb Ketch</b>	1-3 Mortars	5
<b>Sloop</b>	10-24 cannons	3
<b>Gunboat</b>	1-2 cannons	~ 10-35*

Source: United States Government Printing Office Washington, Register of Officer Personnel United States Navy and Marine Corps and Ships' Data 1801-1807:  
[http://ibiblio.org/anrs/docs/E/E3/nd\\_barbarywars\\_register\\_shipdata.pdf](http://ibiblio.org/anrs/docs/E/E3/nd_barbarywars_register_shipdata.pdf) (1-7-2016).

\* Number of Gunboats built remains unclear, this data is mostly unreliable. At least 10 were built in any case.

From these numbers it becomes clear that the American government was aware of the threats that both Revolutionary France and the Barbary Corsairs posed to their national security. However, when it came to dealing with the Barbary Corsairs it is important to note that there was a strong difference of opinion between the subsequent American Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Adams was in favor of continuing to pay tribute to the Barbary States, stating that the alternative of war would be far too costly for the United States to consider. Thomas Jefferson also believed that war would be costly, but he however stated that the alternative of continuing to adhere to Barbary demands would be even worse in the end. A short and decisive war was the best option to undertake in his opinion. Jefferson also stressed the dishonor that continuing to pay tribute brought upon the image of the United States. He instead believed that an 'erect and independent attitude' would be more favorable in that it would show the world that the United States was a force to be reckoned with.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Robert F. Turner, 'President Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary Pirates', *Newport Papers 35, Naval War College* (2010) 159-161.

## 2.2 The early United States: Economy and trade

### 2.2.1 Economic trends and principles

During the early nineteenth century the economy of the United States was much smaller than it is today. It was a pre-industrial nation focused mostly on agriculture and the procurement of resources that were present on the western frontier. This domestic focus meant that foreign trade only made up a relatively minor part of the economy. In addition to this, the era also saw other economic trends such as a fast growing population, a lack of sufficient industrial laborers due to the more attractive option of investing in agriculture and the dawn of the American principle of free trade. It was also the era in which much of the countries' initial domestic infrastructure was built. For example, a network of canals was constructed which reduced transportation time and costs significantly.<sup>47</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, during the early years of the independent United States, foreign trade only made up a small portion of the total Gross National Product (GNP). Additionally, the trade balance of the United States was negative, meaning that it imported more goods from the rest of the world than that it exported. The nation was however able to balance out this deficit through its lucrative shipping branch, which provided transportation services to foreign customers at profitable rates. It is estimated that between the years 1790 and 1800, exports made up about 10 to 15 percent of the American GNP, while imports took a slightly higher share at 15 to 20 percent. These figures however quickly started dropping, and during the early 1800's only 6.8 percent of the American GNP was shared under exports and imports made up a mere 8.4 percent of the total. Just over 15 percent of the United States' total economic output could thus be classified as foreign trade when the First Barbary War started, a figure much lower than had been the case during colonial times. This can be attributed to a reorientation of the American economy from an export-based colonial economy to an economy primarily focused on domestic economic development and internal political consolidation.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> United States Census Bureau, 'Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970' (1976) series A-1 and A-2, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Robert E. Lipsey, 'U.S. Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments, 1800-1913', *NBER Working Paper #4710* (April 1994) 7-8.

**Table 2: Percentage of foreign trade as part of GNP (United States).**

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Imports (% of GNP)</b>	<b>Exports (% of GNP)</b>
<b>1790-1800</b>	10-15	15-20
<b>1800-1810</b>	6.8	8.4
<b>1810-1820</b>	4.9	5.6
<b>1820-1830</b>	6.3	8.0

Source: Robert E. Lipsey, 'U.S. Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments, 1800-1913', *NBER Working Paper #4710* (April 1994) 7-8.

From the above figures it thus becomes clear that international trade was not as large a part of the American economy as it is today. But this does not mean that foreign trade was deemed unimportant. On the contrary, the export of goods and freight services was seen as a crucial factor for the U.S. economy due to the large amount of debt the nation had accumulated during the War of Independence. Exports naturally brought in income that could be used to settle this debt and pay interest, and for this reason free trade was propagated and new foreign markets were highly sought after.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note that many of the international economic policies of the United States were not merely based on numbers but also on the core ideological principles of the nation. Most notable was the United States' opposition to the European colonialist policy of mercantilism. This policy meant that nations attempted to enhance their economic position by limiting imports through tariffs, while also attempting to maximize exports at the same time. After achieving independence, the United States was opposed to these measures firstly because of its experiences during the War of Independence. During this war, the British had imposed an economic blockade on American ports with the Prohibitory Act of 1775. This act was supposed to punish the Americans for rebelling against the British, but it instead caused them to resist militarily and opt for free trade. Partly as a result of the prohibitory act, free trade would remain a core principle of the United States until this day.<sup>50</sup>

The American support for free trade thus came into being due to both internal financial and ideological reasons. In essence, it was much more practical for a young nation like the U.S. to oppose mercantilist policies since they caused restricted access to economic markets

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<sup>49</sup> Lipsey, 'U.S. Foreign Trade', 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence*, 33-34.

which could have otherwise provided much needed income to counterbalance the continued costs of external debt. This practical reason coupled with the United States' negative experience with British mercantilism during the War of Independence both serve to explain the drive for free trade that characterized American foreign policy during the early nineteenth century. By advocating free trade and opposing mercantilism, the United States attempted to expand their worldwide economic interests and competitive position while also rejecting the mercantilist foreign policies of the European monarchies.<sup>51</sup>

### **2.2.2 The Mediterranean trade**

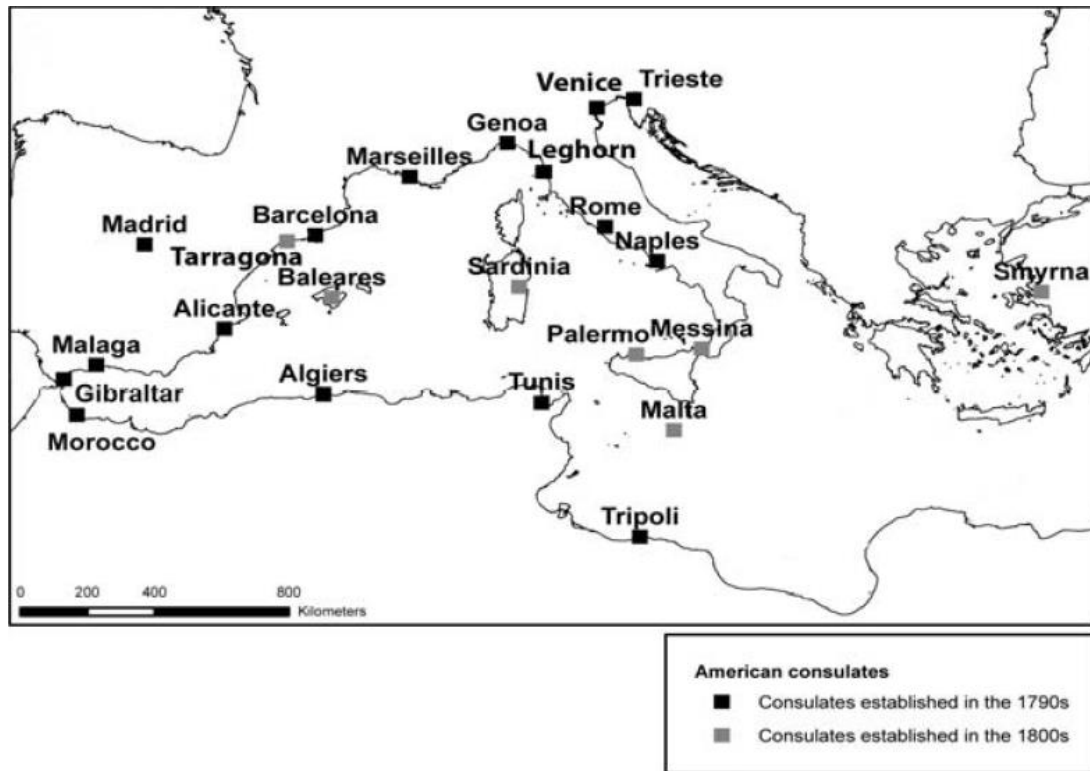
While the United States was not yet a global economic power during the early nineteenth century, external trade and more specifically the export of agricultural products was already quite important for the U.S. economy. The trans-Atlantic trade to Europe was of particular significance. While the majority of American traders still chose Western Europe as their destination (in particular Great Britain), the Mediterranean also took up a significant share of the whole. The United States set up consulates at the end of the eighteenth century in a number of territories that bordered the Mediterranean such as the Iberian Peninsula, France and current-day Italy. In these countries products such as Atlantic cod and lumber were sold. U.S. merchants rarely ventured further into the Mediterranean due to the presence of the Barbary corsairs. It was only after the Barbary Wars were concluded that the first U.S. consulate was set up in the Ottoman city of Smyrna.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Marion Smith, 'The Myth of American Isolationism', 7.

<sup>52</sup> Silvia Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean during the French Wars: A First Approach', *Research in Maritime history* 44 (2010) 45-49.

**Figure 1: Location of American consulates in the Mediterranean.**



Source: Silvia Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean during the French Wars: A First Approach', *Research in Maritime history* 44 (2010) 47.

Although data on the presence of the United States in the Mediterranean is scarce, some conclusions can be deduced from the existing information. In the figure above, the location of all American consulates in the Mediterranean set up during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries can be seen. Not only is it noticeable that these consulates were quite prolific, it is also clear that a major expansion of American diplomatic reach occurred during the early nineteenth century. This indicates that the Mediterranean trade was seen as a key investment for the United States.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, the Mediterranean market was also quite unpredictable during the early nineteenth century due to the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1814) and the presence of the Barbary corsairs. The benefits however seemingly outweighed the risks. It was especially profitable for the United States to capitalize on the Napoleonic Wars, as both the British and the French were in need of a neutral party that could continue to provide them

<sup>53</sup> Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean', 62.

shipping services. The United States was able to fill that void, thus increasing revenue from external trade.<sup>54</sup> More on the relative importance of the Mediterranean market for the United States will follow in chapter three, in which the subject will be further analyzed from a statistical and ideological viewpoint.

## **2.3 History of the Barbary corsairs**

### **2.3.1 Origins of Barbary Piracy**

Piracy originating from the Maghreb, the relatively fertile strip in North Africa, was not a recent phenomenon during the late eighteenth century. Instead, it had already been a well-established hazard for European traders since as early as the fifteenth century. In that era the coastal cities of Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis were faced with an unruly countryside and forced to turn to the practice of piracy in order to survive. Initially the pirates originating from the cities operated on a small scale and were relatively disorganized. This changed after the Barbarossa brothers, feared Muslim pirates who had been successful against the Spaniards, managed to conquer Algiers, Jijel and Tlemcen. Fearing Spanish attacks, Oruç, the most feared of the Brothers, requested the Ottoman Sultan to join the Ottoman Empire for protection. Oruç and his brother Ishak were eventually killed by the Spaniards, but Hizir Reis, later known as Hayreddin Barbarossa, survived and inherited their legacy. He was promoted to Pasha of Algiers, meaning he would from now on represent Ottoman power in the city.<sup>55</sup>

Joining the Ottoman Empire had large consequences for the formerly independent city of Algiers. Under Ottoman command, the military resources of the city were greatly expanded. This allowed Algerian forces under the command of Pasha Hayreddin Barbarossa and later under privateer Turgut Reis to completely reconquer Northern-Africa, expelling the Spaniards and the knights of Malta in the process.<sup>56</sup> This however did not mean that the Ottomans now had complete control over Northern-Africa. Ottoman power was represented in Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis by the Pasha's of the respective cities, but these rulers never attained supreme authority. Instead, power politics in the Maghreb remained a complex web

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<sup>54</sup> Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean', 50.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend 1800-1820* (Leiden 2005) 9-12.

