

Article Title: The Relationship Between the Regency of Algiers and the United States of America as Reflected in the Testimony of Consul William Shaler (1816–1824)

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Abstract:

The relationship between the Regency of Algiers and the United States underwent rapid and significant developments during the Regency's final years—developments that, it can be argued, were not in Algeria's favor. Having shed British dependency, the United States emerged as a rising power; it built a formidable, well-armed navy and refused to accept the terms previously dictated by Algiers. Seeking to protect its maritime trade and freedom of navigation, the U.S. aimed to eliminate the Regency and its fleet. On February 23, 1815, President Madison recommended that Congress declare war on Algiers, and a substantial naval force comprising ten warships was subsequently deployed to carry out the mission. Hostilities commenced at sea, resulting in the capture of two Algerian vessels and the death in battle of the renowned "King of the Seas," Rais Hamidou, during the seizure of his ship. These events strengthened the U.S. position during negotiations for a new treaty; Algeria, finding itself in a weakened state, lost its prestige and could no longer maintain its customary privileges. Meanwhile, the United States succeeded in abolishing the tribute payments it had previously made and secured the release of its captives held in Algiers without paying a ransom. William Shaler, who assumed the post of Consul General in Algiers, documented Algerian-American relations between 1815 and 1824—including the discussions held and the agreements and treaties concluded—in his memoirs. This paper aims to shed light on these matters under the title: "The Relationship Between the Regency of Algiers and the United States of America as Seen Through the Testimony of Consul William Shaler (1816–1824)." Keywords: Regency of Algiers, agreements and treaties, United States of America, war and peace.

Las relaciones entre la Regencia de Argel y los Estados Unidos de América a través del testimonio del cónsul William Shaler (1816–1824)

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Resumen

Las relaciones entre la Regencia de Argel y los Estados Unidos experimentaron transformaciones rápidas y significativas durante los últimos años de la Regencia, cuyos resultados, cabe sostener, no favorecieron a Argelia. Tras independizarse de Gran Bretaña, Estados Unidos emergió como una potencia ascendente, construyó una poderosa armada bien equipada y se negó a aceptar las condiciones que Argel había impuesto anteriormente. Con el propósito de proteger su comercio marítimo y la libertad de navegación, buscó poner fin a la Regencia y a su flota.

El 23 de febrero de 1815, el presidente Madison recomendó al Congreso declarar la guerra a Argel, tras lo cual se desplegó una importante fuerza naval integrada por diez buques de guerra. Las hostilidades marítimas culminaron con la captura de dos embarcaciones argelinas y la muerte en combate del célebre «rey de los mares», el arráez Hamidou, durante la captura de su buque. Estos acontecimientos reforzaron la posición estadounidense en las negociaciones de un nuevo tratado. Argelia, debilitada, perdió prestigio y dejó de estar en condiciones de mantener sus privilegios tradicionales. Por su parte, Estados Unidos logró suprimir los pagos de tributos que había efectuado hasta entonces y obtuvo la liberación de sus cautivos retenidos en Argel sin pagar rescate.

William Shaler, quien asumió el cargo de cónsul general en Argel, documentó en sus memorias las relaciones argelino-estadounidenses entre 1815 y 1824, incluidas las conversaciones mantenidas y los acuerdos y tratados celebrados. Este artículo tiene como objetivo esclarecer estos acontecimientos mediante el análisis de su testimonio sobre las relaciones entre la Regencia de Argel y los Estados Unidos de América durante el período 1816–1824.

Palabras clave: Regencia de Argel; acuerdos y tratados; Estados Unidos de América; guerra y paz.

Introduction:

