

Watchful Waiting / Money Bags and Cannon Balls

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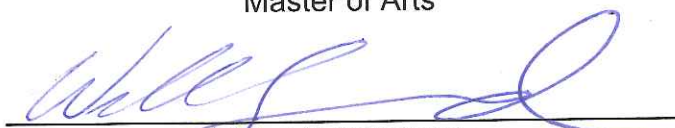
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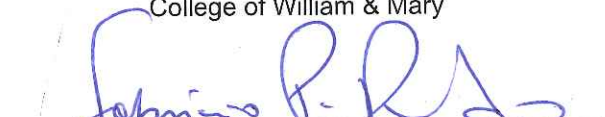
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ABSTRACT

Watchful Waiting: U.S. Neutrality Law in the Atlantic World: 1815-1819.

This paper addressed the ways in which American statesmen responded to the diplomatic crisis of American citizens serving as privateers for the rebelling countries of South America during the South American Wars for Independence. Most specifically, this paper analyzes the strategy of President James Monroe, who crafted a elastic and flexible policy of “watchful waiting,” which allowed the state to capitalize on events and situations in U.S. favor without bringing the nation into war with Spain. From a position of international weakness, U.S. statesmen were able to take advantage of the crisis caused by American privateers and, in the process, strengthen the state economically and territorially.

Money Bags and Cannon Balls: The First Bribery War and the Expansion of American Presidential Power

This paper analyzes the expansion of presidential power witnessed during the Thomas Jefferson administration during the First Barbary War of 1801-1805. During the Early Republic, American shipping faced piratical actions from the various Regencies of the Barbary Coast, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. Jefferson sought to break from the noncombative precedent of his Federalist predecessors by directly engaging the Barbary corsairs. In taking the fight to the Mediterranean, Jefferson transformed the role of the executive. The demands of war forced Jefferson to empower the presidential role of commander in chief in unprecedented and long-lasting ways.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedications	iii
Chapter 1. Intellectual Bibliography	1
Chapter 2. Watchful Waiting: U.S. Neutrality Law in the Atlantic World: 1815-1819.	5
Chapter 3. Money Bags and Cannon Balls: The First Bribery War and the Expansion of American Presidential Power	40
Chapter 4. Bibliography	63

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This Master's Degree is dedicated to my past and future students, who gave me the motivation to earn this degree. Additionally, I dedicate this to my wife Kelly and my parents, who gave me the support and love needed to accomplish my goals.

Chapter 1: Intellectual Bibliography

During the 2017-2018 academic year, I worked to complete the necessary coursework needed to earn a Master's Degree in American History at the College of William and Mary. In addition to a course on the Historian's Craft, and three reading classes covering topics such as Southern History, Vast Early America, and Early Native American History, the major element of my degree works consists two thesis written in the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018. These projects, roughly between 20-30 pages each, represent research conducted in American foreign affairs during the Early Republic. Although I came to William and Mary with no previous scholarly training at the graduate level, these papers have provided me the opportunity to make modest contributions to the historical narrative surrounding early 19th century American diplomacy.

I came to William and Mary with a strong desire to professionalize my passion for history. For the previous four years before enrolling in the graduate history program, I taught American History at a private all-male boarding school in foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. Teaching is my life's passion, and this drive to become the best educator possible inspired me earn my Master's Degree in history at William and Mary.

My teaching background greatly influenced my time at William and Mary. As a teacher, it is my goal to make history as enlightening, fun, and illuminating as possible for my future students. Therefore, both the classes I chose as my reading seminars and the topics studied for my research portfolio were inspired by my desire to make my experience at William and Mary as practical as possible for my career. Thus, I chose classes and topics that corresponded with subjects I will teach in the future and

research topics that would be exciting to teach high schoolers who might think history a boring subject. Whereas many of my classmates came into this academic year with a clear sense of what kind of historian they sought to be, I came in as a generalist who sought stories and topics that I would be able to make exciting for my future high school students.

Thus, lacking an identity as a specific type of historian, I was free to choose a topic within the Atlantic World theme that most excited me. Wanting to stay in American history and thinking that pirates were fascinating, I began to investigate American pirates in the Atlantic World. Thanks to Professor Prado's help, I found that American privateers greatly impacted the direction of U.S. foreign policy after the War of 1812. In a paper entitled "Watchful Waiting: U.S. Neutrality Law in the Atlantic World: 1815-1819." I investigated the role American privateers operating during the Age of Revolution played in dictating U.S. neutrality laws after the War of 1812. These privateers, hired by South American revolutionaries to harass Spanish maritime forces, threaten America's fragile peace with Spain. My main observation in this paper was that, in the hands of skilled American diplomats, U.S. neutrality was situated on a sliding scale. These American statesmen pursued expansionist policies that pushed right up against neutrality in ways that empowered the state while at the same time avoided war with Spain. Thus, what began as a very general interest in pirates transformed into an investigation into the changing dynamics of U.S. neutrality law during the Early Republic. No doubt my students will someday benefit from my work analyzing the role swashbuckling American pirates-for-hire played in facilitating expansionist U.S. policies after 1812.

Due to my experience looking into the maritime aspects of U.S overseas policy, during the Spring semester in Professor Middleton's Colonial America class, I continued to investigate American foreign policy during the Early Republic. The topic I eventually chose is not a direct relation to my Fall paper, however, there are some similarities. This Spring, I looked into American foreign policy as seen through the Barbary War of 1801-1805. This topic began with an interest in the military actions of this understudied U.S. engagement, but it later matured into a paper about Thomas Jefferson's evolving character as Commander in Chief. This paper was called "Money Bag and Cannon Balls: The First Bribery War and the Expansion of American Presidential Power." Condensing Jefferson's ideological complexities into a coherent thesis statement represented a challenge this semester, as I am concerned that my argument was not as tight as it could have been. Nevertheless, I was pleased in my attempt to illustrate that change Jefferson underwent as America's first wartime leader. After the loss of the 300+ man crew of the *USS Philadelphia* to Tripoli, Jefferson took on policies and tactics that challenged his republican ideology. Within this paper, one of my main realizations was the fact that Jefferson pursued Republican-inspired foreign policy objectives through Federalist-inspired means. In order to achieve victory in North Africa, Jefferson expanded the power of the presidency far beyond that of his Federalist predecessors.

I did not intend to write two papers about American foreign policy post 1800. My primary area of interest in American History revolves around the Gilded Age and Cold War. However, this year, William and Mary's course list this academic year was thematically limited by classes that primarily addressed topics regarding early American history. Thus, although I view myself as a generalist, my one year at William and Mary

did allow me to pursue topics that truly engaged my favorite areas of history. In both the Fall and Spring semesters, I found topics that examined America's role in the world from positions of international weaknesses. As I am not interested in perusing my academic career into the Ph.D level, I do not intend on publishing either of these papers. As being the best secondary teacher that I can be is my primary concern, having these papers published is not a concern of mine. That being said, writing these papers has been a tremendous learning experience for me. Not only have I honed my skill as a writer and researcher, but I have also regained some sympathy for my future students who will have to write the papers I assign them. Thanks to graduate school, I will be better equipped to both guide them and sympathize with them.

Chapter 2 - Watchful Waiting: U.S. Neutrality Law in the Atlantic World: 1815-1819.

David Curtis DeForest must have chuckled quietly to himself as he read the morning newspaper in his New Haven home. It was December 3rd, 1823, and the Atlantic World was waking up to the news of President James Monroe's "declaration" the previous day.¹ For almost two decades, DeForest was an adventure-capitalist in Buenos Aires, a dual merchant-diplomat career created in the political chaos of the South American Wars of Independence that began in 1810.² After cutting his teeth learning how to do business "the smuggling way" in Brazil, DeForest made Buenos Aires his adopted home.³ He amassed such a fortune from his extralegal activities that he was able to retire in 1818, and move back to his native home in New Haven, Connecticut. As DeForest read the words of what will become known as the Monroe Doctrine, it is not hard to imagine that memories of his own role in the creation of the doctrine rushed warmly into his mind. Now, an old man at 51, the "Don" read that Monroe was formally closing a period of free-wheeling reactionary politics that had allowed merchants and privateers alike to prosper.⁴ Snuggled warmly in the New

¹ James Monroe, "The Monroe Doctrine," Address, December 2, 1823. Quoted in, James P. Lucier. *The Political Writings of James Monroe*. Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2001. 637.

² Historians and scholars of 19th century South America do not agree on what to call this period of revolutionary activity against Spain. From 1810 to 1825, South Americans fought to gain their independence. The many different leaders, states, goals, and outcomes associated with Latin American independent movement makes it difficult to characterize in broad terms this vast and diverse revolutionary age. In light of this difficulty, I will use the term "South American Wars for Impedence" to refer to the collective struggle for Latin American independence. Although impedence movements arose from Mexico to Argentina, this paper focuses on the South American republics, as their struggle tested U.S. neutrality the most.

³ Benjamin Keen. *David Curtis DeForest and the Revolution of Buenos Aires*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947. 15.

⁴ I will use the term "privateer" to refer to American sailors who were officially contracted by South American revolutionary government to raid and disrupt Spanish imperial vessels. These privateers operated under government sanctioned letter of marque, that legitimized their activities on the high seas. Any bounty or money gained by these actions were to be distributed in prize courts operated in both North and South American ports. The contract-relationship aspect of privateering is one of the major differences separating these sailors-for-hire from the more lawless pirate, who acted without the consent of any government. Head, "New Nations, New Connections,"164-5.

England mansion paid for by profits earned through his South American exploits, DeForest no doubt read Monroe's doctrine as the official end to a dangerous and unstable diplomatic era he had helped to create and exploit.⁵

Historians of 19th century America have often portrayed the 1823 Monroe Doctrine as a great beginning, a "diplomatic declaration of independence" that unshackled the United States from European control.⁶ Henry Cabot Lodge, speaking in 1883, proclaimed that "the Monroe Doctrine bore witness to the strong foreign policy of an independent people."⁷ What the Monroe Doctrine did, was in 954 words, tell Europe's imperial governments that any future attempts to colonize the Western Hemisphere would be considered by the United States of America as a danger to America's "peace and safety."⁸ Thanks to hindsight, it is not difficult to see this bold proclamation to Europe by a minor regional power as the foundational step in the United States' rise to global superpower. Most of all, because it worked. After 1823, the major powers of Europe, England, France and Spain did not attempt to colonize the American continents. They did not deter the continued liberalization of free trade. Finally, they did not stop American expansion.⁹

However, to see the Monroe Doctrine solely through the lens of American exceptionalism, blurs the important context in which it was created. The U.S. during the Early Republic was still a minor military power with little less than a coast guard for a navy and no large standing army to speak off.¹⁰ In the four decades since declaring

⁵ Keen, 166-8.

⁶ Jay Sexton. *The Monroe Doctrine*. New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 2011. 54.

⁷ Henry Cabot Lodge, quoted in, Sexton 53.

⁸ Monroe, "The Monroe Doctrine." Lucier, 638.

⁹ Sexton, 56.

¹⁰ Stephen M. Chambers. *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States*. New York: Verso Publishing, 2015. 16.

independence, the U.S. had been invaded twice by England, had its capital burn, and got involved in an undeclared naval war with France. American foreign policy since its founding had been largely reactionary, acting off of and responding to the interventionist politics that characterized European diplomacy. Born out of the transatlantic Wars for South American Independence, the Monroe Doctrine was an attempt by American statesmen to end the instability that had threatened their policy making. Therefore, rather than seeing the Monroe Doctrine as the beginning of American power, the Monroe Doctrine was actually created to end an era of Atlantic World volatility, detrimental to U.S. state building during the Early Republic. Influenced by both fear of European interventionism and hopeful nationalistic opportunism, James Monroe and his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, penned a proactive and anticolonial doctrine that not only helped stabilized transatlantic relations but also ended the threat of war that had been a defining feature influencing U.S. policy since 1776.¹¹ Monroe, Adams, and their doctrine thus represented a culminating achievement for their view of republican state building after the War of 1812.

However, if the 1823 doctrine was the climax, then how did American leaders, who did not share a united vision for state-building, arrive at such a grand and impactful consensus? Such a strong statement was actually the result of an influential period of weakness. From 1815, when peace returned after the War of 1812, to the establishment of the Transcontinental Treaty in 1819, American leaders faced very real threats of war in their efforts to accomplish various economic and territorial goals. With the return of peace, expansionist politicians wanted to take advantage of the political and economic

¹¹ Sexton, 55.

chaos created by the South American Wars for Independence by deepening American commercial interests in Latin American while at the same time acquiring land from Spanish Florida.¹² War, however, would ruin the plans men like Monroe, Adams, and Henry Clay had for the nation's future strength and security.¹³ Thus, the period between 1815 and 1819 represented a dangerous and unstable time when U.S. political elites made conscious efforts to strengthen and protect the still nascent American state.¹⁴ In claiming neutrality, American statesmen were creating a self-serving balance between direct action and noninterventionism that allowed the state to achieve valuable economic and diplomatic goals. Embedded in this unique style of American neutrality was a strategic flexibility that allowed policy elites to safely maneuver a chaotic Atlantic environment filled with the threat of war.¹⁵ As the U.S. sought recovery and peace after the War of 1812, Monroe and Adams used a flexible and sometimes contradictory neutrality law to define and strengthen the American state in the Early Republic.

