

Anglo-American Involvement in the Maghreb 1669-1816

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Abstract:	Article info
<p>The Maghreb had been subjected to several European conquests. However, the Ottoman State intervened to defend this area in the sixteen century. Tensions between the conflicting parts escalated. Raids, piracy and slavery epitomised the epoch. America the new independent nation confronted serious jeopardies during the passage of its ships; therefore, George Washington Government determined to build a strong navy to redeem slaves and protect trade in the Mediterranean. Britain, likewise, had a troubled history with the Barbary States; it had to pay high ransoms to liberate its citizens held in captivity.</p>	<p>Received: 18/05/2021</p> <p>Accepted: 30/10/2021</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Maghreb ✓ Ottoman State ✓ Piracy ✓ US Squadron ✓ UK Royal Navy ✓ European Trade

Introduction

The Maghreb coasts passed through great critical security problems prior to and even after the coming of the Barbarossa Brothers. Clashes between Christians and Muslims spread widely to involve a number of states in Europe and North Africa. A band of scholars, politicians, historians and novelists interpreted these collisions differently. Robert Davis, for instance, in his book *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters* pictured Muslims as outrageous criminals whose foremost commitment was to revenge for Granada's fall.

However, Godfrey Ficher in *The Barbary Legend* argued that Christians were also guilty of producing terror in the Mediterranean; they assaulted, sacked, slaughtered, enslaved Muslims and sold them in foreign markets. Conversely, Thomas Woodward, in "The Costs of State-Sponsored terrorism" asserted that the issue was purely political and not a religious one. "Some states drew on privateering to retaliate from their enemies regardless their religions."¹ Ralph Pain expounded a similar look abundantly in *Lost Ships Lonely Seas* giving the example of American shipping attacked by Barbary corsairs who were executing the commands of certain imperial powers.

In view of that, piracy threatened the stability of the Mediterranean for several centuries. Nations as well as economies were bitterly struggling to overcome those distressing moments. This image of the Barbary as a spot of humiliation and terror is still manipulating the contemporary western thought. When sudden terrorist acts occur in the world, Muslims will be the first suspected in the issue. Moreover, the phrase New Barbary is frequently used in modern writings to describe current abuses committed against Europeans in Islamic communities; this means that recent terrorism is still bounded to the Barbary's past. From a European perspective, it is just a continuity of the traditional ideological conflict between the jihadists and Christians. For a deeper understanding of this subject, few questions must be raised, here. What happened in the Barbary formerly? Why did Anglo-American governments intervene? Going back to history, then, will be fundamental to explore some truths that drove to violent West responses against the Maghreb. To achieve the purpose, a variety of mixed methods, qualitative and historical, will be used throughout this paper.

1. The Maghreb: A Historical View

1.1. The Barbary Coast under the Ottoman Domination:

The land of seas and sands, seeds and sun, had always been a significant orbit for trade. Furthermore, the variety of waterways crossing the region allowed a good interaction among nations. Hence, Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis became favourite zones for conquerors. On the other hand, the collapse of the Byzantine Empire had led to a long series of wars between Berbers and the Arabs. Eventually, the Arabs managed to dominate the northern part of Africa where they settled and established friendly relations with the Berbers. Together they conquered

Spain. However, the Spaniards restored Granada in 1492. Nothing left for the Moors accept converting into Christendom or returning home.

In fact, Granada's break down was the most upsetting event in the Islamic history. Hostilities towards Muslims opened the gate for innumerable trials of retaliations against

westerners. The conflict took a religious aspect. Accordingly, the Mediterranean Sea had been transformed into a battlefield between the “Moriscos, ousted from Spain in 1609, and Christians.”² Hundreds of seafarers from hybrid origins were exterminated in bloody confrontations. Albeit the losses in lives and ships which were tremendously massive, both antagonists pursued tactics of aggression for long-lasting years. Even more, raids on North African territories in the hope of monopolising trade were going on. Subsequently Ceuta, Malila and Tangiers were annexed to the Spanish rule. It remains crucial to mention here that the initial goal of Spanish ambushes was to predominate strategic ports in the Barbary. Kebir was kept under Spanish control until “the -el -For example, Mers ³. liberation of Oran by Bey Mohamed ibn Otmane during the year of 1792.”⁴