<sup>56</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 10.

of interactions between different groups in the cities and the Ottomans often ruled only by name.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.3.2 Political Structure of the Barbary States

As previously mentioned, the leaders of Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis represented Ottoman power in their cities and were the supreme rulers on paper. But other groups also had large stakes in the future of their cities. First of all, there was the fellowship of privateer captains called the *taïfa*, who were also known as the *raïs*. This group owed a large part of its power to the critical position they employed within the Barbary economy. Then second of all there were the Janissaries (soldiers) and their officers, also known as the *Divan*. Throughout the seventeenth century both groups would vie for power while Ottoman central authority was minimalized.<sup>58</sup>

It was only in the eighteenth century that the situation started to change. Spurred by the economically attractive prospect of increased trade with European states, the central rulers of the Barbary States attempted to tame their hinterlands in order to procure valuable resources. This process was largely successful and caused the power of the *raïs* to decrease. The power of the central rulers, the Pasha's, Beys and Deys of the Barbary States, increased significantly as a result. This however did not mean that Ottoman influence became the defining factor in Barbary politics. Because of their strengthened position, the local rulers of the Barbary States were able to demand important privileges from the Sublime Porte. They were now able to impose hereditary rule, which led to the creation of powerful local dynasties.<sup>59</sup>

The actual act of ruling was carried out by the Pasha's, Beys and Deys of the cities in conjunction with a group of powerful men who occupied positions of power in civilian and military posts. These men became known by the French as the *Puissances* or powers. The actual names of these positions and their exact purpose differed between the various states. However, in all of the Barbary States there was no clear hierarchy beyond the absolute power of the monarch. This caused political life to be as treacherous and uncertain as it was in the

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<sup>57</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 10.

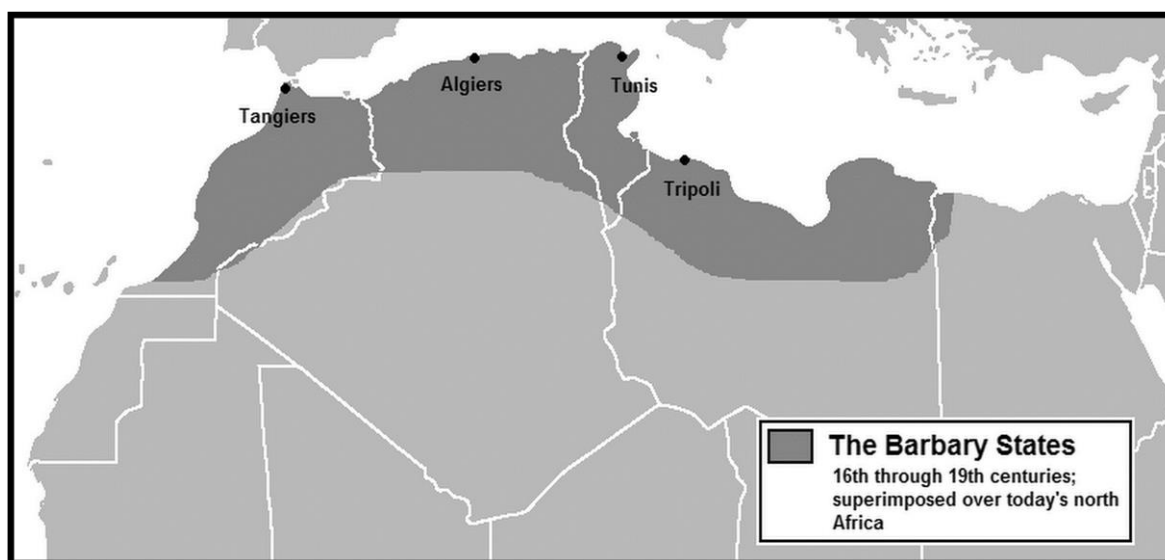
<sup>58</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte*, 69-70.

European monarchies at the time, with each of the Puissances attempting to gain favors from the monarch while also trying to deceive their rivals.<sup>60</sup>

Beyond the central authority in the cities, in all of the states the hinterlands were divided into three general provinces. In these provinces governmental representatives were installed in the form of Beys and Kaïds. These representatives levied taxes and kept order according to the laws imposed from the cities. In addition to these representatives, an official army known as the Mehalla set out from the centers of power once every year in order to collect additional taxes. It is important to note that this was not an army of conquest, but instead a way for the central rulers to remind their dominions of their authority while also receiving taxes in the process.<sup>61</sup>

**Figure 2: Map showing the size and location of the Barbary States in Northern Africa.**



Source: Conservapedia: [http://conservapedia.com/images/b/b5/Barbary\\_States.png](http://conservapedia.com/images/b/b5/Barbary_States.png) (30-6-2016).

### 2.3.3 Foreign relations and the role of piracy

As mentioned in the previous part, the political situation in the Barbary States was one of relative lawlessness until the beginning of the eighteenth century. In this era, the cities of Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis were pirate safe havens and solely dependent on the act of piracy for their survival. This was the case because of their rebellious hinterlands which did not

<sup>60</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 14-16.



allow for the collection of resources that could have otherwise been used in trade with foreign powers. It was only after the centralization of power in the cities at the beginning of the eighteenth century that these hinterlands were properly subdued. It must also be mentioned that it were not just local Muslims who turned to piracy during this time, but that Christian convicts also travelled to the Barbary States and chose to convert to Islam simply because they had no other place to go.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, it was this centralization of power that caused a shift from anarchic piracy to more organized privateering. The pirate captains of the *raïs* lost much of their power but did not entirely disappear. Instead, the leaders of the Barbary States decided to incorporate them into their naval forces. Additionally, treaties with major European powers such as the English and Dutch were signed and from now on the *raïs* were restricted in what targets they were permitted to attack. The formerly autonomous pirates of the Barbary States thus now became privateers (*corsairs*) and tools of war which were expected to serve the interests of their rulers, which included the Ottomans. In fact, the naval forces of the Barbary States were repeatedly called upon to fight in Ottoman wars. Major events in which this occurred were the 1770 war against the Russians and the war against Napoleonic France in 1798.<sup>63</sup>

That the Barbary corsairs lost their autonomy did not mean that their role in society changed completely. The population of the Barbary States still considered the pirates to be the vanguard of Islam, fighting bravely against the infidel forces from Europe. They were commonly referred to as *mudjâhids*, which stood for holy warriors. Barbary piracy and privateering thus also contained a religious dimension. The Barbary States considered themselves to be in a constant state of war with Christianity until the process of centralization that started at the end of the seventeenth century. But even during the more stable eighteenth century the religious discourse of Jihad was still utilized by the central rulers in order to justify wars and rally the population.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> A. Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary. Corsairs, Conquests, and Captivity in the 17th-century Mediterranean*, Chapter 2: Where are the Days? The Making of a Pirate (New York 2010) (E-book).

<sup>63</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 21-22.

## 2.4 The First Barbary War 1801-1805

### 2.4.1 The outbreak of the war

The First Barbary War was not a conflict between the whole of the Maghreb and the United States, but was instead limited to clashes between the city state of Tripoli and the U.S. The conflict started partly as a result of repeated Tripolitan raids on American merchants, who had become legitimate targets after the U.S. achieved independence from the British in 1783. Tripolitan corsairs refrained from attacking British ships because treaties signed with their rulers forbade them to do so, but such treaties were no longer shared with the Americans after they achieved independence.<sup>65</sup>

The war certainly did not break out as a result from a lack of diplomatic effort. As early as 1784, the American government sent negotiators to the Barbary States of Morocco, Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli in order to secure deals for safe passage through the Mediterranean. This effort was only partly successful. The Americans were able to secure an initial deal with the independent Kingdom of Morocco, which provided hope to the U.S. government that the Barbary States could also be dealt with peacefully. This would however not be the case.<sup>66</sup>

Shortly after signing the treaty with the Moroccan leadership in 1785, the neighbouring Barbary State of Algiers declared war on the United States and captured several American ships while taking their crews and passengers for ransom. Unable to respond militarily, the United States was forced not only to pay for their release, but was also forced to provide annual tribute to Muhammed V, the leader of Algiers, in order to attain peace. And the humiliations did not end there. Encouraged by the success of the Algerian extortion, the other Barbary States of Tunis and Tripoli also started targeting American ships. Treaties with both states were eventually signed in 1796 and 1797 at great cost for the Americans.<sup>67</sup>

But these treaties did not seem to deter the Barbary States from making new demands. Algiers for example violated its treaty by demanding two new warships from the U.S. in 1791, a demand to which President Adams begrudgingly agreed. He was forced to do so because at that time the U.S. was embroiled in its quasi-war with revolutionary France. It was only after that war had ended in 1801 that the United States could make a stand against the corsairs. Importantly, the United States had also sworn in a new president by the name of

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<sup>65</sup> More on the causes for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars will follow in the third chapter.

<sup>66</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 32.

<sup>67</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 36.

Thomas Jefferson during that time. Jefferson had made it one of the spearheads of his election campaign to no longer comply with Barbary demands and respond militarily if necessary, a position which stood in contrast to his predecessor John Adams.<sup>68</sup>

#### **2.4.2 The first and second campaigns**

And the United States did respond when the Barbary State of Tripoli once again demanded a raise in tribute in 1801. The United States promptly refused the demand, which caused outrage and a swift declaration of war by Tripoli. By that time the United States had already sent a small naval squadron to Tripoli led by Richard Dale. The squadron was tasked with the enactment of a naval blockade as to prevent corsairs from leaving the city. But despite some initial success, the first squadron lacked the men-of-war necessary to manoeuvre the shallow coastlines of Tripoli, and the naval blockade was thus ineffective at completely trapping the corsairs.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, the destruction of a handful of corsair vessels during the first campaign resulted in Congress giving full military authority to Jefferson on the matter. As a result of this, he was now able to send a second squadron to Tripoli in order to enhance the position of the American fleet. This squadron was led by Valentine Morris, an apprentice captain. Unfortunately, Morris proved to be incompetent at leading his squadron. He arrived in Tripoli months later than scheduled and even managed to get himself captured during a visit to Tunis. Another officer, William Eaton, was forced to bail him out by paying a large sum of his private money. Upon his return to the United States Morris was forced into a dishonourable resignation for his incompetence.<sup>70</sup>

#### **2.4.3 The third and fourth campaigns**

A third campaign would be sent to Tripoli in 1803 following Morris' failure, and this time it would be led by commodore Edward Preble. Preble's campaign started off in disaster. One of his two largest warships, the USS Philadelphia (a 36-gun frigate), became stuck on a reef while pursuing Tripolitan vessels entering the port. The crew was unable to dislodge the ship,

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<sup>68</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 37-38.

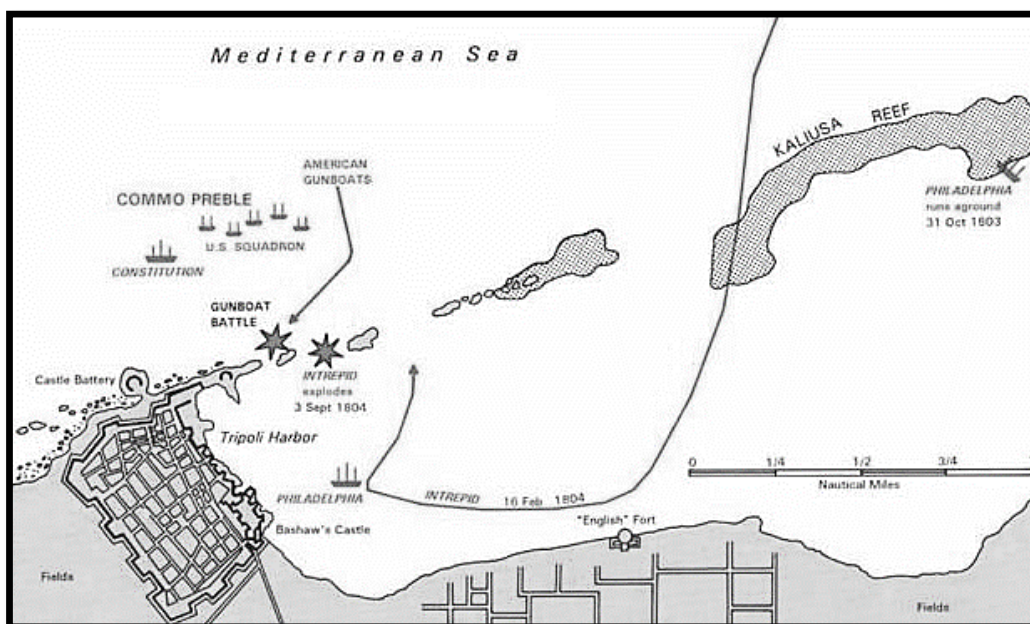
<sup>69</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 41-44.

and the Tripolitans quickly seized the opportunity to deliver a devastating blow. The entire 307-man crew was captured by the corsairs and the ship was pulled into the harbour of Tripoli.<sup>71</sup>

Preble decided that the USS Philadelphia was too powerful a ship to be captured by the Tripolitans. In a daring move, he approved an excursion to sneak into Tripoli's harbour at night with small gunboats in order to burn the Philadelphia. Led by the ambitious young captain Stephen Decatur, the mission was successful. News quickly spread about this courageous action, which in turn gave the United States as a nation a much needed morale boost. Despite all of this, the naval blockade of Tripoli and several major attacks on the city's defences did not spur the Pasha of Tripoli to give up his American captives. More decisive action was necessary, and reinforcements from across the Atlantic were called upon.<sup>72</sup>

**Figure 3: A map of Tripoli harbour showing the positions of the American navy.**



Source: Blog, Remember the Intrepid: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-0mThUzgZjHY/TmH1TFuoZQI/AAAAAAAAARyg/dTK3BCj2hxQ/s1600/Map.jpg> (1-7-2016).

