



Tunis

Located in North Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Tunis has been populated since at least the 4th century BCE. Tunis came under the control of the Ottoman Empire in 1534. Tunis paid a yearly tax to the Ottoman rulers, but was otherwise independent. The “Dey,” or governor of Tunis, could make his own decisions in all matters related to other countries.

Tunis relied heavily on corsairing to fund the state. Corsairing provided money through selling captured ships and their cargo. The crew of a captured ship could be ransomed for money or forced to labor in the city. The government of Tunis received a percentage of this money and also sponsored its own corsairs. Corsairing also provided money through treaties. In these agreements, a country paid Tunis money (called a tribute) to stop Tunisian corsairs from capturing that country’s ships. While corsairing was an important way to fund the state, Tunis is open to new ways of generating revenue.

In 1794, Tunis had treaty agreements with several countries including Great Britain and France, but did not have a treaty with the United States. To Tunis, the United States was not nearly as intimidating as Great Britain or France since it had no navy to threaten war. The United States was also a new country and the ability of the United States to reliably pay tributes is uncertain. Tunis also wanted to strengthen its navy and sought naval supplies such as wood planks, oars, bales of canvas, nails, cables, pipe staves, rope, bombshells, and gunpowder. In addition to these supplies, Tunis was interested in trade goods that the United States produced such as wheat and flour. The United States could provide these as part of a possible treaty agreement.

Opening Position:

- Will sign a treaty agreement to end corsairs capturing U.S. ships for money or naval supplies.
- Interested in exploring new ways to generate revenue through trade routes.

Questions to Consider:

- What does Tunis hope to gain in a possible treaty with the United States?
- What is the possible risk of war with the United States or its allies?

What can Tunis negotiate with?

Remember that you don’t have to offer these right away in a negotiation.

- Agree to not capture any U.S. ships in the future
- Access to foreign markets.