Historians' interest in American interactions in the Atlantic first peaked in the World War Era. Given the U.S.'s own neutral proclamations during the 1910s and 1940s, it is not surprising that historians were deeply considering and writing about a time in America's past when geopolitics threatened the state's neutrality. The first historian to define America's relationship with South America was Charles Lyon Chambers. Chambers, a Harvard professor who studied in South America. In 1917, he

¹² Charles Carrol Griffin . *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire, 1810-1822*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1937. 143.

¹³ John Quincy Adams, diary entry, January 19, 1818. *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: His Diary from 1795 to 1848*, edited by Adams, Charles Francis. Vol. Vol. 4. New York: Books for Library Press, 1874. 43.

¹⁴ Gary Hart. *James Monroe*. New York: Times Books. 2005. 77-79.

¹⁵ The Neutrality Act of 1794 would be the first time a government codified the exact obligations and duties of a neutral nation. American neutrality would also be unique in that it attached strict penalties to violators, thus connecting neutrality to the criminal code of the United States.

wrote *Inter-American Acquaintances*, the text that began American's scholarly interest in the Atlantic South. Written in 1941, Arthur K. Whitaker's 612-page tome, *U.S. and the Independence of Latin America 1800-1830*, quickly became a foundational work in the theme of American-South American studies. Whitaker acknowledges the similarity between America in the 1820s and the 1940s, and claims that when discussing the broad themes of the era, one could substitute "'totalitarianism' for 'monarchical' and 'democracy' for 'republicanism.'"¹⁶ Given this dire geopolitical environment in which he was writing, Whitaker's expansive study highlights in moral terms America's leading role in transatlantic relations.

Historians in the war years were actively thinking about America's neutral position in the Atlantic World, and their various works reflect the politics of the day. One of the earliest attempts to chronicle the development of American neutrality laws was written in 1913 by Charles Fenwick. *The Neutrality Laws of the United States* takes an academic approach at conceptualizing what was and was not America's role as a neutral nation throughout its history. Another approach taken by these early historians was to conceptualize America as taking a leading role in South American affairs. "Pan-Americanism" is the subject of Laura Bornholdt's *Baltimore and Early Pan-Americanism*. Written in 1949, Bornholdt's analysis of America leading a coalition of American states was likely influenced by the formation of NATO that same year. Charles Carrol Griffin's 1937 text, *The United States and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire, 1810-1822* is emblematic of the general approach taken by historians at that time. Griffin's focuses on the power politics of the nation-state, lumping all policies and attitudes under the broad

¹⁶ Arthur P. Whitaker. *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941. Vii.

national characters of “the United States, Spain, and Spanish America.”¹⁷ Later historians will give more agency to the individuals who actually did the 19th century politicking.

In recent years, scholars have reengaged this area of study. Responding to Benedict Anderson’s reconceptualization of nationalism, current scholarship takes a much closer look at the various identities and cross-cultural interactions represented in the history of America-in-the-Atlantic. Emblematic of this approach is Caitlin Fitz’s 2016 work, *Our Sister Republics*. In her book, Fitz expertly chronicles the rise and fall of American public opinion towards the South American independence movement through U.S. media coverage of revolutionary leaders like Simón Bolívar.¹⁸ Americans who toasted patriot victories and named their babies Bolívar were projecting their own republican ideology onto the South American struggle, and in doing so, refined their own sense of American republicanism. Along these same lines, historian Matthew Karp’s work, *This Vast Southern Empire*, analyzes the impact South American relations had in the creation of a separate brand of Southern politics. Karp argues that few Americans in the 19th century were more in tune with geopolitics than Southern politicians, and that the South had an oversized role in shaping the nature and direction of American foreign policy.¹⁹ Thus, given the South’s strong grip on federal positions of power, Southern statesmen were able to create a U.S. nationalism that was not only benevolent to domestic slavery but also protective of the foreign slavery in the Atlantic.²⁰

¹⁷ Griffin, 5.

¹⁸ Caitlin Fitz. *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions*. New York: Liverlight Publishing Corporation, 2016. 9-11.

¹⁹ Matthew Karp. *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016, 3.

²⁰ Karp, 5.

The other direction recent historians have taken in the field of America-in-the-Atlantic is to stress the growth of American state power in transnationalist terms. Stephan Chambers' *No God but Gain*, highlights the role "the generation of 1815" played in connecting American future success to the Cuban slave trade.²¹ By separating the statesmen from their Founding predecessors, Chambers argues that the "15ers" used the lucrative Cuban slave trade fuel the creation of their new brand of American nationalism, one that relied on transatlantic commercial connections.²² Historian David Head shows this transnationalist influence in a different light, highlighting the role individuals played in connecting Atlantic communities. In *Privateers of the Americas*, Head argues that studying privateers allows a much clearer view of how the U.S. interacted in a rapidly dissolving imperial Atlantic community. Whereas many historians leave out the smaller actors in favor of aggrandizing the elite policymakers, Head shows that these diverse privateers not only had agency but also impacted the direction of Atlantic History. In this way, Head hopes to use the aggressive individualism of privateers to bridge the gap between historians of the Atlantic World and the Americanists of the Early Republic period.²³ Head, as well as Chambers, have helped to move American Atlantic studies into the Caribbean, and they have made great contributions looking at the impact trade with that region had on domestic politics and American foreign policy.

These works represent the significant scholarship being done in the expanding field of America-in-the-Atlantic. Though all different in their focus, these historians all

²¹ Chambers, 3.

²² Chambers, 5-6.

²³ David Head. *Privateers of the Americas: Spanish American Privateering from the United States in the Early Republic*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015. 5-8.

engage the diverse factors responsible for creating national identities in the Early Republic. This paper will continue the historiographical themes expressed in the current literature by positioning the years 1815-1819 as a moment of state building intentionally designed by a small cohort of the American political elite. Far from unified in their end goals, these statesmen sought to use America's neutral status as a means to achieve substantial goals in the areas of trade and territory. The factors aiding and inhibiting the achievement of these strategic aims will occupy this paper's focus. Past and current historians have largely overlooked the role neutrality law played in U.S. state-building. While many do engage neutrality as factor in post 1812 Atlantic, scholars talk of the old 1794 Neutrality Law and its 1818 revision as minor steps that help lead to the eventual big policy event of the Monroe Doctrine. On the other hand, much ink has been spent analyzing the significance of the Monroe Doctrine as its impact on U.S. history. Yet, looking only at the big events obscures the significant context that allowed such bold declaration to be made in 1823 by a minor Atlantic power. By focusing on the role neutrality law played in a time of great fragility and uncertainty, this paper will reposition neutrality as a significant and central tool in the hands of skilled policymakers. Therefore, by centralizing the role these laws played, this paper will illustrate how, from a position of international weakness, U.S. presidents and statesmen leveraged a contradictory and flexible neutrality law to not only avoid war but also secure the expansion of U.S. trade and territory.

* * * * *

In 1792, Europe exploded into revolutionary war. Responding to the French Revolution, the monarchical powers across Europe summoned their armies to challenge

this threat.²⁴ Across the Atlantic, the young United States of America watched Europe burn with growing unrest. Having recently secured independence in 1783, the war-weary nation could not afford to fight in another European war. In response to this existential threat, President George Washington addressed the Congressional elite in 1793, informing them that it was now “the duty and interest of the United States . . . to sincerely and with good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial towards the belligerent powers.”²⁵ To help protect his newborn country, Washington envisioned a hand off approach to foreign policy. Washington believed that the U.S. should honor “with perfect good faith” all foreign commercial relationships, but avoid permanent alliances with European nations, as “a passionate attachment of one Nation for another” could lead to either unnecessary war or disadvantages in future treaty negotiations.²⁶ As his second and final term as president came to a close in 1796, Washington penned a parting letter to the American people that would greatly impact the direction and character of American foreign relations for the next century.²⁷ In what would be known as his “Farewell Address,” Washington elaborated on his ideas about a neutral foreign policy, stating that “the great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with [Europe] as little political connections as possible . . . hence, therefore it is unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collision

²⁴ Charles S. Hyneman "Neutrality during the European Wars of 1792-1815: America's Understanding of Her Obligations." *The American Journal of International Law* Vol 24., No. 2 (April 1930): 279-309. 297.

²⁵ George Washington Congressional Address, April 22, 1793. Quoted in Charles G Fenwick. *The Neutrality Laws of the United States*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment Publishing, 1913. 17.

²⁶ Ferrell. 89.

²⁷ Charles G Fenwick. *The Neutrality Laws of the United States*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment Publishing, 1913. 16.

of her friendships or enmities.”²⁸ Without saying the word “neutrality,” Washington set the foundation for a particular and unique brand of noninterventionist neutrality that focused on both “extending commercial relations” and avoiding war.²⁹ Therefore, due to Washington’s vision of foreign relations, economic interest was born in U.S. neutrality from the beginning.

Congress solidified Washington’s vision in the 1794 Neutrality Act. This legislation officially prevented American citizens from “engaging in, or preparing for, hostilities against any power, with which the United States was at peace.”³⁰ This was a significant move by the U.S. government, for it represented the most comprehensive and formal declaration by a state to define the actions and obligations of international neutrality. Furthermore, it also significantly incorporated these acts into the criminal code, providing harsh penalties for those who violated American laws.³¹ This high standard would later be praised by famed British diplomat Lord George Canning, who said that “if I wished for a guide in the system of Neutrality, I should take that laid down by the presidency of Washington.”³²

Washington’s commerce–focused vision of neutral foreign relations served the American economy well in the years after his presidency. As events in the Atlantic continued to disrupt European mercantilist control over their New World markets, the neutral U.S. merchant marine eagerly jumped at the opportunity to extend trade

²⁸ George Washington Farewell Address, quoted in, William R., Manning, ed. *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin-American Nations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1925. 15.

²⁹ Hyneman. 281.

³⁰ Griffin, 97.

³¹ Fenwick, 27.

³² Lord George Canning, quoted in, Fenwick 28.

networks to South America.³³ At the beginning of the 19th century, U.S. commerce in Latin America swelled, with American businessmen regularly trading with major Spanish colonial ports as far south as Venezuela and the Rio de la Plata.³⁴ In the years after Washington's Farewell Address, U.S. commercial interests began to be connected to state security, as Latin American trade networks served as a major factor in overcoming the massive war debt amassed during the Revolutionary War. As historian Stephan Chambers put it, "if the national debt was the price of [American] independence, then U.S-Cuba trade represented an expeditious opportunity for the new nation to begin to settle its accounts."³⁵ This reliance on Latin American trade tied American commercial interests with national security, connection that would both aid and jeopardize American neutrality in the years to come.

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion into Spain in 1808 became a turning point in the direction of American neutrality, as it would tie American commercial interests closer to South American markets. Not only did it serve to further weaken Spanish imperial control over free trade, but the war necessity also created an immense demand for American goods in Europe.³⁶ By late 1808, American imports to the Spanish Peninsula were three times greater than Latin American trade.³⁷ Commander of the English Peninsular forces, the Duke of Wellington, noted the impact U.S. trade made on his war effort, commenting that "all this part of the [Spanish] Peninsula has been living

³³ The United States had been trading with South American colonies since before Impendence. However, before the French Revolution of 1789, Spain had a much tighter grip on its mercantilist monopolies. Thus, if American merchants wanted to sell flour shipments to Cuba, they would first have to go through Spain first. Peggy Liss. *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1982, 173.

³⁴ The Rio de la Plata region incorporates modern day Argentina. Liss, 173-4.

³⁵ Chambers, 21.

³⁶ Griffin, 98.

³⁷ Whitaker, 52.

in American flour.”³⁸ This “revolution in commerce” helped to “awaken” American leaders to the economic possibilities of strong commercial relationship with South America.³⁹ No city benefited more from this awakening than Baltimore, whose population from 1790-1800 more than doubled, making it the third largest city in the U.S. by 1812. Locals during this time claimed that trade transformed their city into a thriving market where “fortunes were accumulated as if by magic.”⁴⁰ Thus, in the early years of the 19th century, Atlantic war equated to a lucrative financial opportunity for a neutral America, as merchants and politicians sought to use the neutral label to advance their interests.⁴¹ In the years to come, this behavior would come to threaten national security, as statesmen would stretch neutrality to the breaking point.

Napoleon’s actions did not just impact North Americans. In the south, a string of revolutions erupted in 1810 and spread across the continent. These uprisings produced leaders like Simón Bolívar of Venezuela, José de San Martín of Argentina, and Bernardo O’Higgins of Chile, destined to liberate their native lands from Spanish rule. As U.S. economic power grew more tightly connected to Latin American ports, policy leaders from the United States watched these revolutions very closely.⁴² In 1810, President James Madison began the practice of commissioning U.S. diplomats as

³⁸ Liss, 173.