On the other hand, Charles V invaded Tunis in 1535, liberated twenty thousands of prisoners. Some years later, the Bashaw of Tunis Muley Hassan signed a peace treaty with Spain. Turk politicians were fully conscious of the Spaniards imperial intentions mainly in the aftermath of the colonization of America; therefore, they espoused the Barbary States rulers to defend their countries so that the Spanish threats would be eradicated. For this purpose, Ottomans established new bases along the coasts from Tripoli to Algiers. To deter any stake, strong forts in Tunis and Bone were created.”⁵ The Barbarossa were designed to protect the peoples of Barbary. In this period, specifically, privateering prospered due to the strength of Orus who fought the Spanish until the last of his life. Actually, the death of Orus in 1518, at Telemcen, fuelled the desire of revenge; his successor and brother khizr, the founder of the Kingdom of Algiers, determined to continue the skirmish against Europeans whatever the cost would be.

Indeed, Suleiman’s admiral achievements, on seas and lands, were heroic. Andrea Doria, a distinguished military leader, used all means, he had, to defeat khizr or at least snatch Algiers, but his dream was always in vain. Simultaneously, the Emperor Charles V continued his campaigns against the Barbary States; he allied with the Knights of Malta and called fighters from Genoa, Sicily, Naples to join him in the mission. Effectively, the warriors were able to seize the Goletta of Tunis. After few days of wrestling, a bloody confrontation between the crusaders and the janissaries⁶ took place in the city. Thousands of Christian slaves were liberated. Tunis was lost but never forgotten. Turgut Reis, one of khizr’s outstanding learners, did not give up the fight against the infidels; he displayed, to the world, that gallant men still existed to protect the area as did khizr before him; most of his campaigns were of success except “the Siege of Malta in 1565 in which he died”.⁷ Yet, the Ottomans never abandoned their will in expelling the Spanish from Tunis; they reinforced their squadron and freed the Goletta in 1574.⁸

1.2. Piracy, Slavery and Incursions

Tremendous security problems surrounded the Mediterranean; people skyjacked from their towns were sold in slave markets. The unbought captives were driven back to their hutches until their governors would pay for their emancipation. Waiting for that, they had to work in farms, gardens, sea, castles.etc. The eminent Spanish writer Miguel Cervantes found himself, by a miserable chance maybe, one of Algiers slaves. Cervantes spent five years there in which he learned that nothing on earth-equalled freedom. Liberty, in his sight, was more expensive than money; it was life itself, nothing would be worse than losing it. Slavery was a genuine nightmare as exhibited in Don Quixote and other literary

pieces. Fortunately, sympathy, solidarity and goodwill stimulated humanitarian relief to raise despair.

Governments, Churches with the help of other Societies contributed financially to redeem every Christian on Islamic lands, "not only liberates him from one death, but from death in a thousand ways."⁹ However, the captives were not always innocents as Charles Sumner noted that 4000 Christian slaves of Algiers killed their guards in one hour, nor were their cities guiltless. Alfred Bradford, describing the Greek pirates, asserted, "Some would light beacon fires on shore to lure unsuspecting ships unto the rocks and citizens would salvage what was left in the wreckage, and if there were survivors, enslave them."¹⁰ White slavery in the Barbary did not differ that much from black slavery in the United States or the United Kingdom. Regardless the colours, the practice remained the same. Slaves were roughly treated all over the world whatever religions were.

Accordingly, an anti- slavery movement rose to defend the people's freedom. A serious thinking about abolishing slavery, the burden that wearied even authorities, spread in Europe and America. White slavery affected bitterly Western economies, because paying high ransoms to free thousands of prisoners was compulsory in the Barbary. When Europeans failed to pay tributes, Barbary privateers harassed their ships. Meanwhile, a number of European corsairs joined the Barbary pirates and provided them with ferries and weapons. The Dutch privateer Simon Danser, for example, taught workers in Algiers how to build and sail square- rigged boats. Consequently, forays on remote areas broadened. Hitherto, the Mediterranean had been the basic site for privateering operations. Moreover, the new vessels developed piracy in the Atlantic Ocean. The English privateer John Ward and the Dutch Murad Rais joined Salee in Morocco to execute successive onslaughts on England as well as other further countries. In fact, the success of this couple of skilful seafarers boosted some Christians in France, Spain, Corsica, Greece, Venice, Albania, Genoa, Calabria, Naples and Sicily to choose the coasts of North Africa for their future careers.