The fourth squadron would be thrice the size of the first, and was to be led by Commodore Samuel Barron. Edward Preble decided to return to the United States upon the arrival of Barron, as he was in poor health and too ashamed of his failure to compel the Pasha in order

<sup>71</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 34-36.

<sup>72</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 34-36.

to continue his mission. Samuel Barron had entirely different orders when compared to his predecessors. He was to exploit a Tripolitan dynastic feud between the rightful heir to the Throne, Hamet, and the current Pasha, Yusuf. Barron sent William Eaton to Alexandria in Egypt to carry out this plan, and after finding and convincing Hamet an Arab force was established that would stage an overland invasion of Tripoli. The force consisted of both Arabs and American marines and numbered about 500 men. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1805 the force led by Eaton left Alexandria and marched through the scorching desert to the Tripolitan city of Derna. Not anticipating a land invasion, the city was lightly defended by the Tripolitans and conquered with relative ease.<sup>73</sup>

With the city of Derna conquered and the naval blockade of Tripoli still in place, the Pasha of Tripoli finally agreed to strike a deal. For a sum of sixty thousand dollars the crew of the USS Philadelphia was released and Tripoli was compelled to never attack American ships again. The Americans on the other hand evacuated Derna and Hamet returned to Alexandria. The deal was signed by both parties and peace returned between Tripoli and the United States. William Eaton however was outraged by the deal, as he felt that his force could have easily marched onto Tripoli and that the United States broke its promise to Hamet. Embittered by these factors, Eaton was never formally compensated for his efforts. Nevertheless, victory was achieved, although this did not mean that conflicts between the other Barbary States and the United States also ceased to exist.<sup>74</sup>

## **2.5 The Second Barbary War 1815**

### **2.5.1 The American campaign and Decatur's success**

The Second Barbary War took place ten years after the initial events of the first war. The First Barbary War had ended on a positive note for the United States after large sacrifices had been made, but it did not end raids from the Barbary corsairs definitively. From 1812 until 1815 the United States was occupied by war with Britain and was thus unable to respond to the continuation of Barbary piracy. It was only after this war had ended in February of 1815 that the corsairs could once again be confronted. Confident in the growing capabilities of the United States' navy, President James Madison requested Congress to declare war on the

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<sup>73</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 36.

Barbary States. War was declared on the second of March of the same year, and two large squadrons led by the hero of the First Barbary war, Stephen Decatur, were sent to Northern Africa.<sup>75</sup>

Algiers was to be the first of the Barbary States to come in contact with Decatur's fleet. After having successfully engaged an Algerian warship, Decatur offered his terms to the leader of the city. All American prisoners were to be released, slavery of American captives was to be forbidden and ten thousand dollars in compensation for naval losses due to piracy was to be paid to the United States. Decatur was successful in attaining the treaty with Algiers, and shortly afterwards went to Tunis and Tripoli to make the same demands. Shocked by the capitulation of Algiers, which was the most powerful of the Barbary States, both Tunis and Tripoli accepted the demands of the Americans and Decatur's mission became a resounding success. He returned to the United States in August of 1815 and was received as a hero.<sup>76</sup>

### **2.5.2 The Anglo-Dutch campaign and the end of 'White Slavery'**

After the success of the American campaign led by Stephen Decatur, in 1816 the British decided that the Barbary States had outlived their usefulness. Furthermore, during the Congress of Vienna of 1815, the issue of 'White Slavery' (the enslavement of White Europeans) had come up as part of a wider condemnation on the continued practice of organised slavery. During this era the British abolitionist movement was also gaining in strength, and under these combined pressures the British decided that they wished to free all Christian slaves in the Barbary States once and for all.<sup>77</sup>

The British fleet that was summoned to accomplish this task was led by Sir Edward Pellew, also known as Lord Exmouth. Initially the fleet sought to secure the release of Christian slaves and end white slavery through diplomatic means. But after Algerian corsairs slaughtered two hundred Italian fishermen, criticism from the British public compelled the government to act more decisively. The British fleet was joined by a Dutch fleet off the coast of Gibraltar, and both nations attacked Algiers with overwhelming force. The entire Algerian

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<sup>75</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 76-77.

<sup>76</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 76-79.

<sup>77</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 271-273.

fleet was destroyed in the fighting and most of the Algerian coastal defences were eliminated.<sup>78</sup>

In the aftermath of the attack the Dey of Algiers accepted British demands for the release of all Christian slaves, who turned out to number in the thousands. He also agreed to never enslave Christians again and to return all ransom which had been paid to him previously. The victory thus signalled the end of the Barbary States as a significant threat, although piracy did continue until as late as the 1820's. In these late occurrences weaker nations such as Denmark and Portugal were often the ones who were attacked. Barbary piracy only ended completely after the French invaded and colonized Algeria in the year 1830.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 39.

<sup>79</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 85.

## **Chapter 3: Why the United States intervened against Tripoli**

In chapter two the question of how the Barbary Wars unfolded and who the different players were was answered. In this chapter the actual reasons for the outbreak of the wars will be analyzed. Multiple factors will be taken into account while doing so. I will look at reasons of prestige and ideology, economic reasons, cultural reasons and military reasons. Furthermore, I will incorporate the role President Thomas Jefferson played on the decision-making when it came to the Barbary Wars. Finally, I will attempt to explain why the Barbary States were able to continue their privateering for so long against arguably much stronger European powers.

### **3.1 The moral foundations of the United States as causes for the wars**

In the first chapter the core values of the United States in the period of the Barbary Wars were already shortly touched upon. In terms of foreign policy these were the values of individual liberty, free commerce and independence. In this part I will illustrate that these values had a significant effect on not only the outbreak of the Barbary Wars, but also on the behavior of the United States during the wars. It was mostly the value of free commerce and the United States' opposition to mercantilism that drove the U.S. into conflict with the Barbary States. The values of liberty and independence also contributed, but these were used as moral justifications instead of being fundamental reasons. The United States' strong stance on free trade however was of a very practical nature and critical in their approach to Barbary privateering.

As explained in the first chapter, the commitment to free trade for the United States originated out of necessity for the fledgling nation. Most of the world's commercial centers had already been colonized by European powers, and these nations disallowed their rivals from accessing their colonial markets unless large amounts of taxes were paid. The practice of mercantilism was the cause of these restrictions. Mercantilism meant that nations attempted to minimize imports while maximizing exports in order to enhance their competitive position. It is needless to say that this approach was not to the benefit of a nation like the U.S. which could only grow through access to new markets.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Marion Smith, 'The Myth of American Isolationism', 7.



When the U.S. came into contact with the Barbary privateers it not only presented the Americans with the necessity to protect their access to the Mediterranean, but it also offered the opportunity to show the world that they were serious about their commitment to achieving commercial access in the far reaches of the globe. Thomas Jefferson was especially adamant in his belief that U.S. commerce could only be protected in the long run through a show of force. In a letter to Congressman John Page from 1785 he explained his position as follows:

‘The question is whether their peace or war will be cheapest? But it is a question which should be addressed to our Honor as well as our Avarice? Nor does it respect us as to these pirates only, but as to the nations of Europe. If we wish our commerce to be free and uninsulted, we must let these nations see that we have an energy which at present they disbelieve. The low opinion they entertain of our powers cannot fail to involve us soon in a naval war.’<sup>81</sup>

While Jefferson was thus quite clear in his appeals to American honor and independence, early encounters with the Barbary corsairs were marked by a foreign policy that was not at all in line with the values that Jefferson believed the United States stood for. During the presidency of John Adams, and more specifically between the years 1795 to 1797, the United States signed peace treaties and provided the Barbary States with tribute in order to secure access to the Mediterranean. During these years the moral pillars of liberty and independence thus often took a back seat out of necessity, since the republic lacked a powerful navy capable of countering the privateers.<sup>82</sup> However, while these parts of the American identity were thus not always ascribed to, the drive for free access to the commercial markets of the Mediterranean can be observed throughout the United States’ encounters with the Barbary States. Already in 1800 for example, naval officer William Eaton warned the U.S. government that their commercial exploits would suffer if measures would not be undertaken quickly: ‘I consider it sufficient to state that the United States are the only nation which have, at this moment, a rich and unguarded commerce in the Mediterranean, and that the Barbary regencies are pirates.’ And later, in December of 1801, President Thomas

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<sup>81</sup> Julian P. Boyd, Mina R. Bryan, Elizabeth L. Hutter, *The papers of Thomas Jefferson vol. 8* (Princeton 1953) 417-419.

<sup>82</sup> Tucker, Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 40-41.

Jefferson justified to Congress his decision to send an American naval squadron to Tripoli upon noticing that ‘Our commerce in the Mediterranean was blockaded, and that of the Atlantic in peril’.<sup>83</sup> Whether through the signing of treaties and the payment of tribute or through forceful action, it can thus clearly be seen that the core commitment of free trade was not only a necessity, but also partly the driving force behind the United States’ encounters with the Barbary corsairs.

While it was thus the United States’ commitment to free trade that played a fundamental role in the outbreak of the Barbary Wars, there are also plenty of examples that show that their commitment to the virtues of liberty and independence played important roles in the legitimization of the wars. It was Jefferson himself who called the Barbary States ‘Nests of Banditti’, fundamentally at odds with Western values and incapable of reason.<sup>84</sup> The only way to achieve total independence from their demands would be to resort to force. John Adams disagreed this would be the best approach since he believed that attacking the corsairs would mean fighting them indefinitely, as their warrior culture would not allow them to capitulate. Both men however clearly attempted to achieve as much independence from Barbary demands as possible, with Jefferson merely willing to go further to achieve said independence. But it was not merely independence from the Barbary demands that Jefferson was after. By making a stand against the corsairs he also saw an opportunity to increase American independence from the European powers and especially Britain. If the United States would fight the Barbary State of Tripoli it would send a clear message to Europe that the U.S. was more powerful than they had anticipated, thus reducing the chance of European aggression.<sup>85</sup>

The cause of liberty was perhaps the most emotionally loaded justification for the wars that was presented. Appeals to war in the name of liberty came in the form of a strong rejection of the enslavement of American captives that the Barbary States were responsible for. This practice of ‘white slavery’ elicited varying responses from the other side of the Atlantic. Initially funds for the release of these captives were raised not only by the U.S. government, but also by religious institutions and the private sector. And later, when military conflict erupted between Tripoli and the United States, the release of the American slaves was

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<sup>83</sup> Paul Leicester Ford, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson vol. 9* (New York 1905) 262.

<sup>84</sup> Patrick Garrity, ‘The United States and Barbary Piracy, 1783–1805’, *Comparative Strategy* 26:5 (2008) 396.