³⁹ Whitaker, 26.

⁴⁰ Laura Bornholdt. *Baltimore and Early Pan-Americanism: A Study in the Background of the Monroe Doctrine*. Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1949. 5.

⁴¹ Jerome R. Garitee. *The Republic's Private Navy: The American Privateering Business as Practiced by Baltimore during the War of 1812*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1977. 27. In 1803, American President Thomas Jefferson secured the purchase of the Louisiana territory from Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France. This “Louisiana Purchase,” a territorial land-grab that doubled the size of the United States, would not have been possible without the economic stresses of war weighing heavily on Napoleon. This was a major victory for expansionist statesmen, who eagerly took advantage of the desperately cash-strapped French economy.

⁴² Secretary of State Richard Rush to Thomas Sumter, U.S. Minister to Portugal, July 18, 1817. Manning. 42.

“agents” to serve state interests in the newly formed patriot governments. Given the title “agent for commerce and seamen,” William Shaler became America’s first Latin American agent, appointed to serve in the port of Vera Cruz.⁴³ Realizing that America “cannot be [an] unfeeling spectator [to] such an important moment,” Secretary of State James Monroe commissioned two more agents to South American posts, adding Robert Lowery to serve in Caracas and Joel Poinsett in Buenos Aires.⁴⁴ As “agents” these men operated in the commercial interests of the American government. However, they did not work for the American government as state-sponsored “consuls,” as the patriot governments were still unrecognized within the international community.⁴⁵ David DeForest, for example, was repeatedly rejected in his attempts to gain a consulship in Buenos Aires, but nevertheless regularly petitioned powerful American merchants John Jacob Astor and DeWitt Clinton to tie their North American wealth to his South American business ventures.⁴⁶ By employing “agents” and not “consuls,” the U.S. symbolically distanced itself from the rebel republics, and in doing so, helped to maintain the veneer of impartiality.⁴⁷ However, by expanding and deepening the U.S. economic reach into Latin American market, these early American diplomat-merchants were actually threatening future Atlantic peace, as these transformed into the point-men in charge of recruiting a generation of American adventurers to become privateers.⁴⁸

⁴³ Secretary of State Robert Smith to William Shaler, U.S. Agent for Seaman and Commerce, Nov. 6, 1810. Manning, 9.

⁴⁴ Secretary of State James Monroe to Joel Poinsett, Consul at Buenos Aires, April 30, 1811. Manning 10.

⁴⁵ Furthermore, a fully functioning consulate would have been viewed as a highly inflammatory move by the United States, as a consulate would practically legitimate the new state governments.

⁴⁶ Keen, 97.

⁴⁷ Chambers, 33.

⁴⁸ Keen, 111.

The War of 1812 was a transformative experience for the provincial American state. Although it did not significantly change the map, the peace created in 1815 significantly impacted the direction of American power in the coming years in two important ways. War with Great Britain facilitated the recruitment of a large number of sailors to combat the Royal Navy. When peace was secured in 1815, many of these seasoned navy men would ply their skills as licensed privateers against Spain. The war also positioned the U.S. for future conflict with Imperial Spain. Building off of lingering tensions over disputed Louisiana Purchase territory, 1815 peace will come to place new stains on Spanish-American relationship. The War of 1812 helped turn American commercial interests south, and in doing so, it positioned the U.S. economic expansionist leaders in direct conflict Spain, who still controlled those markets.⁴⁹ Inflated with nationalist pride after the War of 1812, American statesmen will, under the banner of neutrality, attempt to build the state by pushing against their Spanish neighbors.⁵⁰ However, this pushing will threaten a war that could ruin all their goals for expanding American power economically and territorially.

* * * * *

For U.S. statesmen, peace in 1815 did not lessen the threat of future hostilities in the Atlantic. In response to the ongoing Wars of South American Independence, American President James Madison was quick to declare the United States' neutrality in the conflict.⁵¹ Citing the Neutrality Act of 1794, Madison kept open American ports to all vessels, including those of the South American revolutionaries, outlawing only the

⁴⁹ Head, 22.

⁵⁰ Head, 5.

⁵¹ Fenwick, 34.

arming and direct recruiting of sailors for those war-bound ships. The U.S. Government also directly forbid its citizens from participating in the conflict via privateering or filibustering.⁵² Although he formally claimed neutrality, Madison did not promise impartiality, as he actually expanded on Washington's commerce-focused neutrality to meet the growing economic needs of his expansionist government. The original act in 1794 only mentioned "foreign princes and states," as governing sovereigns with which a neutral America could do business.⁵³ Madison expanded the interpretation of America's neutral obligations to include rebelling colonies as legitimate governments.⁵⁴ The U.S. government never claimed the South American governments were legitimate, but the U.S. ports, who welcomed ships flying all flags, treated them as such. This bold and loose interpretation of the original act further shows that American neutrality after 1815 was a flexible entity. By engaging in a loose reading of American neutrality, Madison wielded a commercially-friendly neutrality that aimed to meet the South American Revolution's dangers and opportunities.

The threat of European intervention terrified American leaders, and Madison's vague language sought to lessen the threat of war while at the same time expanding America's peace time economy.⁵⁵ Adams captures this fear in his private letter to friend William Plummer. "We have therefore enemies in almost every part of the world, and few or no friends anywhere . . . with Spain we are . . . on the verge of war."⁵⁶ This

⁵² Head, 20.

⁵³ 1794 Neutrality Act, quoted in Fenwick.

⁵⁴ The United States of America would not officially recognize the various independent South American governments until 1822. James Monroe Address to the U.S. House of Representative, March 8, 1822. Manning, 146.

⁵⁵ Whitaker, 199.

⁵⁶ John Quincy Adams to William Plumer, January 17, 1817. In, Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed. *The Writings of John Quincy Adams* (New York McMillian Company, 1917), 6:139-144.

anxiety influenced the American political elite, who saw war with Spain as disastrous to their expansionist visions. Thus, the Madison administration deliberately sculpted a federal policy toward South American that was officially neutral, but this neutrality was not intended to be strictly impartial, as trade with both warring governments was encouraged by U.S. statesmen.

In addition to the state's aggressive economic and territorial goals, there were a host of internal and external factors that made a strict and impartial neutrality nearly impossible after 1815. Public opinion at this time weighed heavily in favor of the South American patriots. Seeing a connection to their own revolution of 1776, many American citizens toasted their "sister republics" down south in a shared sense of republican triumph.⁵⁷ One Washington newspaper proclaimed that by 1816 toasts to South American success were nearly "universal." Historian Caitlin Fitz compiled records of the nation's leading newspapers at the time, and concluded that beginning in 1815, around the United States there were more than 70 toasts offered on the Fourth of July for hemispheric independence.⁵⁸ Popular opinion for patriot success even became a personal matter, as towns and newborn babies were named "Bolívar," after the revolutionary general Simón Bolívar.⁵⁹ Hero of the Battle of New Orleans and famed Indian fighter, Andrew Jackson even named his favorite horse after the great South American "Liberator."⁶⁰ The hundreds of toasts, songs, poems, and baby names that

⁵⁷ Fitz, 117.

⁵⁸ Fitz, 249.

⁵⁹ After 1815, Bolivar, USA showed up in Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. Baby "Bolivars" began to show up in American census records starting in 1820. Fitz, 127.

⁶⁰ Fitz, 127.

were created at that time clearly illustrate the overwhelming support the U.S. populace had for the South American “sister republics.”

Whereas the general public could drunkenly toast Bolivar’s fight, the political elite in Washington could not be so blatant in their support, as they were in charge of maintaining the U.S.’s neutral position. In a private correspondence with John Quincy Adams in 1815, Secretary of State Monroe wrote, “in the event that their independence would be free and friendly [relationship] . . . there is no cause to doubt in which scale our interest lies.”⁶¹ Although U.S. leaders were rarely this candid in discussing their support, they were more open in voicing their negative opinion of Spain. A dangerous tension with Spain first began after President Thomas Jefferson’s 1803 Louisiana Purchase, an exchange Spanish ministers called “illegal” and “the most traitorous blow that Bonaparte ever dealt the Spanish Monarchy.”⁶² Various territorial disputes along the Mississippi River and Florida border eventually forced Secretary of State Madison to sever diplomatic negotiations with Spanish minister Marqués de Casa Irujo.⁶³ Although formal, yet cool, communications formally returned in 1809 with the arrival of Spanish minister Don Luis de Onís, the U.S. Government remained hostile to the Spanish ministry.⁶⁴ Therefore, from the Oval Office to the maternity ward, American society at nearly every level supported the patriot fight against Spain, illustrating the internal emotions that made maintaining U.S. impartiality difficult to uphold.

Given America’s hostile opinion of Spain, enthusiastic support for the “sister republics,” and a commercially-focused neutrality policy, external challenges to the

⁶¹ Secretary of State James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, Dec. 10, 1815. Quoted in Griffin.

⁶² Onís to Cevallos, April 16, 1815. Quoted in Whitaker, 203.

⁶³ Whitaker, 30.

⁶⁴ Liss, 200.

U.S.'s delicate neutrality arose almost immediately after 1815. The most significant danger came from U.S. citizens serving as privateers for the unrecognized South American governments. With no navies of their own, these states enthusiastically encouraged men like DeForest to commission American sailors and veterans from the War of 1812 to serve as privateers against Spanish imperial ships.⁶⁵ Madison's neutrality policy indirectly facilitated this issue. Although the American government prohibited its citizens from direct participation in the civil war, the private munitions trade amongst individuals was considered rightful act of international trade.⁶⁶ Spanish American agents and North American merchants became very skilled at navigating the various loopholes embedded in the old 1794 Act.⁶⁷

To complicate matters, the commissions given to American seamen helped deepen trade relationships first established in the early days of the French Revolution. Hemispheric free trade was a major goal for state economic goals, and therefore the vast tonnage of American made goods transported to the lucrative South American ports was not initially seen as a completely bad deal.⁶⁸ Though the threat of war kept the government from overtly supporting the fight, these privateers nonetheless acted in the interest of U.S. political elite. A weak Spain would no doubt help expansionist politicians achieve their major goal of annexing Florida for the United States, as many in the government believed Florida was the key to securing America's southern border.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Keen, 111.

⁶⁶ Head, 23.

⁶⁷ Head, 23.

⁶⁸ Thomas F. O'Brien. *Making the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the Age of Revolutions to the Era of Globalization*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007. 23.

⁶⁹ Lewis, James E. *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 87.

“Florida,” Monroe proclaimed in 1815, “is of the highest importance.”⁷⁰ This was a delicate and dangerous balance though. Initially, from 1815 to 1816, these privateers served American interests to a weaken Spain and expand South American markets. The munition trade was big businesses, as port cities like Baltimore collected huge revenue from port fees and taxes.⁷¹ Privateers were also aiding in goal of expanding free trade into the Caribbean and South American markets, as they helped force open the cracks established in Spanish mercantilist economy.⁷² But, these agents of American interests metastasized into agents of chaos as their indiscriminate marauding took America’s leadership to the edge of war.

However, U.S. diplomats initially downplayed the seriousness of the privateering threat placed on American Atlantic peace. The dramatic rise in privateer activity against Spain from 1815 to 1816 resulted in immediate complaints from the Spanish minister in America, Don Luis Onís. American policy makers at the time cared little about the agent from Spain. Adams once quipped that Onís was “cold, calculating, and wily,” and possessed the characteristics of a “finished scholar in the Spanish procrastination school of diplomacy.”⁷³ Onís wasted no time rising concern about blatant violations of America’s neutrality policy, pointing explicitly to U.S. ammunition, men, and supplies sent to Cartagena.⁷⁴ Onís often complained to Washington armed with the exact names of men and ships who broke neutrality.⁷⁵ In a diplomatic letter to Onís in early 1816, Monroe explained to the Spanish minister that the U.S. righteously observed the neutral

17. ⁷⁰ Secretary of State James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, Dec. 10, 1815 quoted in Manning,

⁷¹ Garitee, 213.

⁷² Making the Americas, 23.

⁷³ John Quincy Adams, quoted in, Hart, 93.

⁷⁴ Onís to Cevallos, March 31, 1815. Quoted in, Griffin, 115.

⁷⁵ Griffin, 104.

obligations and privileges expressed in the 1794 Act, and that America did nothing to aid or hinder either warring party.⁷⁶ Monroe and Adams will react to future complaint by giving Onís this usual response. With faith in the legal system to bring justice to any violator, American statesmen for the remainder of 1816 dismissed Spanish complaints as rumors or accusations lacking the necessary proof of support.⁷⁷ By dismissing the various concerns voiced by Spanish and Portuguese officials, American leaders were testing the flexibility of their neutral policy. Though South American privateering disproportionately preyed upon Spanish ships, neither President Madison nor Secretary of State Monroe was willing to curtail or recognize the obvious violations. As the White House changed hands, this issue, left unchecked by the Madison administration, would come to a head in the following years.

