

## **Those Pirates and Muslim Barbarians: The American Public View of the Barbary Nations and the United States Participation in the Barbary War**

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Although the Marine Anthem is sung quite often throughout the country, relatively few know the extent of its history or the meaning of the phrase, "from the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." In the early 1800s the United States was at war with the Barbary Nations in what would come to be known as the Barbary Wars. The American public glorified the United States and made the Barbary nations into an evil enemy. The historiography of the Barbary Wars tends to be written from a diplomatic or military approach, and understandably so. The fight against these North African pirates afforded some of the earliest and most celebrated actions of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. This combat also began a long and ongoing U.S. military presence in the Middle East, and the American public's interest in the greater Islamic world. Little has been written, though, on the new nation's reaction to the war. This article will address the American people's reaction to the United States dealing with the Barbary Nations.

From the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Barbary Nations were the crippling controllers of the Mediterranean Sea. Their piratical practices were felt thorough much of the Atlantic World, along the Mediterranean, up to Iceland, and down the Western African Atlantic coast. The four Barbary Nations were Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers, and were the scourge of trade and commerce for many of the nations of the time. These piratical states attacked the merchant ships of any country who refused to pay them tribute. The only way to get these nations to stop was to comply.<sup>1</sup> Most of the European nations had succumbed to this, being too absorbed in their own conflicts to be able to effectively force the Barbary Nations to stop this practice.

Prior to the Revolution, American ships were protected by the bribery of Britain to the Barbary Deys (rulers of the Barbary Nations, also referred to as Shaws). After the United States had won its independence, it had to negotiate its own treaties to ensure a modestly safe trade in the Mediterranean Sea. The tributes demanded

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<sup>1</sup> Something to keep in mind, a nation could still be attacked if they paid tribute but there would be repercussions if this happened. Colonies were very susceptible to this because they did not always have the full protection of the mother country.

by each Barbary state could be substantial. In 1801, the last tribute treaty the U.S. signed with a Barbary state, Algiers, granted them \$500,000 and an additional gift of \$21,600 in naval stores.<sup>2</sup> The equivalent of this in present funds is 7.5 million dollars.<sup>3</sup> This was a huge amount for a newly formed nation to have to constantly forfeit, especially since this was only one of the nations that demanded tribute. President Thomas Jefferson never approved of paying tribute to the Barbary nations stating, "I am very unwilling that we should acquiesce in the European humiliation, of paying tribute to those lawless pirates."<sup>4</sup> Many Americans agreed with President Jefferson. One stated as such:

The Dey will make a haul to repay him for his present losses. I hope we shall not be the victims; we are nearly two and a half years in arrear; no funds, we have a valuable unguarded commerce in these seas; we are threatened by all Barbary; therefore we should act with energy, make good our stipulations and annuities have consular friends (not to be depending on mercenary Jews) and show force in the sea.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the actions that aggravated the new nation were, "in addition to the ship *Polly*, the Algerian privateers brought in ten more U.S. ships, which brought the total number of U.S. captives to 119." The Dey ended up demanding \$2.435 million for the prisoners.<sup>6</sup> The Algerians released these US captives on July 13, 1796, but due to delays many prisoners, like that of a man named Foss, did not return to the United States until August 23, 1797.<sup>7</sup> With all this building tension, a breaking point was close at hand. When war broke out between the United States and the Barbary state of Tripoli, it flooded the newspapers. There were articles on this subject from Maine to the Carolinas. For example:

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<sup>2</sup> "Summary. Mediterranean Squadron," *Weekly Wanderer*, June 27, 1801.

<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Sahr, "Consumer Price Index Conversion Factors 1800 to 2016 to convert to Dollars of 2006," <<http://oregonstate.edu/cla/polisei/faculty/sahr/cv2006.xls>>.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1829), 97.

<sup>5</sup> "Extract of a letter from Richard O'Brien to the Secretary of State, dated at Algiers," *New-York Gazette*, January 1, 1802.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

We are sorry to have to impart to you that the misunderstandings subsisting between your government and the Pasha of Tripoli, have at last involved you in a war with said Barbary State; and intelligence has been received here of several of its cruisers having already sailed, with the view of capturing all the American vessels they can meet with<sup>8</sup>.