The memoirs of William Shaler, the American Consul in Algiers from 1816 to 1824, document numerous historical facts and details regarding Algiers during the Ottoman era. Among these, they shed light on the rapidly evolving relations between Algiers and the United States. As the U.S. Consul, Shaler played a significant role in influencing events; from his vantage point, he recorded the key developments of this relationship. His memoirs are rich in information, outlining the primary characteristics of the ties between the Regency of Algiers and the United States—particularly between 1815 and 1824. The appendices further enhance the historical value of the work, clarifying the nature of the relationship—a dynamic increasingly dominated by the United States. The memoirs detail the circumstances surrounding treaties and negotiations, as well as the underlying factors that led to the decline of the Regency's military and political power. The United States leveraged this decline to its own advantage, effectively reversing the power dynamic that Algiers had traditionally imposed in its negotiations with European nations. Consequently, Algiers lost the position of strength that had long allowed it to dictate terms—often non-negotiable ones—to others. In this contribution, we aim to explore this subject by addressing the following question: How did William Shaler's memoirs portray the relationship between the Regency of Algiers and the United States during the period from 1815 to 1824, and what historical facts did they document in this regard? To address this, we examined several key points: first, the nature of the relationship between the Regency of Algiers and the United States prior to 1812; second, the Regency's declaration of war against the United States in 1812; third, the 1815 peace treaty between the two parties and the circumstances surrounding its conclusion; fourth, the rising tensions and the pressure exerted by the authorities on Consul William Shaler; fifth, the friendly visit of the American fleet in October 1816 and the initial steps toward renewing the peace treaty; and sixth, the formal renewal of the peace treaty between the Regency of Algiers and the United States in 1816. Before examining the relationship between Algiers and the United States through the memoirs of William Shaler, it is worth noting that these memoirs serve as an important source for the study of modern Algerian history. They document a period during which the Regency was in decline—a far cry from the era when it possessed a formidable fleet that commanded respect through its maritime **jihad** (naval warfare) and economic activities. Algerian relations with European powers and the United States underwent numerous shifts, generally to the detriment of the Regency. The Algerian fleet had been exhausted by conflicts with Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Prussia, Denmark, and Russia. As the United States emerged on the global stage, its relationship with Algiers evolved rapidly—though, again, not in the Regency's favor. It was during this period that Consul William Shaler appeared on the scene, leaving behind a work rich in information, critique, and personal impressions. While these memoirs are invaluable for understanding the prevailing atmosphere in Algiers just before the French occupation, one cannot overlook Shaler's racism, his lack of impartiality, and his condescending attitude. Furthermore, he was an advocate for colonialism; on several occasions, he explicitly called for the occupation of Algiers and the dismantling of Ottoman rule—arguing, at times, that it would improve conditions, and at others, that such a beautiful part of the world simply should not remain in Ottoman hands. He even went so far as to suggest that Great Britain should undertake this task. Shaler consistently characterized Algeria's maritime activities as "piracy"—implying mere plunder and pillage—and claimed that the country's entire policy, naval operations, and economy were built upon it. This ignores the fact that, from its inception under the Barbarossa brothers, Algeria's maritime activity was, in reality, a form of naval **jihad**—a stand taken against the Crusaders. Acquiring wealth was the primary

objective for the corsairs; in this regard, the accounts did not differ from most foreign sources, which viewed the Regency through a racist lens. These sources consistently sought to tarnish its reputation, fueled by religious intolerance and a profound sense of contempt and hatred toward both the government and the local population—portraying Algiers as a "nest of demons," a "city of terror," or a "den of thieves." This perspective stemmed from several factors, including the conflict between Islam and Christianity, as well as Algiers' formidable naval power, which proved to be a persistent thorn in Europe's side—a "thorn" that these sources aimed to help eliminate. Nevertheless, despite these biases, they provide indispensable historical material for the study of Ottoman-era Algiers.

1. The Nature of the Relationship Between Algiers and the United States Prior to 1812:

The relationship between Algiers and the United States underwent various developments, particularly after the latter secured its independence, maintained it, and stood its ground against Great Britain. The relationship fluctuated between the Regency of Algiers asserting control over American vessels, periods of peace and the signing of peace treaties, and sudden declarations of war by the rulers of Algiers. Shaler noted these shifts, explaining that American maritime trade remained under threat until 1793. In a series of successive strikes that year, Algerian vessels captured eleven American merchant ships, bringing them—along with their crews—to Algiers. This incident led to an increase in the number of American captives in Algiers, reaching a total of one hundred, which stirred public opinion back in the United States. Having emerged from the challenges following the War of Independence (1776) and having solidified its political standing through its constitution (the Federal Constitution of 1787), the United States nonetheless faced the burden of a heavy national debt and lacked a naval force. As Shaler described it, a war against Algiers would have been a national catastrophe. Consequently, the United States had no choice but to negotiate to secure the release of its captives and prevent further attacks on its ships. To this end, the President of the United States tasked Colonel Humphreys, the American minister in Lisbon, with initiating negotiations with Algiers, and commissioned Joseph Donaldson to visit the Regency to conclude a peace treaty—an agreement under which the United States pledged to pay the sum of \$725,000. ...to Algeria, in exchange for the ransom of American captives—as well as in the form of gifts, grants, and other customary offerings of the time. For his part, the Dey of Algiers promised to assist the United States in securing peace treaties with the regencies of Tripoli and Tunis. The United States faced a precarious financial situation, compounded by a crisis of confidence in its standing as a nation. Consequently, the government struggled to secure the funds necessary to fulfill its treaty obligations. The resulting delays in payment fueled suspicion within the Regency of Algiers, prompting new demands. According to Shaler, Joel Barlow—appointed as a temporary commissioner by the United States—resolved the matter in 1796 by paying the sum stipulated in the 1795 treaty negotiated by Donaldson. Shaler notes that, when accounting for the losses incurred by the United States in raising these funds, the total cost reached approximately one million dollars. Under this treaty, the United States committed to an annual tribute to Algiers of 12,000 sequins—an amount Shaler suggests was nearly double the value originally specified—in addition to customary gifts. Driven by various pressures, the United States felt compelled to pay these tributes. As American trade expanded and flourished, Algerian demands grew; the United States consistently complied to avoid a rupture in relations, which would have resulted in severe commercial losses and a decline in its political reputation. Such was the general nature of the relationship between Algiers and the United States, yet the Regency abruptly declared war on the U.S. without any genuine justification or clear provocation on the part of the Americans.