James Monroe assumed more than just the presidency in 1816. He also inherited a legacy of expansionist policies that characterized his presidential predecessors. Although the United States had been pushing westward since colonial times, the most significant event in recent years was Thomas Jefferson's "Louisiana Purchase." With this land grab, Jefferson sought to transform the U.S. into a hemispheric "empire of liberty."⁷⁸ Monroe inherited this set of expansionist ideals that connected state security to territorial growth.⁷⁹ With the return of peace in 1815, U.S. politicians cast their gaze south, towards Florida, the Caribbean, and even distant Spanish Texas.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Monroe to Onís, Feb 2, 1816. Quoted in Manning, 20-21.

⁷⁷ Griffin, 116.

⁷⁸ Thomas Jefferson. Quoted in Fitz, 157.

⁷⁹ Frank Lawrence Owsley and Gene A. Smith. *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1921*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1997. 183.

⁸⁰ Owsley and Smith, 26.

Expansion in the Early Republic was not limited to territory, for U.S. merchants and economic elites eagerly sought to extend trade relationships in the years following the War of 1812. With its lucrative exports of coffee, sugar, rum, and Latin American specie, no market was more important to future American economic growth than Cuba.⁸¹ Adams later wrote that Cuba was, at the time, “an object of transcendent importance to the political and economic importance of our Nation.”⁸² Senator John C. Calhoun concurred, claiming in 1818 that “trade with Havana alone” was the most important source of specie for the U.S., without which the U.S. economy would be an “embarrassment.”⁸³ Protecting the Cuban trade relationship from war, therefore, was a matter of national security. As influential American General Thomas Jesup proclaimed, “Cuba [is] the key to all western America, whether we consider it in a military, political, or economic point of view.”⁸⁴

This aggressive expansionism also bred fear, as Monroe and his contemporaries were deeply concerned about European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Having had Britain invade their home twice and been in hemispheric proximity to various European interactions in the Caribbean and South America, the American political elite believed that European powers would continue to interfere in American political matters. U.S. leadership especially feared any reason that would invite England to increase their presence in the Caribbean. General Jesup further explained, “we have nothing to fear from Cuba in the feeble hands of Spain, but in the hand of Great Britain,

⁸¹ Chambers, 66.

⁸² Adams, *Writings*, VII, 372.

⁸³ John C. Calhoun, quoted in C. F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), IV, 205.

⁸⁴ General Thomas Jesup, quoted in the *New York Herald*, December 26, 1858. Quoted in Chambers 92. Note, the General’s advice to President Monroe was in 1816, but the *Herald* reprinted the transcript nearly forty years later.

it [would] become so formidable as to menace the independence of our country.”⁸⁵

Therefore, for James Monroe, who saw this threat of intervention, especially from Great Britain, as “dangerous to our peace and safety,” American national security must be calculated within the range of the whole Atlantic.⁸⁶ In the following years, from 1816 to 1818, various external and internal threats grew to threaten the status quo carefully constructed by the architects of American strategic neutrality.

Given the near ideological fear of European intervention in the Western Hemisphere, President Monroe understood that navigating the volatile Atlantic as a neutral nation required a high degree of caution and attentiveness. Calling his approach “watchful waiting,” Monroe’s foreign policy strategy was deliberately slow and cautious, allowing him to react appropriately to events that could threaten both war and his expansionist goals.⁸⁷ In action, “watchful waiting” meant that Monroe would use neutrality to his advantage, as a guide for future policies and decisions aimed at maximizing American interests while keeping the nation out of war. By 1819, the Transcontinental Treaty exemplified the success of Monroe’s cautious policy, but, in order to get there, Monroe had to face serious challenges that, if not handled properly, could send America to war with Spain.

The first political challenge to test Monroe’s neutral policy was the continuation and growth of American privateering in South American waters. During Monroe’s presidency, the privateering problem exploded, as more than 3,000 North Americans

⁸⁵ General Jesup, in Chambers, 201.

⁸⁶ Monroe, “The Monroe Doctrine,” James P. Lucier, ed. *The Political Writings of James Monroe*: Regency Publishing, Inc., 2001, 637. And, Sexton, 56.

⁸⁷ Whitaker, 199. John C. Calhoun would later remark about this inherent quality of Monroe, saying, “When called on to decide an important point,” Monroe would “hold the subject immovably fixed under his attention, until he had mastered it in all its relations.” Calhoun, quoted in Fitz, 156.

took to the sail during his first term.⁸⁸ It was not only individual citizens caught up in the extralegal affair, whole cities became complicit in the privateering enterprise. Baltimore, in particular, saw privateering as a business, and profits from the high seas enterprise benefitted almost all sectors of the Baltimore economy.⁸⁹ One infamous Baltimorean merchant David Didier, looked forward to the personal economic benefits another war, so that “we may make use of our fast schooners.”⁹⁰ To make matters worse, by late 1817 and 1818, many American privateers began to turn piratical, preying on all vessels, including fellow American ships.⁹¹

The increased scope, frequency, and range of attack (Spanish officials in Cadíz claimed to see American ships off the Spanish Coast) resulted in the increased uproar voiced by Spanish and Portuguese governments.⁹² Onís now derided the Monroe Administration for its poor control over its own citizens, saying, “the mischiefs resulting from the toleration of the armament of privateers in the ports of this Union, and of bringing into them, with impunity, the plunder made by these privateers on the Spanish trade,” demanded for “the punishment, according to the law, of those turbulent and seditious individuals who have taken up arms within the territory of this confederation, and from these carrying desolation, destruction and horror into the frontier provinces of the Crown of Spain.” Onís then twisted the knife of international embarrassment into Monroe, saying that these actions “so deeply compromise the neutrality of the United

⁸⁸ Caitlin Fitz, “When the Fourth of July Embraced Latin America.” *New York Times*, June 30, 2016. Accessed, 10/5/2017.

⁸⁹ Garitee, 212.

⁹⁰ Henry Didier to John D’Ancy, Feb. 27, 1815. Quoted in Garitee, 219.

⁹¹ Fred Hopkins. “For Freedom and Profit: Baltimore Privateers in the Wars of South American Independence.” *The Northern Mariner* Vol 18, No. 3-4 (July-October 2008): 93-104.

⁹² Griffin, 105.

States in the eyes of all nations.”⁹³ Criticism like these hit home, as in 1816, British officials claimed it was “common knowledge” within the international community that the U.S. was routinely breaking its neutrality laws.⁹⁴

The rising number of marauding corsairs was not the only external threat to American neutrality faced by Monroe early on into his term. In late 1816, a group of South American agents led by the Chilean patriot José Miguel Carrera entered the United States on a mission to have the U.S. government directly finance their revolution. Although the government quickly rebuked their offer, the “Carrera Cabal” nevertheless met with some of the richest and most influential Americans at the time, including De Witt Clinton, Arron Burr, Thurlow Weed, and John Jacob Astor.⁹⁵ While none of these Americans gave in to the Chilean’s demands, the fact that South American revolutionaries could so openly petition a neutral nation’s most powerful individuals revealed how fragile America’s Atlantic peace actually was.

Although, by the summer of 1817, an even greater threat to Monroe’s neutrality was washing up on the shore of Amelia Island. Located off the coast of Florida, Amelia Island was a small plot of land controlled by Spain. In June of 1817, Gregor MacGregor, a Scottish adventurer and soldier of fortune, seized the island’s small Spanish garrison, raised the “Green Cross of Florida,” and thusly claimed the island for himself.⁹⁶ MacGregor’s island republic may have been small, but its impact was significant. Having a rouge dictatorship within miles of the U.S. mainland was an international

⁹³ Luis de Onís to James Monroe, Jan. 2nd 1817. Quoted in, Manning, 1910.

⁹⁴ British Consul at Baltimore, July 6, 1816. Quoted in, Griffin, 104.

⁹⁵ Griffin, 128.

⁹⁶ Owsley and Smith, 126-7.

embarrassment for a neutral state, as MacGregor's republic became both a pirate den, illegal slave trade trafficker, and contraband market.⁹⁷

Not all threats came in the form of foreign actors, as one of the most persistent issue discrediting U.S. neutrality resulted from its very own judicial system. The same popular opinion that inspired so many citizens to name their children "Bolivar" also resulted in friendly juries for those privateers who fought for the young South American republics. In particular, the Maryland District Court in Baltimore was notoriously friendly to convicted privateers, as its judges dismissed two-thirds of the cases that came before them.⁹⁸ In one infamous case, Spanish ministers brought to court documented proof of privateering activity committed by notorious Baltimorean merchant Thomas Taylor, however, despite such strong evidence, it only took the judge ten minutes to acquit Taylor of all wrongful acts.⁹⁹ Adjudicating neutrally law confused even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States John Marshall, who noted the "difficulty there may be, under our municipal institutions, in punishing as pirates, citizens of the U.S. who take from a State as war with Spain, a commission to cruise against that power."¹⁰⁰ All these issues bringing justice against real violations of international neutrality caused Spanish ministers to proclaim that it was "impossible" for Spain to achieve justice in American courts.¹⁰¹ Although admiralty courts eventually gave Spain the justice she

⁹⁷ Liss, 210.

⁹⁸ Garitee, 227.

⁹⁹ Kevin Arlyck. "Plaintiffs v. Privateers: Litigation and Foreign Affairs in the Federal Courts, 1816-1822." *Law and History Review* Vol. 30, no. 1 (February 2012): 258.

¹⁰⁰ Arlyck, 261.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

deserved, in the early years of his first term, Monroe could not even count on his judiciary to protect his government from threats to his neutrality policy.¹⁰²

In the face of all these various external and internal threats, Monroe did not sit idly by. Confident in his slow and careful approach, Monroe was deliberate and calculating in how he went about defusing these dangers. The White House at this time truly believed that one wrong or overly aggressive move could trigger a disastrous war against Spain and its ally Great Britain.¹⁰³ Therefore, opportunistic patience was a critical factor in Monroe's ultimate success, as "watchful waiting" eventually paid off in the signing of the Transcontinental Treaty in 1819. Monroe's strategy for combating the issues threatening state neutrality was a two-prong attack that centered on domestic politics and foreign military action.

The first step was to amend some of the obvious flaws in the old 1794 Neutrality Act. By 1817, Monroe and others were convinced that the old act could not serve the purposes of a revolutionary Atlantic. One of the most glaring and damning flaws was that, while the old act clearly banned the U.S. Government from selling arms to belligerents, it said nothing about the private sale of munitions from one American individual to another foreign citizen.¹⁰⁴ The 1794 Act also did not explicitly say anything about the role colonies played on the international stage. Thus, in the first months of 1817, President Monroe began the process of enacting a new Neutrality Act that would

¹⁰² Although the eventual revision in 1818 of the Neutrality Act would serve to tighten the law and close some of the loopholes, the revision could not stop the problem of biased juries and judges letting off privateers. Public opinion would change out of favor for South America as American privateers began acting more like pirates in their actions, and as Simón Bolívar gradually took up more dictatorial characteristics. Furthermore, the Panic of 1819 scared off future investors who might have risked funding a privateering venture. Garitee, 227, and, Arlyck, 227.

¹⁰³ Sexton, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Whitaker, 216.

better serve the current needs of his administration and protect the U.S. government from his opportunistic privateering constituents.

MacGregor and his Amelia Island republic was a more sensitive situation. This issue dominated October cabinet meetings, as policymakers wrestled with the idea of breaking up the notorious pirate den, and if that action would cause Spain to react in war.¹⁰⁵ Monroe ultimately reasoned that since it was evident that MacGregor's camp was made for "smuggling, if not piratical purposes," then the U.S. Government had the right to seize the island.¹⁰⁶ Secretary of State Adams put the decision more bluntly, "the marauding parties at Amelia and Galveston [must] be broken up immediately."¹⁰⁷

Although this sort of American interventionism seems normal activity to the modern reader, in 1817, this clearly non-neutral attack on foreign soil was a bold and dramatic move calculated to swiftly end the destabilizing threat of pirates. Thus, this attack revealed Monroe's willingness to use a centralized show of force to defeat threats to his administration's agenda. The seizure of Amelia was more than a symbolic step closer to the goal of acquiring Florida, it revealed a turning point in Monroe's usage of state neutrality, as direct intervention used in the protection of neutrality was now a strategy.

¹⁰⁸ In claiming that U.S. state neutrality was under attack, Monroe was able bend American neutrality to suit his administration's goals.

Monroe also used covert diplomatic action to protect neutrality. In 1817, Monroe commissioned three American agents on secret fact-finding mission to South America.

¹⁰⁵ Adams, diary entry, January 12, 1818. *Memoirs*, 39.

¹⁰⁶ President James Monroe, quoted in Hart, 71. Galveston Island, off the coast of Spanish held Texas was also a notorious destination for pirates. They were led by the infamous brothers Lafitte. However, this den mostly preyed in the Caribbean Sea, and did not venture as far south as South America.

¹⁰⁷ Adams, diary entry, October 30, 1817, *Memoirs*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, 107-108.