Luckily, Jefferson had already seen that the Barbary Nations would turn, and had ordered the construction of a navy.<sup>9</sup> The first squadron would be made up of four ships. The first was the *President*. With 44 guns, it was the flagship of this small fleet. Second was the *Philadelphia*, which had 38 guns. A quartet of ships, the *President* and the *Philadelphia* with a sloop-of-war called the *Essex* (32 guns), and the *Enterprise*, a schooner with only 12 guns, sailed across the Atlantic heading for Gibraltar and then on to the Barbary Coast.<sup>10</sup> A toast on the anniversary of American Independence stated: "The Navy of the United States, May she teach the pirates of Barbary, our favorite doctrine, 'Millions for defense, but not a cent for tribute,'" has become a basis of American foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

In the book, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, Michael Oren states that "the navy was consequently instructed to enforce the existing treaties with North Africa, but also 'to chastise' any aggression by the pirates by sinking, burning, or destroying their ships."<sup>12</sup> The Dey never had much respect for the United States and at one time had said, "The light that this Regency looks on the United States is exactly this; you pay me tribute, by that you become my slaves, and then I have a right to order as I please. Did the United States know the easy access of this barbarous coast called Barbary, the weakness of their garrisons, and the effeminacy of their people, I am sure they would not belong tributary to so pitiful a race of infidels."<sup>13</sup> This point was again emphasized in the *National Intelligence*, "Why then should we come, cap in hand, and kiss the feet of these savages? These pirates are insatiable as the grave."<sup>14</sup> The language of the text above places

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<sup>8</sup> "Extract of a Letter from Barcelona, Dated 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1801, to a Merchant in Philadelphia," *Commercial Advertiser*, August 7, 1801.

<sup>9</sup> This fact is ironic because Thomas Jefferson had previously defunded the Navy.

<sup>10</sup> Glenn Tucker, *Dawn Like Thunder* (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Incorporated, 1963), 135.

<sup>11</sup> *American Mercury*, July 9, 1801, No. 888, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 55.

<sup>13</sup> *New-Jersey Journal*, "Algiers, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1800," May 5, 1801, No. 915. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *National Intelligencer*, "Springfield, Sept 8," September 23, 1801, 1.

a strong emphasis on the pirate activities being the reason why these nations were 'savages' and 'barbarians.' One can also see the beginnings of a shift in rhetorical emphasis from the Barbary states' piracy to their 'Islamic barbarism.' The people's opinion was strongly in support of both starting and finishing a war that would bring the Barbary Nations to their knees.

The war with the Barbary Nations received intense coverage and elicited emotional responses in the new nation's newspapers. The first item that drew the attention of the United States was the capture of the Navy frigate *U.S.S Philadelphia*. An officer from the ship made an account of the capture of the frigate. The enemy boarded the ship after they surrendered, and began acting like pirates, plundering everything within sight. "Before we got to shore we were treated most brutally, with some men being stripped down to one shirt."<sup>15</sup> The reactions of the American people to the capture of the frigate *Philadelphia* were outrage and disbelief. One account from a newspaper that could not believe that this happened stated, "We think that if such an occurrence as is reported to have taken place were a fact, it would most probably have been known at Barcelona at that date."<sup>16</sup>

The capture of one of the United States largest and most heavily armed vessels by the Barbary Nations was an abomination and a national embarrassment. It affected the morale of not only the Navy but the American people as well. One article stated, "This unfortunate occurrence has entirely deranged the commodore's [Preble] plans."<sup>17</sup> Demoralized and upset, the American public seemed to falter a bit in its support of its heroes and the war itself. The loss did make the public reevaluate the situation in Barbary, and the government took a chance to push the war forward to another level. President Thomas Jefferson declared that:

I communicated to Congress a letter received by Captain Bainbridge, commander of the *Philadelphia* frigate, informing us of the wreck of the vessel on the coast of Tripoli, and that he, his officers, his men, had fallen into the hands of the Tripolitans. This accident renders it expedient to increase our force and enlarge our expenses in the Mediterranean,

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<sup>15</sup> "Extract of a Letter from an Officer on Board the Philadelphia Frigate, Dated at Tripoli," *Aurora General Advertiser*, March 20, 1804.