<sup>85</sup> Garrity, ‘The United States and Barbary Piracy’, 399.

presented as one of the goals of the intervention. The importance of the value of liberty and the release of American captives can clearly be observed in a letter written after the first war had concluded from the commonwealth of Massachusetts to Naval officer William Eaton. In this letter Eaton was awarded a plot of land in Massachusetts for his ‘Undaunted courage and brilliant services which so eminently contributed to the release of a large number of his fellow citizens, late prisoners in Tripoli, from the chains of slavery, and to restore them to freedom, their country, and their friends.’<sup>86</sup>

The core values of the United States thus played important roles in the outbreak of the Barbary Wars. While free commercial access to the Mediterranean was the driving force behind the U.S. government’s decision to go to war, the causes of political independence and the liberation of fellow American citizens served to further legitimize this decision. The cause of liberty was especially meaningful to the U.S. citizenry, with multiple private initiatives started in order to facilitate the release of their fellow countrymen. But it was not the primary reason for the wars, as can be observed from Thomas Jefferson’s and the U.S. government’s correspondence.

### **3.2 Military reasons for the outbreak of the wars**

It was not a coincidence that the Barbary States would be one of the first political entities to come face to face with the American ‘energy’ that Jefferson had referred to. First of all, the Barbary States were much weaker in military strength than the European nations which arguably presented much larger threats to U.S. commerce. For a young nation with a small navy like the United States, they were thus a relatively safe bet to wage war upon. Secondly, the Mediterranean was comparatively an important region for the U.S. in economic terms.<sup>87,88</sup> Free access to the Mediterranean meant that an enormous market with many different established economic contacts could be exploited by the Americans. More on the economic reasons for the wars will follow later in this chapter. In this part I will further outline the comparative military strength of the United States and the Barbary States, and I will show that it was the development of the American navy that permitted the decision to go to war to be

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<sup>86</sup> Office of Naval Records and Library, Naval documents related to the United States wars with the Barbary powers, ‘Land conveyed to William Eaton, former U.S. navy agent for the Barbary regencies’, 376.

<sup>87</sup> Garrity, ‘The United States and Barbary Piracy’, 398.

<sup>88</sup> For more information, see ‘The significance of the Mediterranean trade and the Barbary Wars’ on pages 48-51.

made. I will also explain why the European nations like Britain and France waited so long before acting against the Barbary States despite being able to annihilate them with their more powerful navies.

### **3.2.1 The weakness of the Barbary States as compared to the Western powers**

Although the Barbary States did not have as much military strength as the Western powers, they did have certain advantages that could be exploited in the case of war. First of all, their fleets were able to employ asymmetrical warfare in order to ambush and significantly weaken the often numerically superior enemy forces. The Barbary corsairs were especially experienced in this kind of warfare, as the practice of piracy naturally rewarded opportunistic behavior. Secondly, the corsairs employed an effective defensive measure in the form of strong coastal batteries. Algiers for example, arguably the most vicious of the Barbary States, had a thousand cannons stationed on its coastline ready to fire on enemy ships. This number included more powerful cannons captured from the European powers. Many of these cannons were stationed upon sturdy fortifications made from stone that could resist canon fire from the sea. They were also able to call upon thousands of conscripts from their surrounding countryside in order to defend the cities.<sup>89</sup>

In direct warfare however, the Barbary fleets did not amount to much when compared to the fleets of Western nations at the end of the eighteenth century. The fleets were low in number of ships and were entirely set up for the purpose of carrying out raiding expeditions. Because of this, they mostly lacked powerful warships and were made up of fast and maneuverable brigs and sloops that were able to quickly board and overpower merchant vessels. Sometimes the corsairs would use captured Western ships to conceal their identity, only revealing their allegiance at the last moment when it was already too late for their opposing ships to evade boarding. In terms of defensive fleet strength, the Barbary States were thus not at all impressive in their capabilities which caused them to mostly rely on their formidable coastal defenses when attacked by a superior force. This explains why the United States was able to go to war against the Barbary States despite having a small naval footprint when compared to other western nations.<sup>90,91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 48.

<sup>91</sup> Fremont-Barnes, *The Wars of the Barbary Pirates*, 24- 26.

This relative weakness of the Barbary States raises the question as to why the Barbary States were able to get away with their raids against European shipping for so long. The answer to this is that while the Barbary States were often an annoyance to the major European powers, they at times also proved to be useful.<sup>92</sup> During times of war between the rivaling nations of Europe, pacts between the Barbary States and the warring parties were often signed so that the Barbary corsairs would disrupt the enemy's trade in the Mediterranean. In addition to this benefit, allowing the Barbary States to continue their activities also made it more difficult for lesser powers to establish a foothold in the Mediterranean economically. This in turn was to the benefit to the larger political players such as the British and the French who did not experience as much relative decline as a result.<sup>93</sup>

### **3.2.2 The ongoing development of the American navy and the Barbary Wars**

The comparative lack of strength of the Barbary States versus the Western powers makes one wonder why the United States under the Presidents Washington and Adams did not militarily intervene against the Barbary States much earlier. Multiple elements were involved in this, such as differences of opinion between the succeeding Presidents Adams and Jefferson and domestic economic factors. The most important factor however was the in the late eighteenth century still ongoing debate on whether it was necessary to establish the United States Navy.

The United States Navy was first established in 1775 as the continental navy. It was created during the War of Independence as a safeguard against British attacks on the North-American continent. The young navy was successful in slowing down British attacks until French aid could arrive. It was also useful in the raiding of British supply routes which hampered the British war efforts considerably.<sup>94</sup> After the war had concluded, however, the navy was disbanded by Congress for several different reasons. First of all, the United States lacked the funds necessary for the upkeep of the navy. Secondly, the end of the war meant that a majority of Congress did not see a further need for a large naval deterrent. This sentiment was strengthened by the fact that the United States saw the Atlantic and Pacific oceans as natural barriers between them and their potential enemies. And lastly, a powerful

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<sup>92</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 32.

<sup>93</sup> Murphy, 'The Barbary Pirates', 32.

<sup>94</sup> Nathan Miller, *The U.S. Navy: A History* (Annapolis 1997) 21-22.

navy was seen as a potential instrument of central state control. This went against republican ideals of a nation that promoted individual liberty and opposed authoritarianism.<sup>95</sup>

Between the years 1785 until 1794 the United States thus lacked a significant naval force to protect itself. During the year 1794, however, circumstances changed and the American government once again deemed it necessary to build a small navy. The naval act of 1794 was drafted in direct response to attacks by the Barbary corsairs on American merchant vessels.<sup>96</sup> The act initially authorized the construction of six frigates. But soon after construction had started, three of these frigates were cancelled again by Congress due to funding issues. Ultimately, however, the start of the Quasi-War with France in 1798 forced the United States to complete the initial plan for the construction of all six frigates. This newly established American navy saw its first action during the Quasi-War, in which the frigates were tasked with the defense of American shipping vessels against French raids. After the Quasi-War had ended in the year 1800, laws were finally passed for the permanent establishment of a navy so that a second disbandment of the navy would never occur.<sup>97</sup>

When the war with Tripoli broke out the United States thus possessed a small but effective naval force. Had the decision to rebuild the navy not been made, then not only would going to war against Tripoli not have been feasible, but the United States would also have had considerably more difficulty in defending itself during the Quasi-War against France. The attacks by Barbary corsairs proved to the United States' government that a peacetime navy was a necessity for any nation that wished to remain sovereign. The raids by the Barbary corsairs thus had a major influence on the military development of the United States in its early years. Congress was spurred into action and approved the necessary countermeasures, which in turn allowed the Tripolitan war to take place.

### **3.3 Economic reasons for the outbreak of the wars**

Previously in this chapter I outlined both the ideological and military reasons that caused the United States to go to war against the Barbary States. However, fundamental economic reasons also played large roles in the outbreak of the wars. In this part these reasons will be examined in detail. First of all, the domestic economic factors that drove the U.S. to wage war

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<sup>95</sup> Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> For a complete list on the number of American warships built between 1793 and 1807, see Chapter 2, page 25.

<sup>97</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 5 (E-book).

against the Barbary States will be explained. Secondly, the significance of the Mediterranean trade for the United States will be outlined.

### **3.3.1 Domestic economic factors as reasons for going to war**

Although the U.S. economy had initially boomed after the Treaty of Paris had been signed, this soon ended in the year 1785 during the so-called ‘panic of 1785’. The panic of 1785 was arguably the first economic crisis that the independent United States went through. It turned out that the debts that the republic owed as a result of fighting the British were too great to bear. Additionally, the young nation experienced high levels of deflation and did not engage in meaningful trade with other states. Finally, the British were still boycotting the United States following the war and actively attempted to undermine American industries through competition with their already more developed businesses. The United States thus experienced a difficult beginning, and multiple other crises would follow in the late eighteenth century.<sup>98</sup>

Certain parts of the American economy were hit harder than others during the crises that followed after independence had been achieved. The agricultural sector, the whaling industry and the shipbuilding industry were most harshly affected. The agricultural sector of the United States was still devastated as a result of the War of Independence, during which many farms had gone up in flames and thousands of slaves had escaped captivity. The whaling industry had lost many of its ships as a result of British naval attacks during the war. And the shipbuilding industry lay dormant since it had previously only made ships for the British navy, which was no longer around following the Declaration of Independence.<sup>99</sup>

Most devastating to the American economy however were the trading restrictions that the British imposed on the United States. Having previously been entirely devoted to trading within the boundaries of the British Empire, the United States was now unable to access its old markets due to the mercantilist policies of the British. The American government had hoped that France, which had been their ally during the war, could step in to fill the void as America’s number one trading partner. But the French were unable to extend credit to the indebted United States, and American merchants were thus unable to purchase French goods

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<sup>98</sup> Willard Long Thorp, *Business Annals* (New York 1926) 113-123.

<sup>99</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson’s War*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

to sell on other markets due to a lack of financial means. Additionally, the French continued to utilize tariff barriers (mercantilism) in order to protect their own economy, which meant that American merchants only had restricted access to French products.<sup>100</sup>

With devastated domestic industries and the collapse of pre-revolutionary trade, the United States' economy thus contracted and went through multiple crises in the late eighteenth century. The economy was largely unstable and initially lacked any significant long-term growth perspective. These factors were exacerbated during the last years of the eighteenth century by the outbreak of the Quasi-war against revolutionary France in 1798, which disrupted the trade between the two nations that the U.S. had previously engaged in. Finally, during the early years of the nineteenth century, the recession of 1802–1804 forced the United States to undertake action in order to quell the tide. This particular recession was caused primarily by a pause in the French revolutionary war following the Treaty of Amiens. The United States had benefitted greatly from this war since both Britain and France had required a neutral trading partner while hostilities were ongoing. After the war had ended, The United States' services were no longer needed and the amount of trade decreased drastically.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, the United States was unable to compensate for this loss of trade as a result of continued raids originating from the Barbary corsairs. In order to recover economically, the United States were thus forced to take action against the Barbary States, and eventually did so in the form of the war against Tripoli.

### **3.3.2 The significance of the Mediterranean trade and the Barbary Wars**

The Mediterranean market was important for the American economy after the War of Independence for several reasons. First of all, trade in the region of the Mediterranean had traditionally made up a large portion of the total amount of trade that the United States participated in. It is estimated that before the War of Independence, an average of fifteen percent of all American exports went to the region of 'Southern Europe', which included current-day Italy, the Iberian Peninsula and the Ottoman territories.<sup>102</sup> Thomas Jefferson himself described the Mediterranean trade in the following way:

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<sup>100</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

<sup>101</sup> Thorp, *Business Annals*, 113-123.

<sup>102</sup> Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean', 49.



‘[it comprises] about one Sixth of the Wheat and Flour exported from the United States, and about One Fourth in Value of their dried and pickled Fish, and some Rice . . . that the Commerce loaded outwards from Eighty to one hundred Ships, annually, of Twenty thousand Tons, navigated by about Twelve Hundred Seamen.’<sup>103</sup>

After the War of Independence, the importance of the Mediterranean market grew even further as part of a general increase in American foreign trade. In the tables below, the amount of American exports to a number of Mediterranean nations in the years 1791 and 1800 are laid out. As seen previously in chapter 1 (figure 1), these nations were the major trade partners of the United States in the Mediterranean at the time. What becomes clear from these figures is that in the year 1800 just over twenty percent of total American exports destined for Europe found their way to the Mediterranean, a slight increase from the nineteen percent seen in the year 1791. Despite showing only a slight relative increase as part of the total amount of trade between 1791 and 1800, the numbers do indicate that the Mediterranean trade (in line with a development of scale seen across most of the American economy) was demonstrating quickly increasing revenue with large potential for further growth.