The purpose of this trip was to acquire first-hand intelligence on the progress of the civil war.¹⁰⁹ For this mission, the Monroe Administration chose Caesar Augustus Rodney, John Graham, and Henry Brackenridge to represent the neutral attitudes of the U.S. government.¹¹⁰ Richard Rush, acting Secretary of State, wrote to the men explaining by their government need their service in this transnational drama:

The contest, by the extension of the revolutionary movement and the greater stability which it appears to have acquired, becomes daily of more importance to the United States. It is by success that the colonists acquire new claims on other powers, which it may comport neither with their interests nor duty to disregard. Several of the colonies having declared their independence and enjoyed it some years, and the authority of Spain being shaken in others, it seems probable that, if the parties be left to themselves, the most permanent political changes will be effected. It therefore seems incumbent on the United States to watch the movement in its subsequent steps with particular attention.¹¹¹

This was a shrewd diplomatic move, as Monroe sought clarity before taking any public steps towards recognizing the rebelling governments. Although patriot forces under Bolívar and San Martín were making progress by 1817, Monroe still feared that any premature move in overt favor of the South Americans would offend the monarchical powers of Europe and give them cause to join Spain against the republican revolutionaries.¹¹² Thus, before Monroe took any steps closer to recognize the new republics, he had to get tangible information on the ground. The information gained by this mission will embolden the president, allowing him more flexibility to bend U.S. neutrality in the nation's interest.

¹⁰⁹ Watt Stewart. "The South American Commission, 1817-1818." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol. 9. No. 1 (Feb 1929) 32.

¹¹⁰ Stewart, 39.

¹¹¹ Richard Rush to Caesar A. Rodney and John Graham, July 18, 1817. Quoted in, Manning, 42-45.

¹¹² Stewart, 36.

Due to the various proactive steps taken in 1817 to mend Atlantic tensions and better secure the U.S. position, Monroe was well positioned for a December address Congress and members of the Senate.¹¹³ This address was important, as Monroe would not only reaffirmed the nation's neutrality policy but also elevated the status of the revolutionaries to "equals" with Spain.¹¹⁴ Although far from a declaration of recognition for southern independence, this address acknowledged that patriot victory could be a reality. As Monroe openly stated, since the "early stages," the Wars for South American Independence were "highly interesting to the United States."¹¹⁵ Therefore, establishing friendly discourse now would help facilitate post-revolution friendships. Nevertheless, this was no doubt a major diplomatic slight against imperial Iberia. Additionally, the president even appeared to offer a justification for his citizens caught up in patriotic republican fervor, saying "it was natural that our citizens should sympathize in events which affected their neighbors."¹¹⁶ Finally, in a precursor to the Monroe Doctrine's future theme, Monroe made a bold assertion for the status of the nation's rights and privileges along its borders. Speaking of raids against pirates at Amelia and Galveston, Monroe said:

This enterprise has been marked in a more signal manner by all the objectionable circumstances . . . and more particularly by the equipment of privateers which have annoyed our commerce, and by smuggling. These establishments if ever sanctioned by any authority whatever . . . have abused their trust and forfeited all claims to consideration. A just regard for

¹¹³ This Address would be his first Annual Address given to the House and Senate, given, December 2nd, 1817.

¹¹⁴ Here we see the impact the earlier 1817 fact-finding mission to South America had on Monroe. The progress of the war had shifted enough in patriot favor that Monroe could call them equal combatants with Spain. However, they had not won thoroughly enough for America to formally recognize their independence.

¹¹⁵ James Monroe, Dec. 2, 1817. "Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents." HeinOnline. Accessed, Oct. 26, 2017. 13.

¹¹⁶ Monroe, Dec. 2, 1817. "Compilations." 13.

the rights and interests of the United States required that they should be suppressed, and order have been accordingly issued to that effect.¹¹⁷

Although Monroe's first annual address revealed how the president considered state security linked to foreign policy, there were still some issues raised. Monroe was open about the fact that diplomatic progress with Spain was stalled, and had not moved since the Madison years. Despite all the peripheral actions aimed at maintaining peace, Monroe still had not dealt with the main national security threat: a porous neutrality law. As privateers still roamed the Atlantic threatening American security, Monroe in late 1817 reaffirmed the "impartial neutrality" of the United States.¹¹⁸ By doing so, the president circled 1818 as the pivotal year to create a new neutrality law that allowed the watchful and waiting Washington elite to achieve their expansionist goals.

Due to a series of planned and spontaneous events, the year 1818 became a turning point in the establishment of a more secure American neutrality. Although the process began in 1817, by 1818, Monroe finally had a substantial revision in place to fix the porous 1794 act. Jokingly labeled by Congress as a "peace treaty between Spain and this city of Baltimore," the 1818 revision fixed the major oversights in the 1794 Act that allowed so many privateers to be fitted out in American ports.¹¹⁹ However, approval of this revision was not unanimous amongst American politicians. The most vocal critic of this policy change was Henry Clay, senator from Kentucky. An ardent nationalist, Clay believed that the U.S. should drop all pretenses of neutrality and openly recognize the South American governments. Clay feared Europe, and especially England, monopolizing South American wealth. To Clay, if the U.S. did not recognize the rebel

¹¹⁷ Monroe, Dec. 2, 1817. "Compilations," 14.

¹¹⁸ Monroe, Dec. 2, 1817. "Compilations," 13.

¹¹⁹ Griffin 116, and, Whitaker, 246.

governments and entrench future trading relationships, then America could remain "sort of independent colonies of England—politically free, commercially slaves."¹²⁰ In Clay's mind, whatever the risk, the state benefited from all actions and policies that contributed to the continued dissolution of the Spanish Empire.

However, Clay's vision of a hemispheric economic relationship was built out of unrealistic idealism and not practical realities, as trade with the Caribbean was far more profitable and did not risk America's neutrality in the process.¹²¹ Therefore, in a vote of 115 to 45, Congress reaffirmed the careful policy of watchful waiting. Along with the Amelia and Galveston missions, this victory represented another strong centralized move by President Monroe aimed at stabilizing Atlantic chaos in America's favor. Proof of this increased sense of stability and confidence showed up in March 1818, when Congress, for the first time, openly debated diplomatically recognizing the new South American republics.¹²² Although Monroe would not formally recognize them until 1822, this bold move made in the face of Spain could not have been made before now. In strengthening the nation's defenses against the individual actors who risked war, Monroe's Neutrality Act of 1818 positioned the U.S. one step closer to achieving a lasting peace settlement with Spain and other European interventionists.¹²³

The Neutrality Act of 1818 was the culmination of a multiyear effort to protect American impartiality in a chaotic Atlantic World. Whereas the revision was a deliberate and thought-out event, U.S. General Andrew Jackson thrived in spontaneity. Having once claimed that he was "born for the storm," Old Hickory was a man of action, and in

¹²⁰ Henry Clay, quoted in Sexton, 20.

¹²¹ Griffin, 135-6.

¹²² Whitaker, 345.

¹²³ Whitaker, 245.

1818, he invaded Spanish Florida, capturing several forts in the process.¹²⁴ Jackson's Florida invasion could have resulted in a diplomatic disaster, as Monroe acknowledged in a letter to James Madison, that the capturing of Spanish forts could be seen as a violation of the neutrality act.¹²⁵ However, instead of ruining Monroe's watchful waiting policy, it actually revealed the strengths of Monroe's diplomacy. American leaders have long coveted the Florida territory, and Monroe saw in Jackson's aggression an opportunity to expose Spanish institutional weakness for American territorial gain.¹²⁶ In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, Monroe explained his strategy:

The occurrence at Pensacola, has been full of difficulty, but without incurring the charge of committing a break of the Constitution, or of giving the Spanish just cause for war, we have endeavored to turn it into the best account of our country, and credit the Commanding General. We shall tell the Spanish Minister [Onís], that the post will be delivered up, but that their attack, was owing to the misconduct of the Spanish officers, whose punishment would be . . . [that America] must keep a strong force in Florida.¹²⁷

By not condemning Jackson and blaming instead the Spanish for the invasion, Monroe spun U.S. military aggression into a defensive act protecting national neutrality. In doing so, he revealed the power and strength embedded in the flexible neutrality he had been crafting. Monroe therefore spun Jackson's recklessness into political gain, as the White House "punished" Spanish "misconduct" by occupying their territory. "As long as we do not wound too deeply her pride by holding [Florida]," Monroe conspired, "there is much reason to presume that this act will furnish strong inducement to Spain to cede the

¹²⁴ Betram Wyatt-Brown. "Andrew Jackson's Honor," *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol 17, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp 1-36. And, Fitz, 188.

¹²⁵ Monroe to James Madison, July 20th, 1818. Quoted in Lucier, 506.

¹²⁶ Bagott to Castlereagh, July 24, 1818. Quoted in Griffin, 177.

¹²⁷ James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, July 22, 1818. Quoted in, Lucier, 506

territory.”¹²⁸ Watchful waiting may have been a slow-play policy, but it was by no means passive. Rather, it centered on the active use of strategic and flexible neutrality and required a keen eye for seizing opportunity in the moment. By “taking and holding all of Florida,” Monroe’s actions show that he was actively using a contradictory neutrality policy for state-building purposes.¹²⁹ As a result, Monroe revealed Spanish weaknesses and forced them to negotiations that would at long last stabilize America’s Atlantic relations.

* * * * *

From the years 1816 to 1818, President James Monroe crafted a foreign policy for a chaotic Atlantic that centered on a flexible and sometimes contradictory neutrality law. Although this policy was at times contrary to America’s impartiality pledge, it nonetheless served to achieve significant state-building goals of the expansionist politicians. U.S. neutrality law was born with commerce in mind, and American politicians of the Early Republic utilized the post War of 1812 peace to extend the economy into the Spanish Atlantic.¹³⁰ The generation of American statesmen who took power in 1815 faced the challenge of producing a foreign policy that allowed for territorial expansion and that protected trade in the lucrative Caribbean and South American markets. Given the widespread and real fear within these diplomats over European interventionist actions, Presidents Madison and Monroe embraced and redefined Washingtonian neutrality to fit the purposes of a new volatile Atlantic world. Whereas it was Madison who initially declared America’s impartiality in the South American Wars for

¹²⁸ James Monroe to Andrew Jackson, July 19, 1818. Quoted in Hart, 92.

¹²⁹ Adams, diary entry, January 2, 1819, in *Memoirs*, 207.

¹³⁰ George Washington’s Farewell Address, quoted in, Manning, 15.

Independence, Monroe was the president who best used U.S. neutrality to the nation's advantage. Although he openly condemned the individual privateers who attacked the Spanish, Monroe himself was not afraid to bend American neutrality by strategically deploying violence against Spanish territory.

Neutrality in Monroe's hands was neither impartial nor noninterventionist. His administration, as well as the vast majority of the U.S. public, supported the Spanish colonists who fought Spanish imperial rule. He also allowed for the seizure of Spanish land, which included several islands and the whole territory of Florida. However, Monroe's unique definition of neutrality was far from careless. In a deliberate and careful policy he called "watchful waiting," the U.S. president maneuvered Atlantic diplomacy with patience and a keen eye for opportunity. Using both foreign action and domestic legislation when individually called for, Monroe by 1819 had not only avoided war but also positioned his leading diplomat John Quincy Adams to make a transcendent peace treaty with Spanish Minister Onís.¹³¹ The 1819 Transcontinental Treaty, also known as the Adam-Onís Treaty, ceded all of Spanish Florida to the United States, as well as officially defining the western border of the Louisiana Purchase territory.¹³² Until the Monroe Doctrine five years later, this treaty marked a defining achievement for the Monroe administration. Secretary of State Adams proclaimed "the acquisition of Florida has long been an object of earnest desire to this country. The acknowledgment of a definite line of boundary to the south sea forms a great epoch in our history."¹³³ This epoch was also triumphed by the popular press, as one newspaper

¹³¹ Head, 13.

¹³² Lewis, 124.

¹³³ John Quincy Adams, quoted in Hart, 98.

stated, "in a word, it is a treaty more than which the most sanguine have not anticipated to be more favorable. It is one that fully comes up the expectations of the great body of the American people."¹³⁴ With this treaty signed, Monroe secured a national security, territorial, and economic victory, as the Floridian land secured the vulnerable underbelly of the American state. Peace also guaranteed the existence of the vital Cuban trade relationship to American markets. Therefore, the Transcontinental Treaty represented the crowning achievement of Monroe's watchful waiting, a neutrality policy that set the stage for future state growth. Although the Monroe Doctrine will be remembered as the most significant foreign policy achievement, Monroe's willingness to embrace the contrary values of "consensus and fragmentation," "continuity and innovation," and "change and stagnation," he created the stability necessary for such a proclamation to be made in 1823.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Whitaker, 189.

¹³⁵ Lewis, 124.