<sup>16</sup> "Philadelphia, March 9," *Alexandria Advertiser*, March 15, 1804.

<sup>17</sup> *Centinel of Freedom*, March 20, 1804.

beyond what the last appropriation for the naval service contemplated.<sup>18</sup>

The end result of the capture of the *Philadelphia* was an escalation of the war. To recover from the embarrassment Commodore Preble of the United States Navy needed to do a 180 degree change to gain the respect of the American public. The decision was then made to destroy the *Philadelphia*. It would be far better to have it destroyed than to have the ship in enemy hands. While potentially perilous, this eventually helped turn the tide of the war in America's favor. In the end Preble picked two ships to carry out the mission. A report to the House of Representatives detailed the following:

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 1804 Commodore Preble, lying with his squadron in the harbor Syracuse, gave orders to Lieutenant Stewart, commanding the brig *Syren*, of sixteen guns and Lieutenant Decatur commanding the ketch *Intrepid* of four guns and seventy-five men to proceed to Tripoli to destroy the frigate *Philadelphia* of forty-four guns then lying in the harbor of Tripoli.<sup>19</sup>

The crew of the *Intrepid* distributed combustibles and ignited them on board the ship. The burning ship did more damage than anyone could have anticipated. The *Philadelphia* somehow broke free from her mooring and drifted ashore very near the Pasha's castle before finally exploding.<sup>20</sup> The burning of the frigate had many positive affects. The first was that Commodore Preble regained his good reputation. In an editorial by the *Manchester Spy*, there was a piece that stated, "All the letters from on board the United States vessels in the Mediterranean speak in high terms of the superior skills and indefatigable vigilance of Commodore Preble."<sup>21</sup> This was a major turning point in the war, causing a push toward immediate action against the Barbary Nations. A strong consensus to build on this momentum and to strike the Barbary nations soon swept the nation and military. Thomas Jefferson announced his congratulations and

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *ASP Naval Affairs I*, 122.

<sup>19</sup>"Destruction of the frigate Philadelphia communicated to the House of Representatives," November 15, 1804 in *American State Papers, Class 6 Naval Affairs*, Vol. I 1794-1825, Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklins eds. (Washington, D.C.; Gales and Seaton, 1834), 128.

<sup>20</sup> *Victory in Tripoli*, 162-673.

<sup>21</sup> "Massachusetts. Boston, May 18. Interesting Report," *Manchester Spy*, May 23, 1804.

hopes for final success over the Barbary nations: "the activity and success of the small force employed in the Mediterranean in the early part of the present year, the reinforcement sent into that sea, and the energy of the officers having command in the several vessels, will I trust, by the sufferings of war, reduce the barbarians of Tripoli to the desire of peace on proper terms."<sup>22</sup>

Another interesting aspect was how major players in the Barbary War, and also in the future wars of 1812 and the second Barbary War, were viewed in the papers and how the men were idolized by Americans. In between the wars, and sometimes during, these heroes returned to the United States with fanfare comparable to movie stars today. Balls and dinners were thrown for these brave men. Several times these would be accompanied with gifts from thankful citizens. Some of these heroes were Commodore Edward Preble, Captain William Bainbridge, Stephen Decatur, Isaac Hull, Charles Stewart, Thomas MacDonough, and David Porter. The activities of these men were closely followed in the press and they presented their side of the conflict to the nation. The high esteem these officers were given was shown not only during, but after the war as well. This demonstrated how much the American public supported action against the Barbary Nations as well as how they deified their heroes while turning their enemies into bloody barbarians.