2. The Regency of Algiers Declares War on the United States (1812):

The initial treaty concluded between the United States and the

Regency of Algiers favored the Algerians; the U.S. was compelled to accept its terms under the pressure of the Dey's harsh measures against captured American merchant vessels, effectively placing the U.S. in a position of subordination similar to that of several European nations. However, this situation did not last, particularly after the United States resolved its outstanding issues with Britain and turned its full attention toward Algiers—which had supported Britain and heeded its call. In 1812, Dey Hadj Ali—nicknamed "The Tiger" due to his ruthlessness—declared war on the United States. Why, then, did the Regency of Algiers declare war on the United States at that particular time?

Shaler noted that Algiers' relations with the Netherlands, France, and Spain were severely strained—to the point that the Dey even insulted the flag of the Ottoman Empire itself. Conversely, relations with Britain remained stable during this period. Having seized the island of Sicily, Britain sought to protect both maritime navigation and the island's coastal inhabitants from attacks by the Algerian navy—arguing that Italian ports under French occupation enjoyed similar protection. Leveraging its influence with the Regency, Britain succeeded in securing a truce for Sicily, as well as the release of Sicilian captives held in Algiers; it remained unclear to Shaler whether this was granted gratuitously or in exchange for something else. In April 1812, the Dey received a letter from the Prince Regent of England. He forwarded it to Colonel Lear—then the United States Consul General in the Barbary States—under the pretext of needing an accurate translation into the "Frankish" (European) language. The official letter's most significant points included an affirmation of the close friendship and alliance between Britain and Algiers. It underscored Britain's commitment to the alliance and its pledge to defend Algiers using the British fleet—described as the master of all seas, striking terror into other maritime nations—provided that the Regency continued to honor existing friendship treaties. The letter further emphasized the high regard in which Britain held the Regency of Algiers, expressing the hope that the Dey would not allow the enemies of Great Britain to undermine the understanding and harmony between the two states. The letter was drafted at Carlton House on January 4, 1812. It is worth noting that, at the time, Britain was not on good terms with the United States, and it was in Britain's interest... ..to secure the Regency as an ally in its conflict.

In addition to the alliance between Britain and Algiers, Shaler noted that the Algerians had reached the zenith of their glory and power during this period. Maritime nations sought to curry favor with them—a trend that intensified after the Algerians captured a European warship in battle. Furthermore, they achieved a resounding victory in their war against Tunis, during which they seized another warship. They even defied the Sublime Porte by capturing several Greek vessels that were flying the Sultan's flag. "At this stage, the Algerians boasted that they were the greatest naval power after Great Britain." It was under these circumstances that the Dey decided to declare war on the United States of America. According to William Shaler, the war declared by the Dey against the United States carried within it a catastrophe for Algiers—one whose consequences would not end "until the country lost its independence and its piracy was brought to an end." The advice to go to war came from certain Jews who held significant influence with the Dey and headed a powerful commercial firm. They had informed the Dey of the strength and vast reach of American commerce, noting how the Americans had patiently endured acts of piracy committed against them by the vessels of various warring nations. They imagined that Algiers could do the same, and that the United States would have no choice but to submit—ultimately leading to a large payment to the Regency in exchange for renewing the peace treaty. However, while these calculations may have been based on certain realities, they proved inaccurate. At the very time these individuals were advising the Dey, the United States had declared war on Great Britain—a conflict that would inevitably force the British to withdraw their warships from the

Mediterranean. Algiers had no control over the outcome of that conflict, and the Dey's declaration of war against the United States at such a moment constituted a clear and deliberate act of aggression.