Chapter 3: Money Bags and Cannon Balls: The First Bribery War and the Expansion of American Presidential Power

"What is practical must often control what is pure theory"
- Thomas Jefferson, 1802

The morning of October 31st, 1803 broke bright with opportunity for Captain William Bainbridge, commander of the forty-two gun American frigate, the *USS Philadelphia*. Operating under the orders of America's third Mediterranean commodore in three years, Edward Preble, Bainbridge and the *Philadelphia* were a part of an American blockade of the Tripolitan coastline. In 1803, this naval noose was President Thomas Jefferson's answer to a series of piratical actions on American merchant vessels committed by the North African regencies, Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Together, these states were known as the Barbary Coast. Preble's orders, given to him by the Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith indicated that he was "at liberty to pursue the dictates of [his] own judgement" to conduct a blockade against Tripoli and, in doing so, "annoy the enemy" with "all the means in [his] power."¹³⁶ On the 31st of October, Captain Bainbridge saw his opportunity to "annoy the enemy" when a Tripolitan ketch attempted to slip past his blockade. Bainbridge gave chase, and in the shallow Mediterranean waters, Bainbridge ran his frigate aground on a bed of reefs.¹³⁷ Unable to free the heavy ship and within range of Tripoli's naval batteries, Bainbridge surrendered the

¹³⁶ Secretary of Navy Robert Smith to Edward Preble. July 14, 1803. Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005. 148.

¹³⁷ *Naval Documents Relating to United States Wars with the Barbary Powers* (6 Volumes, Washington DC, 1939-44), 1:122. (Herein referred to as *Naval Docs*)

Philadelphia to the Bey of Tripoli without firing a shot.¹³⁸ That morning, not only did the United States of America lose one of its most impressive ships but also its crew of three hundred and seven American citizens, who would now be enslaved by Tripoli's Islamic regency. Jefferson called this black day a "national stain," and the "most serious [disaster] which has happened to the present administration."¹³⁹

Jefferson's strong reaction to this capture resulted from his core Republican belief in the value of free oceanic trade. With the loss of British protection after the successful American Revolution, North African corsairs began seizing American ships and sailors in 1784.¹⁴⁰ By 1794, these Barbary attacks reached crisis level, with more than eleven American vessels captured and more than 120 citizens enslaved.¹⁴¹ As a response to "the depredations committed by the Algerine corsairs on the commerce of the United States," the George Washington administration called for the creation of a standing American Navy, and in March, 1794, Congress enacted its first Navy Bill, as a means to protect the young republics' commercial independence.¹⁴²

Despite creating a Navy for the protection of American trade against North African privateers, the Federalist administrations of both George Washington and John Adams sought resolution through tributes rather than cannon balls. By bribing the Muslim regencies, Americans could regain access to the lucrative Mediterranean trade

¹³⁸ The Ruler of Tripoli was named Yusuf Karamanli. Traditional North African rulers at this time referred to themselves with the titles "Bashaw" and "Bey." In this paper I will refer to Yusuf as interchangeably as the Bey and Bashaw. Ibid.

¹³⁹ Thomas Jefferson, quoted in, Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007. 62.

¹⁴⁰ An Act concerning the creation of a Navy. *Naval Doc.* March 27, 1794 1:164.

¹⁴¹ Oren, 22.

¹⁴² An Act concerning the creation of a Navy. *Naval Doc.* March 27, 1794 1:164.

unmolested. However, these tributes came at an incredible cost.¹⁴³ Just one peace deal with Algiers, by far the most prolific threat to shipping in the 1790s, cost the U.S. both one million dollars and a thirty-six gun American-made frigate. Seeing Algiers's success in forcing America into tributary status, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis also threaten attacks in return for tribute. A full Mediterranean peace was achieved by 1797, but the price of opening up the sea for commerce cost one and a half million dollars, totaling to twenty percent of the national budget.¹⁴⁴ This was a crippling strain on the federal treasury, as the young nation relied on its export trade as a primary means to pay off the immense debt earned by the American War for Independence.¹⁴⁵

For nearly two decades, Thomas Jefferson watched as Barbary “pirates” injured and threatened American free trade in the Mediterranean. A firm believer in the republican concept of “free ships make free goods,” Jefferson viewed these North Africans attacks and subsequent tributes as dangers to the future success and growth of the United States. As a republican, Jefferson believed that nations, like human beings, had a lifespan, and therefore, these Mediterranean attacks represented assaults on a vital trade artery responsible for keeping the young United States vibrant and

¹⁴³ On March 6, 1796, President George Washington signed the first peace treaty with the Barbary power, Algiers. This opened the Mediterranean back up, but in doing so, showed to the other regencies, Tripoli, Tunis, and Morocco, that the USA was willing to pay for peace. Frank Lambert. *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005. 92-3.

¹⁴⁴ This 20% statistic has been used by several other historians, among them Cogliano and Gordon Wood. However, not all agree on that it was 20% of the federal budget. Frederick Leiner asserts that peace was achieved at 15% of the federal budget. In both of these cases, sourcing is difficult to determine. Cogliano cites Lambert, and Lambert does not provide a footnote for his 20% fact. Similarly, Leiner does not provide citation numbers at all, and therefore it is difficult to connect fact to the list of sources cited in his endnotes. The most accurate account of a numerical value associated to a peace purchase comes in Lambert's usage of Secretary of the Treasury Wolcott in the June 10th 1796 edition of the *Daily Advertiser*. Regardless, the cost for peace represented a major expense for the United States. – Reword they are almost all going after this Leiner statistics. Fredrick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Ellis, *The American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Knopf Publishing, 1997. 196.

free.¹⁴⁶ Thus, Jefferson rejected the Federalist approach of his predecessors as damaging future American progress. Claiming himself to be the “enemy of all these douceurs, tributes, and humiliations,” Jefferson rejected the notion that America could purchase peace from the Barbary Coast. Ever since his time as Minister to France in the 1780s, Jefferson had remained steadfast in his belief that “nothing will stop the eternal increase from these pirates but the presence of an armed force” in the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁷ Although he lacked the political power to dictate national foreign policy as a minister and vice president, by 1801, Thomas Jefferson was in the White House finally handing him the power to apply his long standing demand for military action.¹⁴⁸

Since 1786, Jefferson nursed his conviction that the American government should stand up to the Barbary Coast with force instead of tribute.¹⁴⁹ In 1801 when he won the presidency, Jefferson received his chance to apply his longstanding rhetoric into action. However, the Barbary War that will come to Jefferson in 1801 and last until 1805 will be a moment that tests Jefferson’s own republican convictions. Although Jefferson came into office wielding a coherent and longstanding strategy, when faced with the realities of war, Jefferson will be compelled to abandon his Republican principle in order to achieve the military victory his agrarian vision for the U.S. demanded. The

¹⁴⁶ McCoy, Drew R. *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982. 197 and 203.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 28, 1801. James Morton Smith, ed., *Republic of Letters*, (New York, 1995) Vol 1., 1194.

¹⁴⁸ Ellis, 203.

¹⁴⁹ While Minister to France, Jefferson wrote to John Adams, who was serving as Minister to London at the time, explaining to him his plan to have the government use force to deal with the pirates. Adams, wrote back disagreeing, claiming that a Navy expedition would be too expensive, and that in the long run, the financially weak USA should pay tribute like the other European nations. Jefferson to Adam, July 11, 1786. *Naval Docs*.

Barbary War against Tripoli therefore illustrates a moment of transition for President Jefferson, a time in which Republican rhetoric was challenged by the ever-changing dynamics of trans-Atlantic warfare. In order to achieve his Republican goals, Jefferson adopted federalist strategies. A turning point in this transition hit Jefferson in 1803, when news of the *Philadelphia* disaster came to Washington. The *Philadelphia* capture turned a war fought with limited means into a time sensitive humanitarian crisis, which compelled Jefferson to change his tactics against the Tripolitans. Challenged by a moment of international crisis, the Barbary War revealed Jefferson's republican character as both flexible and adaptable, a leadership style allowed him to successfully project and protect American interest across the ocean. Using Federalist means to achieve Republican goals, Jefferson defined the role of Commander-in-Chief, and as a result, significantly expanded the power of the executive unlike any president before him.

* * * * *

Jefferson's character has been a topic of scholarly fascination for many years. Even Jefferson's founding peers noted his complex enigmatic personality. Friend and political rival John Adams explained that, whereas "almost every other American statesman might be described in . . . broad brush strokes . . . Jefferson could be painted only touch by touch, with a fine pencil and the perfection of the likeness depend upon the shifting and uncertain flicker of the semi-transparent shadows."¹⁵⁰ Modern historians too have struggled to catch Jefferson in the right light. Through the years, scholars have

¹⁵⁰ John Adams, quoted in, Robert W. Tucker, and David C. Hendrickson. *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. 3.

portrayed the Virginian as everything from an atheist to a zealot.¹⁵¹ However, the best scholarship about the man stays away from the hardline moral absolutes found in Jefferson works during the 1960s-90s. Since 1990, historians have leaned into the moral and ideological complexities that characterize Jefferson. Authors like Joseph Ellis, Peter Onuf, Gordon Wood, and Jon Meacham have all written excellent accounts of Jefferson's character. Whereas Ellis' well-titled 1997 book *American Sphinx* painted Jefferson as more ideologically rigid, recent scholarship, like John Boles' *Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty* readily acknowledges the man's mysteries, writing, "in the end, [Jefferson] is the most attractive, most elusive, most complicated, most intellectual, most practical, most idealistic, most flexible, and most quintessentially American Founder of them all."¹⁵² It is within this idea of Jefferson as the most practical, idealistic, and flexible that I engage the man. Jon Meacham wrote in *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, "to realize his vision, [Jefferson] compromised and improvised. The willingness to do what he needed to do in a given moment makes him an elusive historical figure. Yet in the real world, in real time, when he was charged with the safety of the nation, his creative flexibility made him a transformative leader."¹⁵³ Meacham's desire to find place Jefferson in real time and in the real world corresponds with my argument, but unlike many of these historians, I will engage Jefferson's within the real world of trans-Atlantic warfare.

¹⁵¹ The vast spectrum of Jefferson's character studies range from Dumas Malone's epic six-volume *Jefferson and His Time* depicting the quintessential Founding Father hero worship to Paul Finkelman's "Jefferson and Slavery: Treason Against the Hopes of the World."

¹⁵² John Boles. *Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty*. New York: Basic Books, 2017. 5.

¹⁵³ Jon Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, New York: Random House, 2012. xx.

However, within the vast literature surrounding Jefferson, very few historians have engaged Jefferson's character through the lens of foreign policy. Writing in 1990, historians Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson co-authored *Empire of Liberty*, which instantly became the preeminent source on Jeffersonian foreign policy. In their view, Jefferson directed the ship of state with a strong idealistic and moralistic vision. However, Tucker and Hendrickson only analyzed Jefferson's diplomacy in domestic and European issues. Except for five pages of endnotes, the Barbary War of 1801-1805 was almost completely omitted from their study, and even there, they consider the war "less than vital to the state."¹⁵⁴ Two decades later, Francis Cogliano revisited and revised the modern scholarship regarding Jeffersonian diplomacy. His 2014 book, *Emperor of Liberty* now stands as the best account of Jefferson's role as foreign diplomat from his early political career and into his presidency. In line with the recent Jefferson historiography, Cogliano rejects Tucker and Hendrickson's view of Jefferson the idealist, and instead, Cogliano argues that Jefferson was a realist. "Although he was guided by a clear ideological vision for the American republic," Cogliano argues, "he was pragmatic about the means he employed to protect the republic and advance its strategic interests."¹⁵⁵ Unlike Tucker and Hendrickson, Cogliano analyses the Barbary War as proof of Jefferson's consistent view of foreign policy.

This paper will advance the recent scholarship about Jefferson's foreign policy by using the Barbary Wars as a case study for the transformation in leadership characteristics witnessed during his presidency. Although the Barbary War has been

¹⁵⁴ Tucker and Hendrickson, 294-299.

¹⁵⁵ Francis Cogliano, *Emperor of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson's Foreign Policy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 10.

covered by popular and military historians, it remains an understudied episode in Thomas Jefferson's political career.¹⁵⁶ Whereas Cogliano argued that Jefferson employed a consistent vision and strategy against Tripoli, I argue that the capture of the *USS Philadelphia* was an important turning point in Jefferson's presidency, compelling him to adopt a more Federalist approach towards achieving his republican goals.¹⁵⁷ Whereas other historians have noted Jefferson's flexibility, few have analyzed it within the crucible of war. Thus, this paper situates the Barbary War as a moment that defined Jefferson's transformative pragmatism. That transformation challenged Jefferson's Republican committed towards running a frugal and small government. By 1805, Jefferson had successfully achieved a peace that reopened the Mediterranean to free American trade, but to do so, he had to dramatically increase the power of the nascent American navy, enact a sweeping tax program, and become the first American president to endorse a foreign regime change through a revolutionary military coup d'état.

¹⁵⁶ Capitalizing on post 9/11 public interest in Muslim "terrorists," many books dramatized the war by honing in on the sporadic swashbuckling events that occurred in the war, thus highlight a triumphalist theme in American overseas interventionism. These works, such as Adrian Teinniswood's *Pirates of the Barbary*, Brian Kilmeade's *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates*, and Joshua London's *Victory in Tripoli*, serve more as a mirror reflecting the public's desires of the present than they do provide valuable insight into the nature of delicate 19th century foreign relations.