The newspapers declared the burning of the *Philadelphia* a huge success, with several proclaiming the virtue of the act. In fact, papers from Maine to Virginia put Stephen Decatur and his men's gallant actions in their papers. At a banquet some time after the burning of the frigate *Philadelphia*, the men were recognized by "Stephen Decatur junior and his brave companions, American heroes of the Tripolitan harbor." He received a one gun salute, which was an honor at that time.<sup>23</sup> The general public were not the only ones who wanted to reward Decatur for his courageous actions. In fact, "It was resolved that the president of the United States be requested to present in the name of Congress to Captain Stephen Decatur, a sword of a certain amount of dollars and to each of the officers and crew of the United States ketch *Intrepid*."<sup>24</sup> President Jefferson decided to add to this, declaring, "Lieutenant Decatur... thereby

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<sup>22</sup> *American State Papers, Message of President Jefferson No. 22.* Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1804.

<sup>23</sup> "Philadelphia. Celebration-Fourth July," *Democrat*, July 14, 1804, 4.

<sup>24</sup> *United States' Gazette*, November 14, 1804, 3.

advanced to be Captain in the Navy of the United States."<sup>25</sup> Upon hearing of these honors, Decatur replied, "I find my services have been far over-rated and I feel myself entirely at a loss for words sufficient to express my gratitude to the President and to yourself on the present Occasion." It was during this period that Decatur first received considerable notice. One paper stated: "Capt. Stephen Decatur, whose gallant exploit; in burning the *Philadelphia* frigate, has been the subject of frequent notice."<sup>26</sup> When Preble was replaced in his post later in the first Barbary War, his letter to Stephen Decatur and his fellow men showed Preble's high regard for them. "There can be no question, but your country will be gratefully impressed by your exertions"<sup>27</sup> Decatur was allowed the honor of bearing an ambassador from the Bey of Tunis on the frigate *Congress*, accompanied "with a present of Horses to the President of the United States" upon the conclusion of the first war.<sup>28</sup> The George-Town citizens even put together a dinner in honor of Captain Stephen Decatur as well as Charles Stewart for their valiant actions against the Barbary pirates.<sup>29</sup>

At another dinner held in his honor at Richmond, the guests raised a toast to Decatur: "may his gallant service ever receive the rewards of his country's gratitude."<sup>30</sup> An example of how much the public loved and respected Commodore Decatur was illustrated upon his death in 1820 (from a duel) when a newspaper wrote a beautiful commemoration: "A hero has fallen! Commodore Stephen Decatur, one of the first officers of our Navy--the pride of his country--the gallant and noble-hearted gentleman is no more! Mourn, Columbia! For one of thy brightest Stars is set--a Son 'without fear and without reproach' --in the freshness of his fame--in the prime of his usefulness--has descended into the tomb."<sup>31</sup> The grief filled response was typical throughout a country that had lost its biggest hero since the Revolutionary War.

Stephen Decatur was by far the most popular hero from the Barbary War, but he was not the only one. Captain Bainbridge of the *Essex* saw both glory and misfortune. He experienced the former

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<sup>25</sup> "From Washington, November 17, 1804," *Evening Post*, November 22, 1804, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, December 5, 1804, 2.

<sup>27</sup> "From the Philadelphia Register. Tribute of Respect to Our Gallant Navy,"

*Commercial Advertiser*, March 5, 1805, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Evening Post*, November 13, 1805, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *American Citizen*, December 21, 1805, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Enquirer*, "For the Enquirer," June 6, 1806, 3.