2. Britain and America in the Mediterranean

2.1. Early Political Relations with the Barbary

Being the strongest power in the Mediterranean, the Ottoman State agreed to improve connections with the realm of England. The Agreement of 1579 between Queen Elizabeth I and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III guaranteed a safe trade in the Middle East and North Africa. Following this pact, a noticeable economic cooperation between the English traders and Turks went on enthusiastically. English mercantilism¹¹ flourished, more than earlier, in the Barbary and the Levant Companies. Despite criticism to the English fellowship with Muslim leaderships, the crown bolstered its political relations with the Ottoman regime; the secret of this proximity was for a couple of reasons. The first had been to found alliances against the imperial Spain specifically with the Moriscos¹² who hatred the Spaniards after their eviction, whereas, the second cause had been twofold. England had to make profitable transactions, as it had to keep an eye on Spain's move in the region. Morocco's geopolitical position fitted best the Queen's intents; "she allied with Mulai Ahmed El-Mansur."¹³ Nonetheless, this approach seemed to be invalid because the English government was neither capable of protecting its merchants in the Mediterranean perpetually, nor was it able to stop the Spanish invasions on North Africa.

Furthermore, privateers, from different origins working in the Barbary raided Ireland more than once; the renegade Murad Reis, for instance, succeeded to get hundreds of hostages from Baltimore.¹⁴ Other coasts were also attacked such as the English Channel, Scotland, Ireland, Bristol, Iceland, Tuscany, Greece, Cecily and Sardinia. Huge numbers of Christians were incarcerated; some of them were wholesaled in slave markets. Additionally, it was asserted on a State Paper that, in 1583, 60 English slaves waited their Queen to pay their ransoms to get free. Meanwhile, the crown determined to reply in its own way as Christine Woodhead revealed, “the other side of the coin was the infectious lawlessness in the Mediterranean, by 1600 the English had themselves established a well-founded reputation for conspicuous piracy on Muslim shipping as well as Spanis.”¹⁵ Thus, the Mediterranean became an overt place for international piracy. Henry Morgan, the British leader of the buccaneers won considerable battles in America over the Spaniards whom he decided to fight everywhere even in their home country, for this purpose he sailed with his crew to Gibraltar.

In fact, Catholics’ criticism to the Queen Elizabeth I foreign policy towards the Ottoman State, mainly, afflicted the English- Turkish bilateral relations. Yet, there were other reasons that contributed to the shift of attitudes with the coastal regencies. English interest to trade in North Africa had relatively decreased after the setting up of the East-India Company in 1600. In other words, safety of English vessels crossing the littorals of the Barbary became more valuable than trade itself in the area. Therefore, a huge number of privateers were appointed to shield mercantilists while passing through the Mediterranean. It was, thus, an attempt to overwhelm the Barbary corsairs’ threat towards Christian shipping, as it was also a strategy to both crumble European trade and impeded its extension to India.

In the meantime, North African rovers exceeded their assaults against English seaboard; this retaliation from the populace of England endured long-lasting years. Dorset, Cornwall as well as Devon were the most offended towns, hundreds of their inhabitants regardless their age and gender were driven to Algerian bagnios or jails of Tripoli, Morocco and Tunis. Hence, British ports seemed unsafe neither for working nor for shipping; this matter, however, amplified during the office of Oliver Cromwell. Nevertheless, the state maintained its usual activities in the Mediterranean. As early as 1662, the Portuguese Princess Catherine gifted Tangier for the King of England Charles II who was seeking a base in the Barbary to keep on controlling the traditional antagonist “Spain the natural enemy” as Oliver Cromwell called it in 1665. Simultaneously, the King secured trade roads for mercantilists via treaties with Barbary leaders. However, these measures did, by no means, wind up piracy, which lingered in the area for some other years. Algerian privateers exceeded their operations from Tangier despite the British warnings. In response to these disturbances, King Charles sent, in 5 September 1669, a squadron commanded by Sir Thomas Allin to besiege and bombard Algiers. Effectively, the Royal Navy devastated the town leaving behind terrible human and substantial damages.