¹⁵⁷ In this way, I will use the Barbary War to advance Max Edling's scholarship that argues America's ability to project power abroad strengthened the federal government at home for future greatness. Edling argues that there is a "blind spot" created by historians who do not study American actions abroad. "The general neglect of wars, military coercion and diplomacy in the historiography of the early U.S. led to an unfortunate blind spot...this neglect created a blind sport that served to maintain the myth that the rise of American power through territorial and commercial expansion somehow just happened, or worse, that the process was providential and peaceful." The ability for Americans to successfully project power and pursue interested outside their borders creates a "fiscal military state" that would be foundational in positioning the U.S. for future military and economic greatness. Max Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle: War, Money, and the American State, 1783-1867*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014. 6.

* * * * *

Jefferson first articulated his desire to use force against the Barbary Coast in 1786. At that time, the Washington administration dispatched Jefferson to Paris as America's first Minister to France. Washington requested that Jefferson and John Adams, the Minister to England, articulate a U.S. strategy to handle the corsair crisis. In a diplomatic dispatch to Adams, Jefferson argued that the United States "should prefer the obtaining of [peace] by war," and gave the following explanations for justifying his opinion: "Honor favors it . . . it will procure us respect in Europe, and respect is a safeguard to our interest . . . I think it least expensive."¹⁵⁸ Adams, however, countered Jefferson's opinion, arguing that the more prudent move for the financially and militarily weak nation would be to purchase peace. Adams calculated that future trade earned in the Mediterranean would more than make up for the continued cost of tribute to the North African powers.¹⁵⁹ President Washington agreed with Adams, and thus, his 1795 peace with Algiers set a two decade long U.S precedent of buying and bribing the Barbary for peace.¹⁶⁰

In Jefferson's mind, the direction of American foreign policy was a direct result of his Republican vision for an expansive agrarian republic. Believing that that "cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens," Jefferson saw the "yeoman farmer" as the

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 11, 1786. *Naval Docs.* 1:10.

¹⁵⁹ John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 31, 1786. *Naval Docs.* 1:11.

¹⁶⁰ Unable to stop the spread of attacks on its own merchant vessels, the U.S. government sought peace settlements first with Algiers in 1795 and then with Tripoli and Tunis in 1796 and 1797. ¹⁶⁰ In 1795, Algerian peace totaled up to more than \$1 million, which, according to Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott quoted in *Claypool's Daily Advertiser*, accounted for 16 percent of the federal revenue for the year. This treaty was the largest single item in the federal budget for the year 1795. *Naval Docs.* 1:107-116.; Oliver Wolcott, *Claypool's Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, June 10, 1796. Quoted in, Lambert, 87.

backbone responsible for supporting the young United States' agrarian future.¹⁶¹ These industrious and virtuous farmers were not to simply be subsistence producers, that would invite sloth upon the nation. Rather, they were to be the pushing force behind an expanding agrarian republic that sought growth from the virtues of agriculture rather than European-style manufacturing.¹⁶² The critical connecting factor to Jefferson's vision of America's political economy was therefore access to a vigorous overseas trade.¹⁶³ Commerce and the maintenance of free trade were intimately connected to Jefferson's foreign policy objectives. If Jefferson's yeomen did not have access to foreign markets, then they would risk slipping into stagnate subsistence farmers whose lazy and idle lifestyle was deemed detrimental to republican virtues. Thus, the protection of America's Republican experience was critically connected to a secure and open trade route.¹⁶⁴ In Jefferson's mind, American warfare, limited in scope and purposefully designed, protected American welfare.

The belief in Mediterranean trade being a vital artery supporting American economic and moral health was not merely a lofty metaphysical concern. Rather, trade into the Mediterranean markets actually served as an important economic lifeline for an American economy desperate to pay off extensive debt incurred during the Revolutionary War. After the War for Independence, the U.S. became the largest neutral carrier of goods for the Western world. From 1700 to 1807, the value of all

¹⁶¹ Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, August 23, 1785. *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol 8. 426-7.

¹⁶² Thomas Jefferson. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 22, 2018).

¹⁶³ Jefferson understood that Americans, including himself, enjoyed European products, and therefore saw trade as the fix to this dilemma. He believed Europe could be America's manufacturing center, leaving the U.S. to remain agrarian and free. *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 627.

goods involved in foreign trade expanded from 40% to 92%. In monetary terms, combined imports and exports in 1790 totaled to \$43 million, and by 1807, that total skyrocketed to \$246 million.¹⁶⁵ Within that trade boom, Jefferson calculated that one-sixth of all wheat and flour exported and a quarter of all dried and pickled fish went to Mediterranean ports. This Mediterranean trade involved more than one hundred ships annually, loaded with twenty thousand tons, and employed more than twelve hundred seamen.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, when Barbary corsairs began threatening this vital trade route, Jefferson could only see these attacks as existential threats to the very future of America. Jefferson's ideological commitment thus defined his reaction to the Barbary crisis, committing him to the firm belief that only force could save America's agrarian future. Jefferson took both these ideological commitments and fears to Washington.

Thomas Jefferson called his presidential election "the revolution of 1800," but when war with Tripoli came to Jefferson in 1801, "continuity," not "change," will characterize his presidential leadership in the theatre of foreign policy.¹⁶⁷ As the Barbary War illustrated, instead of dismantling an expansionist military and fiscal state, Jefferson actually empowered the federal government in a manner far beyond that of his federalist predecessors.¹⁶⁸ In order to achieve victory against Tripoli and secure his Republican policy of free trade, Jefferson had to adopt strong-handed unilateral policies. Republican peace, therefore, took Federalist-inspired action. Although the Barbary War illustrates an ideology in transition, Jefferson was not a perfect war-time leader.¹⁶⁹ As the nation's

¹⁶⁵ Gordon Wood, 623.

¹⁶⁶ Jefferson, "Report on American Trade in the Mediterranean," December 28, 1790. *Papers*,

¹⁶⁷ Edling, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Edling, 108.

¹⁶⁹ McCoy, 10.

first Commander in Chief to lead a nation through open war, Jefferson conducted his war to protect trade in an uneven and largely ineffective manner, where his rhetoric of force rarely translated to real military action. Although the American Navy secured a victory in 1805, the war was plagued by mishaps, embarrassments, and missed opportunities for four years. Nevertheless, by the end of the First Barbary War, President Jefferson will have set a powerful precedent, that executives could wield the power of the national government to realize personal foreign policy goals.

After years of preaching force, President Jefferson entered the White House in 1801 and immediately sought to implement his vision of an interventionist U.S. foreign policy in the Mediterranean. By 1801, Tripoli had established itself as America's primary North African adversary.¹⁷⁰ In addition to recently violating the 1797 Treaty by capturing U.S. merchant vessels, the Bashaw of Tripoli demanded a tributary increase of \$100,000 to match that of Algiers. Condemning the idea of tributes as "money thrown away," Jefferson fumed that "there [was] no end to the demand of these powers, nor any security in their promises."¹⁷¹ In response to this challenge, Jefferson called a cabinet meeting within the first several months of his administration to come up with a new state policy for this crisis. On May 20th, the cabinet signed off on a plan to dispatch a naval squadron of four frigates to the Mediterranean under the Command of Commodore Richard Dale. He ordered the Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith to command Dale to actively blockade the Tripoli's port and use his force "so as best to protect our

¹⁷⁰ A year before Jefferson entered office, Tripoli captured two American vessels and increased their demand for tribute by \$100,000. It had also embarrassed the American Navy by commandeering the *USS George Washington*, the first ever U.S. naval ship to enter the Mediterranean, for Tripolitan use in a voyage to Constantinople. Lambert, 101-102.

¹⁷¹ Thomas Jefferson to William Cary Nicholas, June 11, 1801. *Thomas Jefferson Papers*. 34:309.

commerce and chastise their insolence—by sinking, burning, or destroying their vessels wherever you shall find them.”¹⁷²

The ramifications of his command to sink, burn, or destroy the Bashaw’s corsairs shows the transitional nature of Jefferson’s character. Jefferson’s command essentially constituted an act of war. Furthermore, the president did not have the authority to engage in foreign war without Congressional approval. Jefferson’s unilateral decision illustrates his willingness to expand executive power in order to achieve his policy goals. This constitutional issue came to light in December 1801, when American Captain Andrew Sterrett engaged a Tripolitan naval ship and crippled it, killing over twenty of its crew.¹⁷³ Sterrett’s naval victory was an example of Jefferson’s willingness to put rhetoric into action, at the same time, it also illustrated that Jefferson, not Congress, had taken the nation to war.¹⁷⁴ This powerful unilateral move contradicted Jefferson’s inaugural promise to not enlarge the government or expand executive authority.¹⁷⁵ However, in a display of political savvy, Jefferson heralded Sterrett as a war hero to Congress and asked Congress to retroactively approve of his military maneuvers. In “an Act for the protection of the Commerce and the Seamen of the United States against Tripolitan cruisers,” Congress legitimized Jefferson’s interventionist policy and empowered the president to use the U.S. Navy at his complete discretion, allowing him access to U.S. treasury in order to build more ships.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Robert Smith, May 21, 1801. *Naval Docs.* 1:472.

¹⁷³ Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. 26.

¹⁷⁴ Cogliano, 154.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Jefferson, “First Inaugural Address.” Quoted in, Edling, 108.

¹⁷⁶ “An Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers,” February 6, 1802. *Naval Docs.* 2:51.

In the larger scope of the war, the crippling of one small vessel hardly constituted an American victory. Nevertheless, it did symbolize that the Jefferson administration was serious about changing American policy in the Mediterranean. Although he had a military success and Congress' blessing, Jefferson was unwilling to aggressively expand his interventionist agenda into an open and direct naval warfare against Tripoli. In Jefferson's eyes, force meant the projection of force, and therefore, Jefferson sought a limited war against Tripoli that consisted of ineffective and porous blockades around the Muslim regency.¹⁷⁷ Jefferson saw himself as "the enemy to all douceurs, tributes, and humiliations," yet, his military strategy comprised of blockading the enemy's ports with the "smallest force competent."¹⁷⁸ The three years of ineffective blockade and the weak projection of power compelled William Eaton, Consul of Tunis, to proclaim that "the Government may as well send out Quaker meeting-houses" to serve as the American Navy.¹⁷⁹

Disaster, however, changed the course of the war, as it forced Jefferson to adopt a more aggressive military and diplomatic strategy in order to achieve victory. The 1803 captured of the *USS Philadelphia* by Tripolitan corsairs fundamentally transformed the nature of the war. Until this humiliating event, Jefferson felt no pressure to change his naval policy of limited, cost effective, blockades with conducted with "the smallest force competent."¹⁸⁰ However, with over three-hundred American citizens locked in the Bashaw's dungeons, the *Philadelphia* capture turned the war into a humanitarian crisis

¹⁷⁷ Ellis. 204.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 28, 1801. James Morton Smith, ed., *Republic of Letters*, (New York, 1995) Vol 1., 1194; Thomas Jefferson, quoted in, Allison, 27.

¹⁷⁹ William Eaton to James Madison, August 9, 1802. *Naval Docs.* 2:229.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, August 28, 1801. James Morton Smith, ed., *Republic of Letters*, (New York, 1995) Vol 1., 1194; Thomas Jefferson, quoted in, Allison, 27.

that demanded immediate resolution and policy change.¹⁸¹ These enslaved Americans placed a unique pressure on Jefferson, as their imprisonment and uncertain fate forced Jefferson to aggressively transform his approach to ending the war through force and diplomacy. Thus, the *Philadelphia* disaster was a turning point for the trajectory of the Barbary War, because it demanded from Jefferson a new style of executive leadership that was unilateral, centralized, and decisive. Far from the limited war he envisioned in 1801, the post-*Philadelphia* Barbary War required a new commander in chief. As emblematic of an ideology in transition, Jefferson's new strategy to defeat Tripoli was to harness the previously untapped power of the executive to achieve his foreign policy goals.¹⁸²

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, Jefferson reacted with both action and policy. Three months after the *Philadelphia's* capture, the U.S. Navy enacted its revenge with a December 1804 covert raid to blow up the stolen vessel in the Tripolitan harbor.¹⁸³ Led by Lt. Steven Decatur, this unexpected attack sent shock waves across the Atlantic, inspiring British Royal Navy giant Horacio Nelson to call Decatur's raid "the most bold and daring act of the age."¹⁸⁴ Unlike Captain Sterrett's early success in 1801, Jefferson did not let positive momentum go to waste. Now that Jefferson had a war hero and the shot of optimism desperately needed to revive patriotism for the war effort, he moved to enact expansionist policies designed to bring the fight to the enemy.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Cogliano, 163.

¹⁸² Edling, 109.

¹⁸³ Naval Docs, 4:474-5.

¹⁸⁴ Horacio Nelson, quoted in, Oren, 60.

¹⁸⁵ Decatur received many accolades for this naval mission. Thomas Jefferson personally thanked him in a Congressional address. Congress also awarded him a commemorative sword in 1805. Decatur was commissioned as a captain, the youngest member of the Navy to reach that rank in naval history. Oren, 62.