**Table 3: American exports to Mediterranean countries in the year 1791.**

<b>Mediterranean trade-partners</b>	<b>Exports in dollars (year 1791)</b>
Italy (including Malta)	31,727
Gibraltar	25,959
Spain	1,172,563
Ottoman Empire	0
France	806,882
<b>Total Mediterranean trade</b>	<b>2,037,131</b>
<b>Total European trade</b>	<b>10,405,932</b>
<b>Percentage of total European trade</b>	<b>19.57</b>

Source: United States. Dept. of the Treasury. Bureau of Statistics, Statistical tables, exhibiting the commerce of the United States with European countries from 1790-1890:

<http://archive.org/stream/statisticaltable00unit#page/n20/mode/1up> 21-28 (30-06-2016).

<sup>103</sup> Garrity, ‘The United States and Barbary Piracy’, 398.

**Table 4: American exports to Mediterranean countries in the year 1800.**

<b>Mediterranean trade-partners</b>	<b>Exports in dollars (year 1800)</b>
Italy (including Malta)	2,689,968
Gibraltar	865,957
Spain	4,743,678
Ottoman Empire	0*
France	40,400**
<b>Total Mediterranean trade</b>	<b>8,340,003</b>
<b>Total European trade</b>	<b>41,379,234</b>
<b>Percentage of total European trade</b>	<b>20.16</b>

Source: United States. Dept. of the Treasury. Bureau of Statistics, Statistical tables, exhibiting the commerce of the United States with European countries from 1790-1890:

<http://archive.org/stream/statisticaltable00unit#page/n20/mode/1up> 21-28 (30-06-2016).

\* Records show no signs of significant trade occurring before the nineteenth century (Treaty of Tripoli was signed in 1797). Trade again stops at around 1815 due to the outbreak of the second Barbary War.

\*\* This figure is lower than had previously been the case due to the ongoing Quasi-War.

While thus not making up the majority of American overseas trade, the Mediterranean market was growing notably in revenue and prominence and was important enough to invest significant resources into. But it was not merely the amount of trade that made the Mediterranean an important market for the United States. The Mediterranean also presented the U.S. with an opportunity to move their trading relations away from Great Britain. Continuing to rely on Britain for economic safety after achieving independence was not only impractical, but it also impeded further growth considering the restrictions Britain placed on American merchants.<sup>104</sup> For the United States, the securing of the Mediterranean trade thus represented the first step towards economic independence from Britain.<sup>105</sup>

And as mentioned previously, the Barbary States were often used by the major powers of Europe in order to harass their rivals. Between the United States and Britain, this was no different. After the War of Independence, the Barbary States proved to be convenient for Britain in the sense that they prevented the United States from gaining an economic foothold

<sup>104</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 3 (E-book).

<sup>105</sup> Marzagalli, 'American Shipping into the Mediterranean', 44.

in the Mediterranean. The Barbary States were thus often seen by the Americans as indirect extensions of European mercantilism and an affront to American sovereignty.<sup>106</sup> The role the Barbary States played in the rivalry between the United States and Britain can clearly be observed in a letter of correspondence between Captain John Rodgers and Robert Smith, the Secretary of the Navy. This letter was written following the end of the First Barbary War and it speaks of the satisfaction of seeing the most powerful nations of Europe (Britain and France) being astonished by the generous peace treaty which the Americans managed to forcefully gain from the leader of Tripoli. The United States thus not only compared themselves to the European powers when it came to the Barbary States, but they also saw it as some sort of victory over European arrogance when the war ended in their favor. For the Americans, the war against Tripoli thus represented a possibility to understate not only their economic but also their political independence.<sup>107</sup>

### **3.4 The role of Thomas Jefferson's presidency in the outbreak of the wars**

Throughout this thesis on the Barbary Wars, the persona of Thomas Jefferson has repeatedly been of importance in the explanation of certain events. In this part, the significance of Jefferson's presidency on the outbreak of the Barbary Wars will be examined in detail. To start, I will give a short history on the interactions between Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary corsairs before he took up the role of president of the United States. This is relevant to answering the question of what role Thomas Jefferson played, because these initial events colored his views on the corsairs. I will then look at the ways in which Thomas Jefferson's presidency differed in contrast with the presidencies of George Washington and John Adams. This will allow me to measure the precise impact that Thomas Jefferson's personal convictions had on the United States' policies with regards to the Barbary States.

#### **3.4.1 Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary corsairs: early encounters**

Contrary to popular belief, Thomas Jefferson's views on the Barbary corsairs did not merely arise from an ingrained adherence to American values. Jefferson instead had dealt with the corsairs on multiple occasions before he became president, and this influenced his views on

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<sup>106</sup> Marion Smith, 'The Myth of American Isolationism', 43.

<sup>107</sup> Office of Naval Records and Library, Naval documents related to the United States wars with the Barbary powers, 'Letter to secretary of the navy from Captain John Rodgers', 271.

how to deal with them later on. Jefferson's first indirect encounters with Barbary States took place during his time as the United States' minister to France between the years 1774 and 1779. While in Paris, Jefferson had heard of numerous stories from captured American sailors in which the excesses of Barbary slavery were featured. These reports led him to proclaim in the year 1776 that the only way to achieve peace with these 'barbarians' was through the medium of war.<sup>108</sup>

He also viewed the policy of appeasement towards the Barbary States as dishonorable and possibly dangerous, in that it could encourage European nations to pursue a more aggressive course towards the United States. In addition to this, he denounced the fact that the United States supplied the corsairs with larger amounts of tribute than the European nations. He argued that this would eventually cause them to value the capture of American hostages in particular, which would in turn lead to a higher amount of raids on American shipping.<sup>109</sup>

In hindsight Jefferson's arguments may seem logical, but his unwillingness to compromise sometimes also led to unwanted consequences. Throughout his time as minister to France, Jefferson was at one point tasked with convincing the leader of Algiers to release a number of American hostages who had been captured earlier. But Jefferson's confrontational approach caused him to not give the appointed American diplomat the necessary authorizations to adhere to Algiers' demands for the transfer of additional tribute, and the American hostages remained enslaved as a result.<sup>110</sup> Shortly afterwards a plague hit Algiers and many of the enslaved hostages died, with only a handful surviving the ordeal.<sup>111</sup>

Despite this early setback, Jefferson stuck to his views and often debated with John Adams, then U.S. minister to Great Britain, about the optimal ways to thwart the corsairs. On this subject they both had strongly contrasting opinions. Adams favored a more measured approach and condoned the policies of the Washington administration. He for example mentioned that anyone who 'deemed it to be more manly to fight them' had 'more spirit than prudence'.<sup>112</sup> He also pointed out that even if Jefferson's proposals were the wiser choice,

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<sup>108</sup> Robert F. Turner, 'State Responsibility and the War on Terror: The Legacy of Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary Pirates', *Chicago Journal of International Law*; Spring 2003; 4 (2003) 125.

<sup>109</sup> Turner, 'Legacy of Thomas Jefferson', 125.

<sup>110</sup> The Washington Papers, George Washington and the Barbary Pirates: <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/history/topics/gw-and-the-barbary-coast-pirates/> (04-05-2016).

<sup>111</sup> The Washington Papers, Letter from Richard O'Bryen to George Washington, 5 November 1793: <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-14-02-0227> (04-05-2016).

<sup>112</sup> Turner, 'Legacy of Thomas Jefferson', 125.

they could not be carried out anyway due to the lack of naval capacity that the United States suffered from in the late eighteenth century.

But Jefferson was not to be dissuaded by Adams and in 1786 he even put forward a proposal to deal with the Barbary corsairs in conjunction with the European nations. The plan was to persuade the European powers to sign a treaty which would combine all Western nations in a combined front against the corsairs. Decision-making within this covenant would be carried out by the mechanism of majority voting and each country would put forward a representative minister. Surprisingly enough, the proposal was received positively among most of the nations of Europe, but it still failed to become reality for an entirely different reason. Only mere years after the United States had achieved independence, Congress still lacked the ability to force the individual states to fund the endeavor. The articles of confederation, the United States' first constitution, did not allow for the central government to exercise executive power. It was only after the definitive constitution was written in 1789 that such arrangements became possible.<sup>113</sup>

Jefferson's final years before he became president took place between 1790 and 1793, during which he was first Secretary of State under the presidency of George Washington. During this time he was still occupied with the issue of the Barbary corsairs, but since President Washington's official policy was to solve the conflict through diplomatic means he merely pondered on how the conflict could be resolved. His preference however remained to deal with the Barbary States by force.<sup>114</sup> It is however obvious that Jefferson's views on the Barbary States did not arise out of thin air. His opinion, although forceful from the start, was largely formed in the late eighteenth century. When he eventually became president, he was finally able to put these convictions into practice.

### **3.4.2 Thomas Jefferson's personal convictions as a reason for the wars**

It is clear that Thomas Jefferson had different convictions on how to deal with the Barbary States than his presidential predecessors. Judging by his debates with John Adams, it can be noted that he personally was much more in favor of using force to achieve success against the corsairs. But in what ways did these convictions eventually influence the United States' interactions with the Barbary States? Were the Barbary Wars unavoidable, or was it

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<sup>113</sup> Turner, 'President Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary Pirates', 160-161.

<sup>114</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 4 (E-book).

Jefferson's confrontational approach that became the catalyst for the eruption of violent conflict? These questions will be answered in the following part.

Previously I already identified multiple ideological, military and economic reasons for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars. Although all these factors heavily influenced the United States' interactions with the Barbary corsairs, the ways in which the United States ultimately behaved came down to decisions made on the presidential level. And after Jefferson became president in 1801, the American policy towards the Barbary States changed dramatically. Without even informing Congress of his plans, Jefferson sent more than half of the United States Navy to Tripoli in order to compel its leader to sign a beneficial treaty. Ultimately a man of peace, Jefferson did not believe in conquest as a viable alternative to diplomacy. But in the case of the Barbary States, Jefferson's ideological notions trumped his pacifist nature. No doubt this was partly due to his previous encounters with the Barbary corsairs. But in the end, this difference in approach can be best explained by his differing interpretation of American values when compared to John Adams and George Washington.<sup>115</sup>

While Adams and Washington both believed in the values of liberty, free commerce and independence, they were also of the opinion that in the case of the Barbary States these tenants could best be followed through diplomatic means given the circumstances the United States found itself in. John Adams for example mentioned that it would not be 'good economy' to spend 'a million annually' (referring to the possibility of war) 'to save one gift of two hundred thousand pounds' (referring to the sums of tribute that the United States transferred to the Barbary States).<sup>116</sup> Additionally, Adams mentioned that it would be difficult to convince the American public of the necessity of going to war.

Washington also favored a peaceful resolution to the conflict with the Barbary States, as can be read in a 1793 letter from him to the Dey of Algiers. In this letter Washington appoints a new negotiator, David Humphreys, and makes clear to the Dey his wish for 'Peace and Friendship, with you, and your People.'<sup>117</sup> But despite these kind words, in Washington's case it was not merely a difference of opinion that kept him from taking action against the Barbary States during his time as president. In an earlier letter in 1787 he wrote the following: 'It

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<sup>115</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 1 (E-book).

<sup>116</sup> Turner, 'President Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary Pirates', 160.