The Barbary age reflected a real human crisis that inspired many historians and novelists. Daniel Defoe in his masterpiece *Robinson Crusoe* depicted the times of piracy in which human life and freedom were both imperilled. In this novel, the protagonist, Crusoe,

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escaped from slavery in Salee but once free, he sought to possess black African slaves for his plantation. That was one of the paradoxes of the era; westerners perceived that, they alone, had legitimacy of owning slaves. Hitherto, it was inadmissible for whites to be slaves for African masters. In other words, slave trade was seen as a crime against humanity in North Africa while this sin was highly estimated in capitalist countries to increase wealth and power. Whether it was a sin or a blessing, in both cases it was a source for degradation and mortification.

Independent America, however, was less lucky than other Christian nations; its trade in the Mediterranean was mostly exposed to perpetual jeopardies. Overburdened by paying elevated sums of ransoms and tributes, George Washington government encountered serious collisions with Ottomans in the Barbary. Moreover, US trade in the Mediterranean excited some European

rivals to conspire with North African privateers to curb American business abroad. The first attack on sea came from Morocco's pirates who arrested an American frigate on its way to the Canary Island. Hitherto, Sidi Mohamed Bin Abdu Allah was the first monarch, in North Africa, who recognised American sovereignty; besides, by 1786, he conceded to sign peace treaties with this new realm. Most importantly was the ban of the former policies of paying tributes and ransoms. A number of hostages were emancipated.

In truth, such kindly gestures announced the birth of a splendid friendship between Morocco and America. Slavery being constrained in the north, piracy moved to the south of Morocco. Actually, the desert's nomads were engaged to capture Christians whenever they found them. Judah Paddock, the Captain of Oswego, was one of their victims. Paddock expressed his criticism to Arab slavery, his chief replied, "You stole from Guinea Coast and you were going there to get more of them. You are worse than the Arabs who enslave you only when it's God's will to send you on our Coast... you take away ship-loads of them to your country from, which never one returns." ¹⁶ The Arab master was trying, here, to convince Judah that Muslim Slavers were more tolerant than westerners. Amine Saikal supported this argument too; he contended, "the followers of non- Islamic faiths were still not subjected to any noticeable degree of persecution or forceful methods of conversion."¹⁷ This meant that Islam respected freedom of all religions as it equally protected human lives and dignity.

Antagonism against America increasingly extended to include some neighbouring states. Maria and Dauphin, kidnaped by Algerian corsairs by summer 1785, were pumped out of their goods and gangs while the passengers were taken into slavery in castles, bagnios¹⁸ and galleys of Algiers. Subsequently, more schooners were looted; hundreds of prisoners were dispatched to a number of jails through the Barbary. In response to that, "the United States declared war on great Britain in reaction to a series of overt acts against American commerce, including impressment of seamen, seizing of ships, and restraint of trade by new theories of belligerent rights." ¹⁹ On the same point, Benjamin Franklin wrote in his letter to Robert R. Livingston in 1783 "if there were no Algiers it would be worth England's while to build one."²⁰ Concerning the white slaves treatment, their masters were "incredibly inhuman, they lashed, starved and slew them."²¹ Conversely, other slaves converted to Islam because they felt their masters' tenderness towards them. Emancipation was a far dream to reach, even a harder task for the government to deal with. The only

certain thing was that money as well as gifts could alone bring freedom, as many Europeans thought.