<sup>31</sup> *American Beacon*, March 27, 1820, 3.

while lying in Gibraltar Bay. An article from Genoa dated January 15, 1802 stated, "If we may give credit to letters from Tunis the Grand Seignior has given notice to all the Powers of Barbary that they must at a fixed period, release all the slaves in their possession, of whatsoever nation they may be."<sup>32</sup> Surprising the people of Gibraltar, Captain Bainbridge fortunately fell in with a ship off Cape de Gat, "with a Moorish ship and an American brig her prize which she had captured off Malaga."<sup>33</sup> The article continued to say that "Capt. Bainbridge immediately made prize of the cruiser and the next day retook the brig, which had escaped while he was securing the Moorish prisoners, with both of which he was proceeding to Gibraltar." An address from the President of the United States to the Senate and House of Representatives declared:

This conduct on the part of that power is without cause and without explanation. It is fortunate that Capt. Bainbridge fell in with and took the capturing vessel and her prize; and I have the satisfaction to inform you, that about the date of this transaction such a force would be arriving in the neighborhood of Gibraltar, both from the east and from the west, as leaves less to be feared, for our commerce from the suddenness of the aggression.<sup>34</sup>

Captain Bainbridge would soon be captured by the Barbary State of Tripoli while in command of the ill-fated frigate *Philadelphia*. The public was deeply moved by the crews capture. One person's response was, "I wish that \_\_\_\_\_ was in chains in Tripoli instead of Capt. Bainbridge, lieut. Osborne, and the other brave fellow who are in slavery there-- there was an ejaculation fervently made, a few days since, by an American tar, upon hearing of the capture, at our very bar, of the American ship *Two Friends*."<sup>35</sup> After the *Philadelphia's* crew was ransomed and the men returned home, a dinner was given in honor of Captain Bainbridge by the citizens of Washington. It was capped with the following toast: "May the powers of Barbary henceforward learn, as all Europe knew before, that the threat of chains to Americans only inflames to victory."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "New-York, April 10," *American Mercury*, 15 April 1802.

<sup>33</sup> "Extract of a Letter Dated Gibraltar, Sept 1," *Federal Republican*, November 8, 1803.

<sup>34</sup> "New-York, November 9," *Connecticut Journal*, 17 November 1803.

<sup>35</sup> "From the Charleston Courier," *Washington Federalist*, 29 June 1805.

<sup>36</sup> "Washington City, September 25. Dinner to Captain Bainbridge Given by the Citizens of Washington," *Alexandria Advertiser*, 27 September 1805.



There are many more examples of the glorification of the heroes of the first Barbary War. There is an important point to be made about the way the public treated these men both during and after the Barbary wars. It seems that the American public wanted to personify themselves with these people to turn our nation into the victorious hero. Lawrence Peskin, author of *Captives and Countrymen* suggested that, "Americans now wished to see themselves as heroic figures in the mold of Stephen Decatur rather than as hapless victims of pirates."<sup>37</sup> This would explain much of the hype over these new national heroes.

When looking at public opinion from any time frame, it is necessary to see what influenced the people's decisions and from where they received their information. As seen above, most of the information and sentiments toward the Barbary Nations and the United States was gathered by either the political statements of the government or written in the newspapers. These were not the only sources of information about the Barbary Nations. Before the wars had started, captivity journals, letters, and narratives were already in circulation around the United States due to years of unbridled attacks on European vessels and their colonies. These only increased in number as more and more of the nation's citizens were captured and enslaved by the Barbary nations. The most notable of these early captivity journals was written by John Foss.

John Foss concentrated his work on his many sufferings at the hands of his Algerian captors. Much of his writing focuses on the severity and frequency of punishment for the captured Christian slaves. The common form of punishment was 150 to 200 Bastinadoes. This was inflicted by "laying the person upon their face, with his hands in irons behind him and his legs lashed together with a rope. One task master holds down his head while another his legs while two others inflict the punishment upon his breech, with sticks. After receiving one held in this manner, they lash his ankles to the pole, and two Turks lift the pole up, and hold it in such a manner, as brings the soles of his feet upwards and the remaining of the punishment he receives upon the soles of his feet." After this punishment, the men would have to go straight back to work with their wounds still exposed. The Bastinado was not the only severe punishment, in fact, the other punishments for the Christian slaves

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<sup>37</sup> Lawrence A. Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 214.

included: impalement upon an iron stick thrust up through his posterior, having ones head chopped off, castration, being cast off the walls of the city upon an iron hook, and nailed to the gallows by one hand and opposite foot. Of course these were the worst of the punishments and often floggings and random beatings were the everyday form of punishment.<sup>38</sup>