<sup>117</sup> Letter Washington to Dey of Algiers 21 March 1793: <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-12-02-0278> (07-05-2016).

seems almost Nugatory to dispute about the best mode of dealing with the Algerines when we have neither money to buy their friendship nor the means of punishing them for their depredations upon our people & trade.<sup>118</sup> In other words, Washington simply had no other choice than to continue attempting to appease the Barbary leadership. The United States not only lacked its own navy during his terms, but it was also in serious economic trouble following the War of Independence. Furthermore, as a nation the United States was still divided, with individual states being unwilling to take on financial responsibility for the defense of the whole nation out of fear of strengthening the central government.<sup>119</sup>

While Washington thus did not undertake action out of necessity, it can be argued that John Adams could have done more during his presidency. During his term, which lasted from 1797 to 1801, the United States Navy had already been reestablished. But despite being able to, Adams decided not to take action against the corsairs. The correspondence between Jefferson and Adams that was featured in the previous part explains why this was the case. Adams had three major objections to the use of force. First of all, he believed that the United States still lacked the naval capacity to take on the Barbary States, despite now being in the possession of a small navy. Secondly, he was not convinced of his ability to convince the American public to go to war. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, he was of the opinion that a declaration of war would do more harm than good to the already battered American economy.<sup>120</sup>

Jefferson obviously did not agree with these points, and noted that: ‘The motives pleading for war rather than tribute are numerous and honorable, those opposing them mean and short-sighted.’<sup>121</sup> What was often apparent in his discourse was a recurrent appeal to the concept of honor. Jefferson did not only believe that an honorable foreign policy was morally righteous, but also that it was practically beneficial to the United States in the long term. Would the United States continue to appease the Barbary States, then other adversaries would notice this as a sign of weakness and also take advantage, according to Jefferson. Furthermore, the demands made by the leaders of the Barbary States would not cease due to

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<sup>118</sup> Letter Washington to Lafayette 25 March 1787: <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-05-02-0103> (07-05-2016).

<sup>119</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 5 (E-book).

<sup>120</sup> Turner, ‘President Thomas Jefferson and the Barbary Pirates’, 159-161.

<sup>121</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 1 (E-book).

the appeasement policy, but would only increase as they would test how far they could go. Jefferson was thus convinced that in this case, only force could provide a favorable outcome.<sup>122</sup>

However, as previously mentioned, this is not to say that such a confrontational approach was typical for Thomas Jefferson. On the contrary, when faced with possible military threats Jefferson normally favored imposing economic sanctions over a violent response. During his time as Secretary of State for example, he proposed cutting off Britain economically in order to punish it for threats issued against the United States.<sup>123</sup> And even in the case of the Barbary States, Jefferson was initially not a proponent of unilateral action on the part of the United States, as can be seen from his early attempts at creating an anti-Barbary alliance. Ultimately, Jefferson's approach was provoked out of necessity, and can be characterized as attempting to bring "peace through strength."<sup>124</sup> This because although Jefferson was known as a pacifist president, he did believe that force was sometimes required in order to deter an enemy that could not be reasoned with. These policies were a large shift from his predecessors, who did not think that military action would be the best course of action. Thomas Jefferson's beliefs with regards to the use of force in international relations were thus a major reason for the outbreak of the wars.

## **3.5 Conclusion**

### **3.5.1 Analysis**

During the course of this chapter I have found a large number of reasons for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars. On further reflection, I would divide these reasons in primary and secondary reasons for the outbreak of the wars. With primary reasons I refer to reasons and decisions that directly led to the wars. With secondary reasons, I refer to underlying factors that heavily influenced the decision-making at the time.

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<sup>122</sup> Sofka, *The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security*, 532-533.

<sup>123</sup> Turner, 'Legacy of Thomas Jefferson', 126.

<sup>124</sup> Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli, How America's War with the Barbary Pirates established the U.S. Navy and built a Nation*, Chapter 12: American Peace (New Jersey 2005) (E-book).



### **3.5.1.1 Secondary reasons**

I will first start by listing the secondary reasons. These were important and influential, but did not necessarily directly provoke the conflicts. Firstly, I would classify the United States' ideals of liberty and political independence as secondary reasons in this context. While the freeing of American slaves and the assertion of political independence were important to the United States, Americans had often been taken captive by other powers before and did this not necessarily lead to direct warfare. More importantly, the first Americans were already captured by the Barbary States in 1785, while the First Barbary War only broke out in 1801.<sup>125</sup> This shows that the freeing of these captives was not as important a consideration as one would imagine. On the subject of political independence, from the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson it can definitely be seen that asserting political independence with regards to the British was important, but it was still an afterthought and did not directly lead to the wars. It is also important to note that I am merely referring to political independence here, economic independence was of primary importance and will be touched upon later.

Furthermore, I would classify the military reasons listed as secondary reasons. While the development of the American navy and the comparative strength of the Barbary States were crucial, they did not directly lead to outbreak of the Barbary Wars. Instead, they made the Barbary Wars possible militarily, and thus led to the primary reasons being considered more seriously during decision-making. But it has to again be repeated that without this military development the wars would not have happened, despite these reasons not leading to the wars directly. This can be seen from George Washington's frustration with having his hands tied because of the lack of naval power at his disposal.

### **3.5.1.2 Primary reasons**

Now I will list the reasons that directly led to the wars in order of importance, meaning that the final reason will be the most significant. First of all, the drive for economic independence from Europe and especially Britain was one of the primary reasons for the wars. Having previously been strongly integrated with the British Empire, the American economy was still very dependent on trade with the British. But after achieving independence, the United States was economically excluded from the British colonial market, which led to economic

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<sup>125</sup> Kilmeade, Yaeger, *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates*, Prologue (E-book).

recessions and the necessity for finding alternative partners in trade. Meanwhile, the Barbary States were seen as useful tools for the strongest European powers, since they made sure that weaker nations could not compete with these powers in the Mediterranean through their raids. By attacking the Barbary States, the United States could make a stand against the European's mercantilism, sending a powerful signal that these policies would no longer work. Therefore, I would list the drive for economic independence as one of the primary reasons for the wars.

Secondly, I would also classify a more general (non-ideological) economic reason for the wars as a primary reason. Here I refer to the economic importance of the Mediterranean trade for the American economy. Despite only making up about twenty percent of the United States' European trade at the turn of the century, access to the Mediterranean made it possible to interact with many different Southern-European and Middle-Eastern trading partners. This meant that the Mediterranean market had a strong potential for growth as could be seen in the previously given figures, which was especially needed for the United States after the war of independence had caused economic malaise and had cut the nation off from the British Empire. The importance of the Mediterranean market and the problems that the Barbary corsairs posed in accessing that market were thus also one of the primary reasons for the outbreak of the Barbary wars.

Finally, I come to the most important reason for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars. Because while all these other reasons strongly contributed to the outbreak of the wars, decision-making ultimately came down to one person, and this was the President of the United States. The most important reason for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars were the convictions of Thomas Jefferson and the ways in which he put these into practice. His forceful response to the continued demands made by the Barbary States was what ultimately caused the wars, and although it can never be known for certain, I am not convinced that George Washington or John Adams would have taken the same route. Judging from Jefferson's disagreements with both of his predecessors, he had a wholly different view on how to achieve the same objectives than these men did. It were these views, cultivated through his prior indirect experience with the corsairs that primarily caused the wars. Adams and Washington had both shown that the same challenges encountered while interacting with the pirates could be approached in more peaceful ways. But it was Jefferson who believed that these attempts at peaceful negotiation would ultimately fail, since the corsairs would keep demanding more and more tribute. It can never be fully known if he was right in this regard,

although all signs did point towards this outcome at the time. Nevertheless, it was this conviction that drove President Thomas Jefferson to sending a large part of the American fleet to the Mediterranean without congressional approval, and thus directly led to the first conflict with Tripoli and the broader Barbary Wars.

## **Chapter 4: The long-term effects of the Barbary Wars**

Having found the reasons for the outbreak of the Barbary Wars, I will use this final chapter to determine what long-term effects the wars had on the United States. I will analyze multiple aspects of the nation in order to identify these effects. First of all, I will look at how the First Barbary War affected the self-image of the United States. The focus here will be on how the broader war was viewed by the American public, and on the influence of the more specific raid by Stephen Decatur on the captured warship USS Philadelphia. Secondly, I will determine if and how the wars changed the political dynamics and foreign policy of the United States. Here I will analyze if and how the First Barbary War changed the dynamics between the president and Congress, and on how the war affected the ways in which the United States would deal with similar threats in the future.

### **4.1 Changes to the self-image of the United States**

The First Barbary War is often portrayed as being only a marginal victory for the United States in terms of what it actually achieved. It is true that the war was expensive and that did it not completely stop the Barbary corsairs from preying on commercial vessels. It was only during the Second Barbary War that a coalition of European nations and the United States managed to end most of these activities. But the war did result in a large increase in prestige for the United States, not only in the eyes of foreign states but also within the nation itself. This was in large part due to the “bold act” of Stephen Decatur, who sneaked into Tripoli’s harbor in order to burn the USS Philadelphia, a major American warship that had been captured by the corsairs. In the part below a general overview on the effects of the Barbary Wars on the American self-image will be given firstly. Secondly, the role that Stephen Decatur’s raid played in those changes will also be examined.

#### **4.1.1 American self-confidence and the Barbary Wars**

Within the United States, pride as a result of the victory over Tripoli presented itself in multiple different forms. First of all, the war caused a renewed sense of self-respect for the citizens of the United States to take form. Having just achieved independence, it was not certain at the time if the United States would survive as an independent political entity. The

First Barbary War showed the American public that their nation was capable of standing up for itself on the international arena, and that American values were more than just an ideological fluke. However, the pride that resulted from the victory over Tripoli also contained certain religious and racial elements. The idea that the Islamic governance of the Barbary States formed the pinnacle of backwardness was widely shared. This can be seen clearly in a poem on the Barbary Wars by Joseph Hanson, a poet from New York. In his poem Hanson called the Tripolitans ‘A rude race of Barbarians’ who were taught ‘that on this side of the Atlantic, dwells a race of beings of equal spirit to the first nations, inspired by justice and freedom.’<sup>126</sup>

Other accounts of the American public’s reaction to the wars also reinforce the image of a nation reinvigorated with self-confidence. A review by Washington Irving of the play ‘The Tripolitan Prize’ from 1802 reveals some interesting details. In this play, the highly improbable scenario of a battle between the American navy and Tripolitan forces off the coast of Britain is presented. While Irving thought the play was terrible, he mentions that the public’s reaction to the play was completely opposite to his. They were thrilled by the way the American victory was presented, with the Tripolitans defeated while the English were forced to watch the battle off their coast. This play clearly shows the importance of the First Barbary War for the United States in the international context, with the Americans showing the British that they are not to be underestimated.<sup>127</sup>

It was however not just the First Barbary War that reinvigorated a sense of pride in the United States during the time. The Louisiana Purchase, which I already shortly touched upon in the first chapter, also played a role in this. In a song named ‘national prosperity’ from 1804, the Louisiana Purchase is regarded as an important success which would allow the United States to achieve its objectives of ‘freedom and trade.’ Furthermore, this song does not merely touch upon the difference between the freedom loving United States and the tyrannical Barbary States as the other examples did, but it also highlights the role of Thomas Jefferson in the entire affair. It states that Jefferson was the ‘well-chosen chief of the nation’, who would make sure that the pirate of Tripoli would ‘Render us justice, or encounter our blows’. Jefferson’s change in approach thus also played a role in the way the United States viewed

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<sup>126</sup> Ala Alryyes, *A Muslim American Slave, The Life of Omar Ibn Said* (Wisconsin 2011) 152-153.

<sup>127</sup> William Dunlap, *History of the American Theater* (Princeton 1832) 301-302.

itself in the international arena.<sup>128</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Decatur's bold act as a symbol of national pride**

Perhaps the most important event that transpired during the First Barbary War and influenced the American self-image was the raid on the captured USS Philadelphia by Captain Stephen Decatur. Initially, the loss of the Philadelphia to the corsairs struck a sensitive blow to the morale of the American public. After all, one of the most powerful warships that the United States possessed had been taken by the corsairs without much effort. But the raid on the Philadelphia by Decatur changed the perception of events drastically. While Federalist commentators in the United States attempted to downplay Decatur's heroism by stating that he did not manage to recover the vessel but merely destroyed it, this critique fell on deaf ears in a nation that brimmed with patriotism.<sup>129</sup>

As had been the case during the earlier years of the First Barbary War, the arts once again took their inspiration from events that had happened half a world away. Songs were sung of Decatur's courage in the face of tyranny, referring to the Barbary corsairs as brutes who Decatur would 'teach good manners'. Plays were made which attempted to recreate the events and drew large crowds in the process. For once, the United States was a unified nation, brought together by a shared sense of patriotism. The Philadelphia Aurora, a well-read newspaper from the time, called upon the American public to see 'with an undivided spirit, the virtues and the valor of her heroes and statesmen, exerted in the maintenance of her rights, and the assertion of her independence and her honor'.<sup>130</sup>

Apart from having a large effect on the public opinion in the United States during the time, there were also large political ramifications to Decatur's raid on the Philadelphia. News of the raid struck a devastating blow to the Federalist opponents of President Jefferson who still questioned his militaristic approach to solving the Barbary issue. Up until Decatur's raid, the First Barbary War had not been going very well. Naval blockades of Tripoli had been ineffective, the Pasha remained defiant and the initial capture of the USS Philadelphia and its crew led many to believe that the expedition would end in disaster. But Decatur's raid forced

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<sup>128</sup> Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World 1776-1815*, Chapter 8: Remembering the Tripolitan War (Chicago 1995) (E-book).