The new State, still weak economically, was striving to improve. Nonetheless, the government made piracy a top issue that must be debated by American Congress. Therefore, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were selected to deal with the North African challenges. However, Jefferson believed that accepting humiliation abroad was no more than a disgrace and disrespect for the United States; he was fully persuaded that Diplomacy would not be the best option. "A military intervention instead would be certainly a more honourable approach"²², but the country was unready for such adventure overseas during Washington presidency. Alternatively, negotiations started with the King of Morocco, the Dey of Algiers, Bey of Tunis besides the Bashaw of Tripoli. The aim was plain; it was peace and security for American shipping. On the other side, the Barbary leaders were quite analogous towards the American question. Contrary to Morocco, the rulers of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli compelled ransoms for free foreign navigation in the Mediterranean; this divergence increasingly worsened relations between the three Barbary regencies and America.

2.2. Skirmishes against Tripoli and Algiers

Animosity towards foreign seafarers in Tripoli led to great offences. Nastiness against Americans, precisely, swung mostly to serious torments; meanwhile, immediate intervention to protect the captured citizens remained reluctant. Nevertheless, US politicians persisted their diplomatic attempts through their meetings with Barbary leaders. One of those famous meetings gathered Jefferson, John Adam and Sidi Haji Abderahmane in London to boost peaceful relations with Tripoli regime. Indeed, the Bashaw of Tripoli ratified a treaty of peace and friendship. Unfortunately, this appeasement did not endure longer; the former uproars re-emerged again. A climate of frustration, suspicion and incredibility characterised the political life. Charles Summer portrayed the Barbary leaders as "barbarous, faithless and regardless of the duties of humanity and justice. Treaties with them were evanescent...they seemed made merely to be broken."²³ Contrary to this opinion, Amine Saikal wrote in *Islam and The West* "they retained for the most part the ethos of respect for and decent treatment to non-Muslims under their rule."²⁴ Working for the good of humanity without distinction, this was the law of Islam that nobody can deny.

On the other hand, optimism had always been kept in the hearts of the sons of liberty whose greatest hope was to see a shining day in their free country far from those gloomy years they lived in custody. Fate was the same in remote lands. In Malesia, for instance, David Woodward spent three years in captivity. American slaves, there, were set to work to gather sago and clear fields of forest. Since diplomacy failed what next? Which solutions would fit the expectation of those wretched slaves? Those were the preeminent questions frequently raised in American minds.

Actually, the spread of enlightenment throughout the world promoted new revolutionary thoughts. Due to John Lock, Montesquieu, Algernon Sidney and other intellectuals, people became so excited to fight for dignity, equality, tolerance, justice and self-autonomy. David Mayer espoused similar claims "free men always have the right to resist tyrannical governments."²⁵ Thomas Jefferson as well as John Mill advocated all sorts of freedoms: political, social and religious. Accordingly, the age of enslavement had .

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to vanish and democracy had to flourish. Appeals to liberty coming from innocent American civilians behind the bars of Barbary dungeons compelled Jefferson to respond promptly; "he opted war because the United States had always been denouncing tyranny against its people."²⁶ Certainly, the choice was extremely hard

but necessary to make; therefore, the government increased the defence budget to develop military industry. Building a significant navy "which would challenge its enemies overseas"²⁷ was an urgent need. Paul Silverstone described the first triumph of the American maritime power by saying "Between 1798-1801 eighty French ships were captured by U.S."²⁸ Furthermore, a substantial armada was sent to the Barbary shores to restore American slaves kept there in borstals.

Looking forward to make a decisive change, Thomas Jefferson finally reached power in 1801. Once the navy was ready, the head of state declared war on Tripoli. "A group of proficient commanders such as Richard Dale, Stephen Decatur and William Bainbridge led the crusade."²⁹ Captain Bainbridge was caught when his ship Philadelphia was fired during the battle. Although, America lost 307 of its citizens as slaves, it persisted on continuing the fight against Tripoli. Two years later, another U.S. fleet under the leadership of Commodore Edward Peble reached the shores of Tripoli. The town was blockaded; Stephen Decatur burned Philadelphia. The Bashaw Yusuf Qaramanly, unable to get a victory, obeyed to sign a peace treaty with U.S.A and free the prisoners he had. Yet, piracy resurfaced, attacks against U.S. shipping never ended up entirely. Therefore, American authority declared to raid Tripoli in 1805. The operation was so successful, the navy managed to seize Dern. Then, a peace in the American terms was established. In other words, tributes were annulated; slaves were redeemed without conditions and compensations were given back to Americans.