John Foss also described his captors: "The Turks are well built robust people, their complexions not unlike Americans, but their dress, and long beards, make them appear more like monsters, than human beings. The Cologlies are somewhat less in stature than the Turks, and are of a tawnier complexion. The Moors, Morescoes, are generally a tall thin, spare sort of people, and of a very dark complexion, much like the Indians of North America. The Arabs are of much darker complexion than the Moors being darker than Mulattoes."<sup>39</sup> This description is important because it shows the author's desire not to align his fate to those of African slaves in America. A reason for this may be because there were black slaves in the Barbary nations as well. Paul Baepler stated that, "On the northern coast of Africa circa 1800, blacks and whites could be sold into slavery."<sup>40</sup> One of these black slaves, Scipio Jackson, can be found in Foss's captivity narrative.<sup>41</sup> Race did not seem to be a crucial issue for the Barbary nations when it came to slavery. One interesting conclusion that can be made by his description of his captors; Foss chose to represent the hierarchy of his nation's standards and apply them to his present situation.

The most popular of the Barbary captive narratives came from the "History of the Captivity and Suffering of Mrs. Maria Martin," published around 1807 to about 1818. Though Western women were enslaved by the Barbary states just like men, this is the only western woman's narrative that has survived. Her tale would have captured the imaginations and hearts of both the women and men of the United States.<sup>42</sup> Her story started with her capture, stating that "the barbarians were no sooner on board, than they began their favorite work, cutting, maiming and literally butchering, all they found on

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<sup>38</sup>Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 82-83.

<sup>39</sup>Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 4.

<sup>41</sup>Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 82.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

deck."<sup>43</sup> Her tone described her attackers as barbarian Muslims, and she did not emphasize their piratical activities. She further noted that they labeled her as a "Chefti Oji," which means "Christian bitch."<sup>44</sup> This woman seemed to be a pious person, so her emphasis on the barbaric attitudes of her Muslim capturers may be indicative of her strong beliefs. There were a couple of strong points from these narratives that would have influenced the public opinion of the Barbary nations. The main emphasis in both Foss's and Martin's accounts of their captivity were on Muslim and Christian differential treatment of their slaves. They strongly imply that Muslims hate Christians and that is the reason these people were made slaves. Their "barbaric" captors always referred to them as Christian dogs. Race was established not to have been a big factor in these narratives, although abolitionists at home were making these correlations. Peskin made this observation in his book: "Not everyone who wrote about Algiers shared this concern. Most notably, none of the captives who wrote letters home from Algiers compared their situation to that of Africans in America."<sup>45</sup> They, more often than not, compared the Barbary nations to the 'savage' Native Americans and emphasized that particular struggle, not slavery in the United States. A final point taken from these narratives was the numerous descriptions of the different types of torture and punishment that would have fed negative opinion of the Barbary nations to the United States. The coverage of the material made strong references to the cruel and barbaric torture, and cast Muslims as the devil's own henchmen. The Barbary states were seen as an evil enemy whose image of villainy grew as the war progressed.

Newspapers and captivity narratives were not the only way of expressing public opinion. Often fictional narratives and poetry were a direct outlet of the sentiments of the people. All of the following highlight the captivity of their Christian and citizen brethren, and also demonstrate a call to action against the Barbary Nation. One of these fictional narratives came from Royall Tyler who wrote *The Algerian Captive* (1797), which depicted the horrors of slavery.<sup>46</sup> Another man, David Humphrey, wrote poetry highlighting the Algerian captives or the call to arms to fight off these injustices. One such is "On the Happiness of America" (1786), with the following verses:

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<sup>43</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 82.

<sup>44</sup> Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 72.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

How long shall widows weep their sons in vain,  
 the prop of years in slav'ry's iron chains?  
 How long, the love-sick maid, unheeded,  
 rove the sounding shore and call her absent love;  
 and seem to see him in each coming sail?<sup>47</sup>

Francis Scot Key also paid homage to the men who fought against the Barbary powers. One of the verses of his early work honors America's Barbary heroes. The poem contains the words, "the star-spangled flag" and has the same metric composition that would later become "The Star Spangled Banner." The poem was set to the same tune, *To Anacreon in Heaven*, as our National Anthem.