<sup>129</sup> Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, Chapter 8 (E-book).

<sup>130</sup> Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, Chapter 8 (E-book).

Jefferson's Federalist opponents to at least temporarily halt their political attacks on his policies. In fact, Federalists that continued to defy Jefferson and attempted to belittle Decatur's accomplishments were ridiculed by the general public, with their remarks seen as 'too detestable for comment'.<sup>131</sup>

But it were not merely the Federalists that were forced to swallow their pride due to Decatur's exploits. Traditionally, many Republicans had been wary of increasing the size and funding of the American navy. They were worried that an increase in size for the navy could lead to government infringement on personal liberty, and that it would damage the autonomy of the individual American states. However, following Decatur's successful raid on the Philadelphia, many of these politicians suddenly forgot about their former reservations. Multiple Republican-leaning organizations put out public statements endorsing the heroism of Decatur, with much more positive remarks about the navy accomplishing these statements than had been the norm previously. Still, some reservations remained. In a public statement released by a militia in Philadelphia it was noted that they wished that 'May they [the navy] be employed only as the scourge of tyrants and the basis of Western freedom.' They were however quite positive about Decatur and the Tripoli campaign, stating that the Jefferson administration had been wise in its decision-making.<sup>132</sup>

## **4.2 Changes to the foreign policy of the United States**

Apart from having significant effects on how the American public viewed their place in the world, the First Barbary War also changed the ways in which the American government functioned domestically and in how it conducted its foreign policy in the years after the war had been concluded. First of all, by attacking Tripoli without first asking for congressional approval, Jefferson set a precedent that would often be repeated by later presidents. The dynamics between Congress and the president thus changed during the First Barbary War, a development which will be further analyzed below. Secondly, the First Barbary War proved to be a lesson on how to deal with tactics of intimidation by foreign entities. These lessons learned in foreign policy can be most clearly observed when looking at the Second Barbary War of 1815, in which the United States changed their attitude radically from their initial policies during the First Barbary War. Both the changes to the dynamics between the

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<sup>131</sup> Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, Chapter 8 (E-book).

<sup>132</sup> Allison, *The Crescent Obscured*, Chapter 8 (E-book).

president and Congress and the differences in foreign policy between the first and Second Barbary Wars will be discussed in further detail in the following part.

#### **4.2.1 Barbary influence on power dynamics between the president and Congress**

As has been previously noted, Thomas Jefferson sent an American naval squadron to the Mediterranean in 1801 after the Barbary State of Tripoli had demanded increased amounts of tribute. Jefferson did so without prior congressional approval and without a formal declaration of war, the first such occurrence in the history of the United States. During the Quasi-War against France only a few years earlier in 1798, President Adams had in fact sought congressional approval before ordering the use of force against the French navy, even though war was never formally declared. The First Barbary War was thus the first conflict in which an American president had acted unilaterally, although shortly afterwards Jefferson's actions were approved by Congress regardless. Jefferson justified his initial unilateral actions by referring to the fact that Congress was in recess at the time, which would have significantly slowed down any decision-making during a time when such a slowdown could significantly hamper military efforts.<sup>133</sup>

It is quite clear that Jefferson had set a precedent through his actions. Ever since the Quasi-War and the First Barbary War were concluded, over 125 minor and major conflicts have been fought by the United States without the respective presidents requesting prior congressional approval.<sup>134</sup> It must be noted, however, that similarly to the First Barbary War, in most of these cases Congress did approve military action shortly after hostilities had already commenced. In 1845 for example, President James K. Polk ordered American troops to advance into the breakaway rebellious Mexican province of Texas. Texas was still part of Mexico, and Mexican troops thus attacked what they regarded as American invaders. President Polk then used this attack as a justification for declaring war on Mexico, with Congress scrambling to hastily authorize the conflict after it had already started.<sup>135</sup>

Prior to the twentieth century there are thus examples which show that other presidential administrations repeated Jefferson's unilateral actions, only to have their actions approved by Congress after war had already become fact. In many modern cases however, Congress was

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<sup>133</sup> Wheelan, *Jefferson's War*, Chapter 6 (E-book).

<sup>134</sup> John C. Yoo, 'The President's Constitutional Authority to Conduct Military Operations Against Terrorists and Nations Supporting Them', *Office of Legal Counsel*, 202.

<sup>135</sup> Graham T. Allison, 'Making War: The President and Congress', *Law and Contemporary Problems* (1976) 87.



never consulted in its entirety. This signaled a major break with wars from the past. While Jefferson's unilateral actions are thus often referred to in modern times by presidential administrations who wish to avoid consulting Congress completely, there are some important distinctions to be made in this regard.

It was during the outbreak of the Korean War in the 1950's that the presidential administration of Harry Truman first claimed that they did not need any sort of approval by Congress to declare war. Truman called his proposed policies 'police actions' instead of an actual war, even though the Korean War lasted three years and cost thousands of lives. Defenders of Truman's policies even directly referred to Jefferson's actions during the Barbary Wars in order to justify Truman's bypassing of congressional approval. Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. was one of those defenders, who in his endorsement conveniently left out the fact that Jefferson mentioned that he was 'Unauthorized by the Constitution, without the sanction of Congress, to go beyond the line of defense.'<sup>136</sup> It was only after Jefferson had received approval by Congress to use force that the squadron he had sent to the Mediterranean started engaging in combat beyond the line of self-defense. Such a distinction was not made during the outbreak of the Korean War.

Following the decisions by Truman during the Korean War, American presidents completely circumvented the necessity to request congressional approval repeatedly, thus going a major step further than Jefferson had during the First Barbary War. During the escalation of the Vietnam War in 1965 for example, President Johnson authorized the bombing of North-Vietnam and the deployment of U.S. combat troops. Earlier, Congress had passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution which perhaps could have been used to legally justify the president's actions, but instead Johnson claimed that the resolution was merely a gesture of approval for the president's actions and that he did not need it to undertake these military operations.<sup>137</sup>

Finally, the last of these modern examples are the actions President Bill Clinton undertook during the Bosnian War. In 1994, in conjunction with NATO, Clinton authorized the use of airstrikes against Bosnian Serb targets in response to human rights violations by said forces. Although Clinton informed Congress of these actions, he never sought their

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<sup>136</sup> Louis Fisher, 'The Korean War: on what legal basis did Truman act?', *The American Journal of International Law Vol. 89, No. 1* (1995) 37-39.

<sup>137</sup> Graham T. Allison, 'Making War: The President and Congress', 95-100.

permission, instead choosing to coordinate more closely with the United Nations and NATO. In 1995 the airstrikes were further escalated through Operation Deliberate Force, and a ceasefire was finally achieved at the end of that year. During the entire course of the conflict, Clinton had kept Congress informed on the proceedings but had not asked for formal approval.<sup>138</sup>

It is thus clear that Jefferson's decision to send a naval squadron to the Mediterranean without first informing Congress had a major impact on the power dynamics between Congress and presidential administrations during later centuries. Up until the Korean War, Jefferson's actions had been used by presidential administrations to justify going to war first and seeking approval later, with the Mexican War as an obvious example. After the Korean War of the 1950's however, congressional approval was often not deemed necessary at all anymore. This cannot be completely attributed to Thomas Jefferson. Instead, the Truman administration was responsible, although Jefferson's actions were (mistakenly) used to justify Truman's unilateral decision-making. The major distinction to be made between Truman and Jefferson is that Jefferson sought congressional approval for use of force against the Barbary States after sending part of the American fleet to the Mediterranean, while Truman did not do the same in the case of the Korean example. Nevertheless, both Jefferson and Truman set major precedents by not being completely open to Congress, with both decisions heralding major shifts towards an increase in executive power within the American political system.

#### **4.2.2 The First Barbary War and dealing with foreign intimidation**

The decision to send a squadron to the Barbary State of Tripoli in order to ward off attacks and retaliate against the Barbary corsairs had considerable consequences on later American foreign policy in both the short and the long term, especially since the First Barbary War ended on positive terms for the United States. The actual effects that the First Barbary War had on foreign policy can be most clearly distinguished when comparing the First and Second Barbary Wars due to a noticeable change in policy between them. Thus, because a significant change can be observed while not many other factors can be of influence due to the relatively short amount of time between the wars, I will use these distinctions to determine what lasting effects the First Barbary War had on American foreign policy. Following that, I will also

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<sup>138</sup> Ryan C. Hendrickson, *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers* (Nashville 2002) 75-59.

shortly touch upon the effects of the First Barbary War on the actions of European powers during the second war.

The results of the First Barbary War did not only have a large effect on the actions of European powers during the Second Barbary War, but they also changed how the United States conducted itself during the Second Barbary War and the conflict with Algiers. Firstly, the United States was no longer reluctant to take military action when the Barbary States had recommenced their attacks on western ships in 1812. The corsairs initially took advantage of the war of 1812 in which the United States and Britain fought one another and were thus distracted from dealing with privateering in the Mediterranean. But in March of 1815 then-President James Madison ordered two squadrons of the United States' navy to embark on a journey to Algiers in order to forcefully persuade its leader to cease all attacks. After defeating multiple Algerian ships, the squadron led by the hero from the First Barbary War, Stephen Decatur, initiated negotiations with Algiers. In his dealings with the Algerian political leadership, Decatur was relentless in his demands for Barbary attacks to cease and he issued multiple threats of all-out war. Shocked by these demands and the fleet of American warships on his doorstep, the Algerian leader capitulated. He released all the Americans that had been enslaved and paid to compensate for the damage he had caused to American commerce.<sup>139</sup>

What can be noticed when comparing the American expedition to Tripoli during the First Barbary War to the one to Algiers during the second war, is that the attitude of the United States had changed completely. The Americans now possessed a crucial attribute that had initially been lacking during the First Barbary War: confidence. Without thinking twice both President Madison and Congress ordered Decatur to embark on Tripoli, not merely to protect American shipping but to directly confront the leader of Algiers and rescue captured Americans. Once arrived, Decatur initiated negotiations aggressively, threatening war multiple times and making demands in a similarly harsh tone as Algiers itself had used before. Clearly, the United States was now more confident in its ability to win an actual conflict and did not hold back any longer.

This had happened due to two factors. First of all, it can be attributed to the surge in patriotism that followed the victory during the First Barbary War as outlined earlier.

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<sup>139</sup> Lambert, *The Barbary Wars*, Chapter 7 (E-book).

Secondly, the war against the British of 1812 also played an important role. Often hailed as the ‘second war of independence’, the stalemate that the war of 1812 ended in cemented American independence and showed the American public that if they could take on the British, they could take on any power.<sup>140</sup> Both these wars were thus important steps in the development of American foreign policy, and the creation of the idea that foreign intimidation should not be abided to.

But as mentioned earlier, the actions of the United States during the First Barbary War did not only have an effect on American foreign policy, they also changed how the European powers conducted themselves in the Mediterranean. In the first chapter it was outlined how the Second Barbary War eventually ended in total defeat for the Barbary States once the British started to view them as adversaries. But this change in policy for the British did not come out of thin air. Instead, the victories of the United States against Tripoli and the later mostly diplomatic victories against Algiers were seen as a threat to British hegemony. In order to show the world that Britain was still the nation calling the shots on the international stage, action thus had to be undertaken.<sup>141</sup> While competition from the United States was thus an important factor in the British decision to send the fleet of Lord Exmouth to the Barbary States in 1815-16, it can also not be understated that the international change of tone towards the practice of slavery that started to take hold during the late eighteenth century had a role to play in the British decision to wage war upon the Barbary States. In 1807 the British Empire abolished the slave trade (but not slavery itself), and the abolitionist movement had attained considerable influence. Indeed, the naval effort itself largely materialized due to an appeal by Admiral Sydney Smith in 1814 to end the injustice of slavery that continued to negatively affect the Mediterranean as a result of the Barbary States.<sup>142</sup> While thus an important factor, the American victories were not the only factor that was considered by the British before going to war.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

This last chapter looked at the long-term effects of the First Barbary War on the United States as a nation. Multiple angles were analyzed, such as the way in which the United States viewed

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<sup>140</sup> Robert Malcolmson, *Historical Dictionary of the War of 1812* (Lanham 2006) 64.

