



U.S. Department of State

As part of the British empire before 1776, the North American colonies produced raw materials for the British Empire and provided a consumer market for British goods. When ships from these colonies sailed the Atlantic Ocean, they flew the British flag and benefited from the protection of the British Navy, the largest navy in the world. They also benefited from any treaties made by the British government. Great Britain regularly signed agreements with the Barbary States, for example, paying them tribute in exchange for leaving British ships alone. During the American Revolution, the colonies formed an alliance with France in 1778 which included protection of ships from capture by Barbary corsairs.

After gaining its independence from Britain in 1783, U.S. ships were suddenly vulnerable to Barbary corsairs. France no longer agreed to protect U.S. ships as it had during the war. In 1786, the United States and the Barbary State of Morocco signed the Moroccan–American Treaty of Friendship where Morocco agreed to not capture any U.S. ships in exchange for \$86,000. Finding money for these kinds of treaties was difficult. The first U.S. government, operating under the Articles of Confederation, had a limited ability to raise taxes and therefore very little money to spend on tribute. Congress also lacked the funds or authority to establish a permanent navy.

With the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, the United States was in a stronger position to either pay tribute to the Barbary States or build a stronger navy. Leaders like Vice President John Adams argued in favor of paying tribute because it would be less expensive than building a navy. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson argued for a stronger navy to protect ships and end the tribute cycle. Many citizens opposed paying tribute on principle, considering these captures illegal acts of piracy. They associated the tribute system with monarchies rather than their new republic.

In 1793, Algiers captured 11 U.S. ships and took their crews hostage. Citizens in the United States were outraged. Newspapers called on Congress and President Washington to act. In response, President Washington ordered his diplomats to begin negotiating a treaty with Algiers and the other Barbary States. Congress passed the U.S. Naval Armament Act that authorized construction of the first six ships of the U.S. Navy. The United States wanted to be recognized as an independent and important country in its own right. The United States could accomplish this goal by building a stronger military and by negotiating favorable treaties. How can you help the United States in this crisis?

Opening Position:

- Return of hostages held by Algiers.
- Engage in trade in the Atlantic World and Mediterranean.
- Prevent ships and crew from being captured by corsairs from any Barbary State in the future.
- Build strategic alliances with European and North African powers.

- Project an image of strength to European powers.

Questions to Consider:

- Does the United States want to participate in the tribute system or does it see it as wrong on principle?
- Would it be better in the short term to pay tribute or use that money to build ships for a navy? What about the long term?
- Which other possible allies might help the U.S. achieve its goals?

What can the United States negotiate with?

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

- Trade naval supplies: 70,000 pounds of nails, 2,000 bomb shells, 34 cables (720 feet long), 12 coils of rope, 1,500 oars, 100,000 pounds of gunpowder, 2,000 wood planks, 2,000 pipe staves, 100 bales of canvas.
- Trade goods: wheat, flour, cochineal, and indigo.
- Money for tribute: President Washington has allowed State Department negotiators to offer up to \$60,000 in a one time payment or \$20,000 a year to each Barbary State in tribute.
- The threat of future military action.



Algiers

Located in North Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Algiers has been populated since at least the 3rd century BCE. Algiers came under the control of the Ottoman Empire in 1529. Algiers paid a yearly tax to the Ottoman rulers, but was otherwise independent. The “Dey” (governor) of Algiers could make his own decisions in all matters related to other countries.

Algiers 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 work for the city. The government of Algiers received a percentage of this money from all corsairs. Corsairing also provided money through treaties. In these agreements, a country paid Algiers money (called a tribute). In exchange, Algiers corsairs stopped capturing that country’s ships.

In 1793, the Dey of Algiers, Pasha Hassan, signed an agreement with Portugal that allowed Algerian corsairs to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Atlantic Ocean. This provided Algerian corsairs more opportunities to find new ships to capture. Within only a few months the corsairs captured 11 ships from the United States with whom Algiers had no treaty. To Algiers, the United States was not nearly as intimidating as Britain or France, as the United States had no navy to threaten war. Algiers also doubted the United States could pay enough tribute. Nevertheless, Algiers knew it had a good opportunity for gaining money and goods from this situation. Algiers 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. 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 and return hostages for money or naval supplies plus yearly tribute.
- The Dey has already made a formal request asking for \$2.2 million.

Questions to Consider:

- What does Algiers 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 Algiers negotiate with?

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

- Promise to return hostages.
- Agree to not capture any U.S. ships in the future.

- Work on agreements with other Barbary States to persuade them to sign similar treaties.
- Offer most favored nation trading status with the United States.

Morocco

Located in North Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the land of Morocco has been populated since Paleolithic times. Unlike the Barbary States of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, Morocco was never conquered by the Ottoman Empire and remained completely independent. Morocco sponsored corsairs to capture foreign ships. 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. Corsairing also provided money through treaties. In these agreements, a country paid Morocco money (called a tribute) to stop Moroccan corsairs from capturing that country's ships. Morocco is not as reliant on corsairing as the other Barbary States.

Morocco has an established relationship with the United States. In 1777, shortly after the United States declared independence from Great Britain, Morocco recognized it as an independent country, becoming the first in the world to do so. In 1784, a Moroccan corsair captured the American ship, *Betsey*, to use as leverage for a treaty with the U.S. In 1786, Morocco signed the Moroccan–American Treaty of Friendship in which Morocco agreed to not capture any United States ships in exchange for \$86,000. In 1794, no other Barbary State had a treaty with the United States and the state of Algiers captured several ships and held hostages from the United States. Given Morocco's cultural similarities to Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, it could be in a good position to help negotiate a compromise.

Opening Position:

- Maintain your alliance with the United States.
- Remain the United States' strongest trading partner among the Barbary States.
- Maintain good relations with Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli.

Questions to Consider:

- How can Morocco use its position to bring the United States and the other Barbary States together?

What can Morocco negotiate with?

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

- Morocco has positive relations with countries in the negotiations
- Morocco knows that naval supplies are important to the other Barbary States and that the United States has these supplies to trade.
- Leverage relationships with other countries to build mutually profitable agreements.



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.



Tripoli

Located in North Africa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Tripoli has been populated since at least the 7th century BCE. Tripoli came under the control of the Ottoman Empire in 1551. Tripoli paid a yearly tax to the Ottoman rulers, but was otherwise independent. The “Dey,” or governor of Tripoli, could make his own decisions in all matters related to other countries.

Tripoli 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 put to labor in the city. The government of Tripoli received a percentage of this money and also sponsored its own corsairs. Corsairing also provided money through treaties. In these agreements, a country paid Tripoli money (called a tribute) to stop Tripoli corsairs from capturing that country’s ships. While corsairing was an important way to fund the state, Tunis was open to new ways of generating revenue.

In 1794, Tripoli had treaty agreements with several countries including Great Britain and France, but did not have a treaty with the United States. To Tripoli, the United States was not nearly as intimidating as Great Britain or France as 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. Tripoli 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, Tripoli was interested in trade goods that the United States produced like indigo and cochineal, two products used to dye cloth. 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 Tripoli 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 Tripoli 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.