In conflict resistless, each toil they endur'd  
 their foes shrunk dismay'd from the war's desolation:  
 And pale beam'd the Crescent, its splendor obscur'd  
 By the light of the star-spangled flag of our nation,  
 Were each flaming star  
 Gleam'd a meteor of war  
 And the turban'd head bowed to the terrible glare,  
 Now mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,  
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.<sup>48</sup>

There are many reasons why the new republics view of the war was so dynamic and crucial for the time. A careful examination of public attitudes about the Barbary Nations reveals a troubling progression. While at first the American public seemed to be mostly concerned with the piracy of North African states, as the number of Americans in captivity grew, attitudes started to change.

When Americans learned the truth about how captured sailors were pressed into slavery, coerced to convert to Islam, and were cruelly treated, the Barbary states turned from "piratical nations" into "Muslim barbarians" in the public eye. This paper does not presume to say that the Barbary wars were the only reason that the newly formed nation viewed Muslims as barbarians. Christendom had held such views since at least the Middle Ages. The tensions between Christian and Muslim territories only increased after the Crusades. The citizens of the new republic tended to hold the same prejudices towards the

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<sup>47</sup> Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror 1801-1805*, (New York:Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 195-6.

Muslim world as their European cousins. As recent decades have shown, this prejudice can return to prominence on short notice.

These sentiments helped call the nation to arms against the Barbary states. The peace between the Barbary Nations after the first war concluded did not last long. A continued sense of unease and hostility started to take hold in both North African and American minds. Shortly after the War of 1812, the United States, along with some European nations took up arms yet again with the Barbary Nations. This conflict was called the second Barbary War or the Algerian War. Continued hostility and correlations with military action are the legacy brought forth from these early interactions with the Barbary states. Many scholars have deemed the Barbary Wars as the first war on terror and that these early actions show that America's interest has always been in the Middle East. The general public still views these middle eastern people as "barbarians" and one need only look at the evening news to find evidence of this which was brought on by years of strife.

Having massive coverage of the war's activities and the follow up of the national heroes in the newspapers and the captivity journals show that these items were published for a couple of reasons. First, the public was naturally curious about how the nation would handle its first test of power after the Revolutionary War. Also this was the first coverage of the newly formed United States Navy in action and all hoped to see them succeed. The second reason was that it was the fastest, easiest, and most believable form of propaganda. The government and the papers wanted to keep the American morale up, so naturally the narratives and coverage of the war would be in favor of gaining support for the military. The one exception to this was the public shame of the loss of the frigate *Philadelphia*. Even with this sentiment though, the push towards action prevailed.

One positive outcome of this War was an exchange of cultural ideas between east and west. Peskin believed that "Perhaps it is enough to conclude that events in North Africa had an extraordinary impact on the inhabitants of the new American republic, and globalization or the increasing contact between world cultures was an important phenomenon then as well as now."<sup>49</sup> This one piece of good news does not overshadow the lasting impact of hostility and prejudice between the United States and the Barbary nations. The

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<sup>49</sup>Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*, 212.

end result is that piracy and Muslim attacks have once again reared their nasty heads in contemporary days. One look at the Somalia Pirates on the evening news show that these sentiments have not lost their hold on the American public. The United States' policy is still to counteract these actions with military force. If these people continue their piratical ways, they may become the newest description of "barbaric."

In conclusion, the public opinion of the United States on the war with the Barbary nations was a united front against their enemy. Americans viewed the Barbary nations at first as little more than greedy pirates, but as the war progressed, the emphasis switched to Muslim barbarians who enslaved Christians while practicing horrendous tortures. The heroes of the war were hyperbolically over glorified, while their enemies epitomized evil. Islamophobic propaganda proved popular and effective for mobilizing public sentiment in Jefferson's time, and remains surprisingly so today.