<sup>141</sup> Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror*, 152.

<sup>142</sup> Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs*, 271-273.

itself after the war and the changes to their foreign policy as a result of lessons learned during the war. First of all, it was shown that the First Barbary War was important for the citizens of the United States in that it revealed to them that their nation could stand up for itself on the international arena, while still keeping in mind the values that separated their republic from the European monarchies. This realization resulted in a large outpour of patriotism following the victory achieved during the First Barbary War, as can be seen from the multiple examples given at the beginning of the chapter.

Following this more general overview, we then looked at a more specific event that led to an increase in American pride during the First Barbary War. This was the raid by Captain Stephen Decatur on the captured warship the USS Philadelphia. In the depth of night, Decatur and his men used small boats to sneak onto the deck of the ship and then set it on fire. After achieving this objective, they then managed to return to the American fleet unharmed. In the United States this event was seen as an unrivaled act of heroism. While the capture of the USS Philadelphia had initially dampened morale, its destruction at the hands of Decatur restored the confidence of the American public in their nation. It also served to silence Federalist opponents to Jefferson's war against Tripoli, who were afterwards seen as bitter losers at best and outright traitors at worst. Furthermore, republican opponents to the creation of a powerful American navy also changed their minds due to Decatur's heroic deed.

After analyzing these factors which led to a shift in how the American public perceived their own nation, we then looked at the ways in which the First Barbary War influenced American politics and foreign policy. First of all, it became clear that Jefferson's decision to send a squadron to the Mediterranean without first consulting Congress had significant effects on decisions made by subsequent presidential administration. The most obvious example would be the war against Mexico over the breakaway province of Texas in 1845. During this war, President Polk sent American troops into the disputed territory of Texas without first consulting Congress, only to have Congress later approve these actions after hostilities had already commenced. But more recent examples can also be found, such as the Korean War that started in 1950. During that war President Truman went one step further than his predecessors however, declaring that it was instead a 'police action' and that it did not require ratification by Congress at all. In any case, it becomes clear from these examples that Jefferson set a precedent in this regard, with a gradual increase in executive powers following his decision to not inform Congress during the First Barbary War seen over the years.

Finally, as part of the analysis on the influence of the First Barbary War on American foreign policy, we found that the war had a significant effect on how the United States dealt with similar threats in later years. In order to be able to clearly identify these effects, a comparison between the policies of the first and Second Barbary Wars was made. It became clear that during the Second Barbary War the United States was more upfront with its intentions from the start. This signaled an increase in confidence in that the United States now knew that it had a good chance to win any prospective battles. Instead of first ordering the United States' navy to protect American commerce, President Madison now authorized the immediate assault of Algerian ships. And in his negotiations with the Barbary States, Stephen Decatur pursued an aggressive approach that included threatening all-out war on multiple occasions. The First Barbary War thus had a large effect on the confidence of the United States on the international arena, and this in turn led to a shift in its foreign policy and the creation of the idea that foreign intimidation should never be adhered to.

To conclude, the First Barbary War was an important period for the United States when viewed in its historical context. It led to an explosion of patriotism and pride in the nation, and had significant effects on the relation between Congress and later presidential administrations. Furthermore, the First Barbary War caused the United States to become more confident in its foreign policy in that the nation would no longer adhere to foreign demands and intimidation. This could be most clearly seen in the different approach the United States took in regards to the Barbary corsairs during the Second Barbary War, in that they were now aggressively pursuing their foreign policy goals from the start.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

From all the above I hope it has become clear not only why the United States made the decision to wage a transatlantic war for the first time in its history, but also just how significant that decision was for the future of not just the United States, but indeed large parts of the world. The decisions made during the First Barbary War had repercussions that reverberated through much of modern history. They affected the foreign policy of the nation that would take over the torch from Britain as the sole modern hegemon, and they thus continue to affect us in this day and age. In order to explain the ways in which this happened and why, I will use this conclusion to definitively answer my primary and secondary research questions. I will then end with a contextualization in order to clearly define in what manner the First Barbary War should be seen as part of the larger study of global history.

### **5.1 Why the United States went to war against Tripoli**

I will first start with the question of why the United States went to war against the Barbary State of Tripoli. During the answering of this question in chapter three, four different reasons were identified. First of all, it was determined that the ideological pillars of the United States that took form after achieving independence in 1783 played a major role in the outbreak of the First Barbary War. These were the moral pillars of individual liberty, political and economic independence and the American commitment to free trade. By far the most important of these three ideological pillars as a cause for the Barbary Wars was the commitment to free trade. The Barbary States were seen by the United States as extensions of European mercantilism, a practice which they were ideologically opposed to. By going to war against Tripoli, the United States thus made an ideological stand and made clear that they would not be deterred by attempts by rival nations to restrict their access to economic markets. However, it was not just the ideology of free trade that played a role in the decision to go to war against Tripoli. The commitments to individual liberty and independence also played important roles, which can be seen in the American desire to free their enslaved fellow Americans and in their push to invalidate the unequal treaties signed with the Barbary leaders. In general, ideological factors thus played important roles in the outbreak of the conflict.

Further reasons for the outbreak of the wars were sought in the military realm. First of all, the Barbary States were relatively weak when compared to the Western powers in military terms. A European power such as Britain could have easily destroyed all of the Barbary States in a short amount of time, but chose not to because it was not in its interest. While the United States also had an insignificant navy, the relative weakness of the Barbary States nevertheless allowed them to go to war and be successful in battle. Secondly, the development of the American navy in the years before the First Barbary War allowed the war to take place in the first place. Earlier attacks by the Barbary corsairs and the Quasi-War of 1798 against France had spurred Congress to approve the rebuilding of the American navy that had earlier been disbanded following the war of independence. With this small but battle-worn and well organized naval force the United States was able to take the fight to Tripoli in 1801.

Following these military reasons, we looked at economic factors that aided in the outbreak of the First Barbary War. First of all, it was found that the American economy had been devastated following the Revolutionary War, with much of the countryside in shambles and with the British Empire imposing tough economic restrictions on the United States. These factors forced the United States to explore alternative markets, and the Mediterranean had much potential in this regard. The only obstacle were the raids by the Barbary corsairs and the mercantilist policies that made the major European powers ignore these transgressions. The economic situation in the United States thus forced the nation to take action against the Barbary corsairs in order to achieve economic independence. Furthermore, the Mediterranean was simply an important market for the United States, with a large percentage of trade already taking place before the War of Independence had ended when the American commercial fleet was still under British protection. Permanently losing such an important market would have been a major loss, and this thus also incentivized the Americans to wage war upon Tripoli.

Finally, as the last examined reason for the outbreak of the First Barbary War, we explored the influence and role that Thomas Jefferson played before and during the conflict. This resulted in the understanding that Jefferson was instrumental in the outbreak of the conflict. His confrontational approach towards the corsairs, which had developed during his time as minister to France, broke with the policies of his predecessors in a major way. He believed that continuing to negotiate with the corsairs would only result in more tribute being paid, more American citizens being captured and more lives being lost. The only way to stop the Barbary demands permanently would be to show the corsairs that the United States would



stand its ground and not accept any more injustices. This confrontational approach was a major reason for the outbreak of the conflict.

Having found all these reasons for the outbreak of the First Barbary War, it was necessary to analyze them further in order to determine their order of importance. All of the reasons were divided into primary and secondary reasons, with the primary reasons being major factors that led directly to the conflict, and secondary reasons being important elements that simmered in the background. Under secondary reasons I grouped the American ideals of liberty and political independence, in addition to the comparative strength of the Barbary States and the development of the United States navy. Primary reasons were identified as the drive for economic independence, the relative importance of the Mediterranean as an economic market and the confrontational approach and political opinions of Thomas Jefferson.

## **5.2 The long-term effects on the United States**

The fourth chapter focused on answering the question of what long-term effects the First Barbary War had on the United States as a nation. This subject was analyzed from two different perspectives. Firstly, I looked at the ways in which the First Barbary War affected the domestic perception of the American public on their nation. Secondly, I looked at how the First Barbary War changed American politics and foreign policy. All of the results found during this analysis will be shortly summarized below.

When looking at the ways in which the war changed the public's perception of the United States, it became clear that the relative victory that it resulted in led to an eruption of patriotism in the United States. The raid by Stephen Decatur on the captured Philadelphia also significantly aided in this process, with Decatur being seen as a national hero from that point onward. This had several political implications for the nation. First of all, Federalist critics of Jefferson's administration were silenced following Decatur's heroism. Second of all, even Republican opponents of the permanent establishment of the United States' Navy now changed their minds. This in turn had implications for the further development of the navy in later years and the political landscape in the United States.

After examining the effects the war had on the American public's perception of their nation, I looked at the ways in which it altered the political process in the United States. Jefferson's decision to send a naval squadron to Tripoli without first consulting Congress

turned out to have caused a chain reaction in later years, with many presidential administrations following his example. Some even directly referenced Jefferson's decision, most notably President Harry Truman's close aide and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger. It must be noted however that in modern times presidents often go one step further by not consulting Congress at all, a development that cannot be attributed to Jefferson but instead to Harry Truman's classification of the Korean War of the 1950's as a police action.

After examining the changes to the relationship between presidential administrations and Congress due to the events from the First Barbary War, the effects that the war had on the foreign policy of the United States were examined. In order to determine these effects, American policy during the first and Second Barbary Wars was investigated. Between the two wars, American self-confidence clearly increased considerably. While President Jefferson initially ordered the squadron near Tripoli to only fight in self-defense, President Madison and Congress allowed the American fleet to confront the Barbary corsairs from the start. Furthermore, the tone of negotiations between the United States and the Barbary States also changed, with Stephen Decatur now taking on a belligerent tone that indicated that his fleet was ready to fight to achieve its objectives if necessary.

### **5.3 The First Barbary War in the context of global history**

As a result of writing this master's thesis it has become clear to me not merely why the First Barbary War broke out, but also how a relatively minor event in history can cause ripple effects that influence major events in later decades. The First Barbary War was without doubt such an event. From the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government to the way in which foreign intimidation would be dealt with in later years, the First Barbary War left its mark on many aspects of American history. Not to mention the impact the war had on the Barbary States, who entered a period of slow but sure decline following the war, with some such as Algiers even being colonized in later decades. Even though the conflict has largely been relegated to the history books today, its effects are thus still felt throughout the world.

Perhaps the most important lesson I would like the readers of this thesis to grasp is that an international war is a complex matter that rarely arises out of a single issue. Instead, many different factors come together to form the perfect breeding ground for conflict, and even then it is up to the decision-makers to choose in what manner they approach these issues. That

being said, it can never be known for sure if Jefferson's predecessors would have approached the situation with Tripoli differently. While the arguments brought forward by the presidents Adams and Washington to avoid war had resonated during the late eighteenth century, by 1801 the established treaties had already started to unravel. Furthermore, it must also not be forgotten that it was Tripoli who officially declared war upon the United States, not the other way around. Whether Jefferson had already sent a naval squadron or not, some form of action on the part of the United States would thus have been required either way. Regardless, I personally remain convinced due to the correspondence between Jefferson and his colleagues that their different outlooks on the conflict had a major effect on decision-making when the situation reached its boiling point.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that the First Barbary War was a multidimensional conflict that arose out of ideological factors, military developments, economic necessity and personal convictions. It changed the course of history in that it solidified the position of the United States Navy, it altered the way in which ordinary Americans saw their nation, it changed the dynamics between Congress and the president and it redefined the manner in which American foreign policy would be conducted in later decades. While generally seen as a minor conflict today, its historical importance can thus not be understated.

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