The victory at Dern induced American warriors to revenge from tyrants in the neighbourhood of Tripoli. A decade later, Madison's Government sent a fleet to the Barbary. The U. S. Marines bombarded Algiers. In fact, these historic achievements in Dern and Algiers alike indicated that "America became a powerful state in the world."³⁰ Due to its navy, pirates of Tripoli and Algiers were defeated. However, Britain was still facing troubles in the coasts of North Africa. After a series of unsuccessful negotiations with Barbary governments over "white slavery abolishment which was concluded during the Congress of Vienna"³¹, the Royal Navy under the leadership of Lord Exmouth, allied with the Dutch Navy, cracked down their enemy's military defences in the year of 1816.³² Consequently, the Dey of Algiers agreed peace and banned slavery. Thus, Anglo-American interventionism played a great role in the shift of powers in North Africa.

The Mediterranean, dominated by Ottomans centuries ago, became open to western antagonism. Algiers, becoming a vulnerable state unable to defend itself, surrendered to the French coloniser. The subjugation of Algiers, though it had a tragic close in view of the Maghreb's inhabitants, it created a wide enjoyment in the hearts of Europeans as reflected here "The serial acts of terrorism and threats posed by the Barbary States were permanently ended."³³ This outlook seemed to be quite normal for Edward Said, nothing strange in it; he noted in his book *Covering Islam*, that Islam was not only a "competitor but it was also a real challenge to Christianity."³⁴ This confession, which many Islamic intellectuals may share with Edward Said, interpreted the violent attitudes against Muslims in many instances.

3. CONCLUSION

Muslims' exclusion from Spain affected Euro-Arabian relations bitterly. Foreign invasions on Barbary Coast continued, whereas Arabs responded to the crusades through Jihadist actions. However, the call for Ottoman help was necessary to rescue Algiers as its leader Salim Toumi thought. The Turks then controlled the Maghreb region from Algiers to Tripoli. Clashes between Ottoman and Europeans prevailed in the Barbary. Piracy became a common strategy to fight each other, while white slavery put the North African States on the black list of the West's enemies that must be debased. The surprise was greater when it came from a younger state. Nobody imagined that America could challenge the greatest power of the time. Thus, it was a political commitment for US government to intervene to protect its interests as well as its citizens in the Mediterranean. Therefore, the first strike was directed to Tripoli, whilst a second targeted Algiers after a decade. In both instances, the US Navy succeeded to destroy the Tripolitan and Algerian fleets as it managed to kill strongest Admirals such as Rais Hamidou.

Hitherto, British politicians' anger from corsairs' perpetual raids, on its shores and lands, made them respond militarily against Algiers in 1816. Such assaults, whether American or British, were executed for strategic and economic reasons as previously explained. Yet, Britain's decision to weaken Ottoman power can be connected to imperial motives; its interests in the Far East had to be protected through dominating major roads leading to India. The Maghreb, geographically important, belonged to this zone, which Europeans used to reach Asia. Therefore, the United Kingdom's vigilant presence in the Maghreb to eliminate the threat of competitors was absolutely an urgent need. Henceforth, this imperial spirit expanded to involve other rivals; France, overpowering the Ottoman rule in North Africa, occupied Algiers in 1830. The Ex-Barbary, then, became a European colony shared between the French and the Italians, but its people never gave up resistance nor did the United States and the United Kingdom discarded their interests in the area.

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11 Mercantilism is an economic policy that Queen Elizabeth adopted to dominate the world trade; it was based on the previous Trade and Navigation Acts of 1651; it included a set of laws aiming to organise English shipping as well as trade with foreign countries. England sought a positive balance of trade by maximising its exports and reducing imports. This policy brought unprecedented wealth to the Kingdom.

¹² Moriscos are Muslims, from the Maghreb region, who lived in Spain; they were forced during the Reconquista era to convert to Christianity or go to exile. The Spanish authority decided to banish Islam from Spain in 1526.

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