Jefferson rode this national optimism into military policy, demanded a naval expansion unlike any other. In March 1804, when news of the successful raid arrived in Washington, Secretary of State Robert Smith recorded Jefferson's new strategic plan for the Barbary War:

The President immediately determined to put in Commission and to send to the Mediterranean a force which would be able beyond the possibility of a doubt, to coerce the Enemy to a peace upon Terms compatible with our Honor and our Interest. A due regard to our situation with Tripoli and precautionary considerations in relation to the other Barbary Powers, demanded our forces in that quarter should be so far augmented as to leave no doubt of our compelling the existing Enemy to submit to our own terms, and of effectually checking any hostile disposition that might be entertained towards us by any of the other Barbary Powers.¹⁸⁶

Congress had passed Naval Bills in the past, but the piecemeal aspect of the previous bills in 1802 and 1803 were never followed by a change in both overall military strategy and North African diplomacy.¹⁸⁷ In order to compel victory "without doubt," Congress passed a new bill to allocate an additional one million dollars to create five new frigates.¹⁸⁸ This fourth and final armada was led by Commodore Samuel Barron, who set sail against Tripoli six frigates, five schooners, two bomb ships, and ten smaller gun boats, two-hundred and sixty guns in all. Together, the cost of this final fleet exceeded \$1.5 million, over three times the amount spent on the naval force dispatched in 1801.¹⁸⁹ This enhanced and empowered squadron at last directly engaged Bashaw

¹⁸⁶ Robert Smith to Edward Preble, May 22, 1804. *Naval Docs* 4:114-15.

¹⁸⁷ An Act for the protection of the Commerce and Seamen of the United States, against the Tripolitan Cruisers," February 6, 1802. *Naval Docs*, 2:51; "An Act to provide an addition armament for the protection of the seamen and commerce of the United States," February 28, 1803. *Naval Docs*. 2:366

¹⁸⁸ "An Act further to protect the commerce and seamen of the United States against the Barbary powers," March 26, 1804. *Naval Docs*, 3:522-3.

¹⁸⁹ Cogliano, 162; Lambert, 141.

Karamanli's forces off the coast of Tripoli on August 3rd, 1804.¹⁹⁰ The ensuing naval battles and American bombardment of Tripolitan naval fortresses represented a clear change in U.S. strategy towards the enemy. Action and attack, not simply blockades, now characterized the final year of the Barbary War.

Such a commitment to a projection and usage of force abroad was incredibly expensive. During his 1801 inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson promised his constituencies a "frugal government" that would not shall not take from the mouth of labor the great it has earned."¹⁹¹ Not wanting to directly tax American citizens as a means to raise the \$1.5 million needed to pay for Barron's fleet, Jefferson sought to enact tax revenue elsewhere. In what he called, "the Mediterranean Fund," the president placed a 2.5% "ad valorem" duty on imports.¹⁹² Although he did not resort to taxing American citizens, this ambitious tax system nevertheless represented an expansion of the bureaucratic state by a president committed to a small and non-intrusive government. Stressed by a crisis that demanded quick resolution, Jefferson had to abandon portions of his ideology that prevented him from achieving his foreign policy goals. In order to protect his nation's right to free trade, Jefferson had to act like his Federalist predecessors by enacting a national revenue system designed fund a massive military expansion.

¹⁹⁰ This attack was the most significant direct assault against the Tripolitan military of the war. It resulted in 3 enemy gun boats captured, one sunk and fifteen damaged. Tripoli navy suffered fifty-two died and another fifty taken prisoner. In addition to the naval battle, U.S. ships bombarded the coastline shore batteries and fortifications for over two hours from a distance of five-hundred yards. *Naval Docs*, 4:347-8; Lambert 147.

¹⁹¹ Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address." Quoted in, Edling, 108

¹⁹² Act further to protect the commerce and seamen of the United States against the Barbary powers," March 26, 1804. *Naval Docs*, 3:522-3; Edling, 116.

The *Philadelphia* crisis did not just change Jefferson's commitment to military force, it compelled Jefferson to reconsider the diplomatic channels available to facilitate peace. In addition to empowering his traditional foreign officers to act unilaterally in the best interest of American peace, Jefferson also took advantage of non-traditional means of diplomatic pressure.¹⁹³ Since 1801, the Jefferson administration knew of an opportunity to use the Bashaw's brother, Hamet Karamanli, as a tool to overthrow the existing hostile Bashaw government in Tripoli.¹⁹⁴ Consul Eaton, who became the lead proponent of the coup plan, regularly wrote to Secretary of State James Madison through the years 1801-1803 arguing that an operation to restore the "rightful Bashaw" would "have saved the United States more than a million of dollars and many lives."¹⁹⁵ In Eaton's opinion, this was an "event which promises to a vast saving and perpetual peace to the U. States."¹⁹⁶ Eaton's argument fell on deaf ears for two years, until the *Philadelphia's* inglorious capture forced Jefferson to reconsider the feasibility to this clandestine plan to overthrow Tripoli's government.¹⁹⁷

It was not until Jefferson was faced with a time sensitive hostage crisis that he was willing to take the extreme executive privilege to initiate a covert coup attempt against the Bashaw. In doing so, Jefferson set significant precedent of American presidents using force to create a pro-American regime change in a Middle Eastern country. Two years earlier, the Jefferson administration was unwilling to involve itself

¹⁹³ On the traditional level, Jefferson gave his head North African officer Tobias Lear a high degree of diplomatic freedom to arrange peace when he saw an opening with the Tripolitans. Jefferson trusted Lear with "the full power and authority to negotiate a Treaty of Peace with the Bashaw of Tripoli." This meant that Lear now had a presidential approval to decide when and on what times a peace treaty with Karamanli can be secured. Thomas Jefferson, quoted in, Lambert, 150.

¹⁹⁴ William Eaton to James Madison, September 5, 1801. *Naval Docs*, 1:569.

¹⁹⁵ William Eaton to James Madison, June 8, 1802. *Naval Docs*, 2: 166-170.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Eaton wrote five letters to Madison detailing the coup plan in various details. *Naval Docs*.

with the internal affairs of a foreign ruler. However, after 1803, Jefferson and Madison gave a tacit green-light to revolutionize Tripolitan politics. Writing to Consul General Tobias Lear in 1804, Madison wrote “of the co-operation of the Elder brother of the Bashaw of Tripoli we are still willing to avail ourselves, if the Commodore [Barron] should Judge that it may be useful.” In addition, Lear was ordered to work with Eaton in North Africa “in all such measures as may be deemed the best calculated to effectuate a termination” of the war.¹⁹⁸ This direction corresponded with Eaton being named “Agent of the Navy for the Barbary Regencies,” and he was transported by the navy to Alexandria in order to find Hamet and commence the mission. In order to finance the operation, Barron was authorized to give Eaton \$20,000 as a means to pay for men and supplies.¹⁹⁹

Although Jefferson never outright stated his approval, his government’s support was clear in its support, as evident in the formal title bestowed on Eaton (Eaton called himself “General Eaton”), the \$20,000 to finance the mission, and in the navy transport that delivered him to Hamet. In a pact signed on February 23, 1805, Eaton pledged that he, and his U.S. forces (Eaton was given eight Marines and two sailors), would use “the utmost exertions, so far as comports with their own honor and interest” to instill Hamet as the rightful Bashaw of Tripoli. This pact was forwarded to Madison but never ratified by the Senate. Nevertheless, on March 8, Eaton began his mission understanding that he had the support of his government, and thus he commenced the five-hundred mile journey to Tripoli from Alexandria with Hamet and five-hundred Greek, Arab, and Berber

¹⁹⁸ James Madison to Tobias Lear, June 6, 1804. *Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series*,. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014. 7:287-88

¹⁹⁹ Samuel Barron to William Eaton, March 22, 1805, *Naval Docs*, 5:438-41.

mercenaries in tow.²⁰⁰ Acting like an early 19th century Lawrence of Arabia, General Eaton marched his motely force across the North African desert to assault the strategic seaborne city of Derna, and after arduous six-week journey, on April 28, 1805, Eaton, supported by three American naval gunboats, attacked and secured the surrender of the city.²⁰¹ After a two-hour battle, Eaton raised, for the first time, an American flag over a defeated enemy in a foreign land. Victory, however, proved bittersweet. Two months later as Eaton and Hamet were planning their attack on the Tripolitan capital, Lear and Bashaw Karamanli signed a peace treaty, officially ending the First Barbary War.²⁰² American peace, however, offered no provision for the so-called “rightful” Bashaw, as Eaton was ordered to return home and abandon Derna, leaving Hamet Karamanli stranded in his brother’s hostile land.²⁰³

* * * * *

Although peace had been reached in 1805, it was neither permanent nor popular.²⁰⁴ Yes the United States had bombarded Yusuf into the negotiation table, but the Bashaw still held his trump card, the three-hundred American souls locked away in his dungeons. In order to secure a peace that alleviated the hostage crisis, Tobias Lear agreed for the United States government to pay \$60,000 in order to secure the safe

²⁰⁰ Lambert, 151

²⁰¹ Francis Rennell. Rodd *General William Eaton: The Failure of an Idea*. New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1932.

²⁰² James R. Sofka, “The Jeffersonian Idea of National Security: Commerce, the Atlantic Balance of Power, and the Barbary War, 1786-1805.” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 21, Issue 4, (1997): 519-544. 543.

²⁰³ Rodd, 261.

²⁰⁴ War with Tripoli will begin again in 1815 after the conclusion of the War of 1812. At the culmination of this Second Barbary War in 1816, ratified by the Senate in 1822, the U.S. will establish a permanent naval squadron in the Mediterranean for the purpose of protecting American trade abroad. Leiner, 22-23.

release of America's imprisoned sailors.²⁰⁵ Thus, the Bashaw, even in defeat, was able to extract one more lump sum payment from a U.S. president who swore never to be a tribute to a Barbary Power. Upon hearing that Lear signed such a forgiving peace and ransom, Eaton seethed that "both honor and humanity bleeds" because of this humiliating treaty. However, Eaton aimed his fury and sense of betrayal most directly at President Jefferson. Calling Jefferson a "coward" and a "fraud in a mask," Eaton raged that "Mr. Jefferson began his administration under the most promising auspices and the assurances he gave his country on the faith of his plighted power . . . he had discharged his promises to refine deceptions, frauds, and speculations on public confidence and incorrigible errors has strongly marked every stage of his prudential conduct."²⁰⁶

Eaton, however, missed the point. His strong criticism of Jefferson's willingness to agree to an unfavorable peace speak to the personal attachment he felt to towards the important role he played in the conflict. However, this personal connection blinded his ability to view the wider trajectory of the war, and therefore, Eaton was unable to see how Jefferson's war aims had transformed since 1801. At the start of the war, Jefferson was an outspoken proponent of a permanent peace secured through force. However, as soon as the *Philadelphia* disaster turned the war into a hostage crisis, Jefferson changed his strategy from a safe and economical tactic of blockade to a more direct and immediate strategy aimed at establishing a quick resolution to both America's tribute system and hostage situation.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Eaton, quoted in, Oren, 69.

²⁰⁶ Eaton, quoted in CB Bow. Bow, C.B. "Waging War for the Righteous: William Eaton on Enlightenment, Empire, and Coup d'état in the First Barbary War, 1801-1805." *History*, Volume 101, Issue 348, (2016): 692-709, 704.

²⁰⁷ Rodd, 106-8.

The four years it took to find resolution in the First Barbary War illustrated the complexity embedded into Thomas Jefferson's character as America's President and Commander in Chief. Although he had a clear idea of the outcome he had in mind, the means of achieving that successful military outcome was far from consistent or well defined. This strategic unevenness points to the larger picture seen in Jefferson's war leadership, that Jefferson's ideology experienced a point of transition. When his rhetoric of force came up against the realities of war, Jefferson adapted. A study of Jefferson's decision making during the war reveals an ideological pragmatism that allowed him to maintain his overall goal of protecting free trade, while at the same time, adapting his principles to the changing demands of war.²⁰⁸ Seen in this light, the Barbary War against Tripoli created a moment in which Jefferson had to act against principles held since his early political career. This war was far from the only episode in Jefferson's life to challenge is Republicanism, however, it was a significant in the precedent it set for future American leaders.²⁰⁹ In order to achieve his personal policy goals, harnessed the power of the national government in unprecedented ways. In doing so, Jefferson expanded his role of Commander in Chief like no other Federalist president before him. In the last two years of the war, Jefferson built the navy to unprecedented power at great expense, grew the federal government's taxation network, and supported a plan to revolutionize a foreign government through a secret military coup. The First Barbary War from 1801 to 1805 may now only be remembered as a line in the *Marine Corps Hymn*, but the ramifications it had on the presidency of Thomas Jefferson were transformative. Serving

²⁰⁸ Sofka, 523.

²⁰⁹ Most significant of these other constitutional challenges was his 1803 decision to purchase the Louisiana Territory from French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

as the United States' first wartime Commander in Chief, Jefferson helped to define the role for his future successors, and in doing so, expanded the role to new levels of executive power.

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