William Shaler did not hesitate to attack the character of the Dey, Hadj Ali, describing him as arrogant and obsessed—an obsession that drove the Regency to declare war not only on the United States but also on the Netherlands, and even to insult the flag of the Ottoman Empire itself. Tensions between Algiers and both France and Spain also escalated significantly, making the task of his successor, Omar Pasha, exceptionally difficult. In Shaler's view, it can be said that the Dey, Hadj Ali, bears a great deal of responsibility for the strained relations between Algiers and the United States.

On June 17, 1812, an American ship named the **Allegheny** arrived at the port of Algiers, carrying the annual tribute—consisting of ammunition and naval supplies—that was owed to the Regency. The ship was initially received favorably, and the unloading of its cargo began. The Dey requested that the manifests for the shipment be brought to him; however, upon reviewing them, he became incensed. He discovered that the required quantities of gunpowder and cables were not fully accounted for. His anger intensified when he learned that the same vessel had also transported gunpowder to the Sultan of Morocco—having stopped in Gibraltar—and was carrying additional goods for private companies and individuals. The Dey viewed this conduct as an insult and a transgression by the United States. He subsequently demanded that the U.S. Consul pay the outstanding balance in cash and ordered him to depart from Algiers by the 25th of the same month, accompanied by his family and all other American citizens residing in the country. Despite the Consul's protests against this directive, his efforts proved futile, and he departed on the specified date. In mid-September 1812, Algerian sailors captured a small, three-masted United States vessel along with its crew. Shaler remarked that this meager prize was the only gain the Regency of Algiers secured after having declared war on the United States with such pride, arrogance, and haughtiness; any hope for substantial spoils had vanished. The following year (1813), the American government attempted to secure the release of the captured crew through a ransom, but the Dey refused to negotiate, asserting that the value of the captives far exceeded any monetary sum.

The Anglo-American War—and the naval conflict between the two nations—ended in a stalemate, with Britain failing to establish control over the United States. A peace treaty was signed by both parties on December 24, 1814. Shaler observed that with the collapse of Napoleon's empire and the conclusion of peace between the United States and Britain, the final embers of a war that had wrought ruin and destruction across Christian kingdoms were extinguished. In his view, only Algiers and its "accursed corsairs" remained to disturb the peace and tranquility that had returned to humanity. Against this backdrop, the Congress of Vienna convened in late 1814 and continued into early 1815, addressing major European issues. Meanwhile, American policymakers realized that the liberation of their naval forces from the conflict with Britain provided a significant advantage in their own naval confrontation with Algiers. Consequently, the terms previously dictated by Algiers were no longer acceptable—all the more so because the Algerian fleet was, at that time, exhausted from ongoing conflicts with several nations, including Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Prussia, and Denmark. Meanwhile, the United States set out to build itself up, constructing a fleet equipped with the latest weaponry to counter the various threats posed to its merchant vessels—in the Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic—by the Algerian fleet. The 1815 Peace Treaty between the Regency of Algiers and the United States, and the circumstances surrounding its conclusion: During one of its sessions, the U.S. Congress determined that it could no longer tolerate paying tribute to Algiers. On February 23, 1815,

President James Madison recommended that Congress declare war against Algiers. The following March, Congress authorized the President to equip and mobilize a fleet to be used at his discretion for launching attacks against Algiers, and to deploy forces to the Mediterranean to compel the Regency to agree to a peace treaty or to protect American merchant vessels from piracy. Subsequently, a substantial naval force was dispatched; one contingent was commanded by Commodore William Bainbridge and consisted of ten warships, including three frigates. The other contingent was commanded by Commodore Stephen Decatur, who carried aboard his flagship *William Shaler*—the man selected by the U.S. President, alongside fleet commanders Bainbridge and Decatur, to negotiate a peace treaty with Algiers. Before the fleet's departure, the Secretary of State issued instructions to the officials to secure a peace treaty with Algiers at the earliest opportunity and to ensure the release of American captives held there—stipulating, however, that no tribute or ransom should be paid, with the sole exception of providing annual gifts to the Dey. The instructions carried by Decatur further directed him to ascertain the operational area of the Algerian fleet upon his arrival at Gibraltar; should any Algerian vessels be found operating in the Atlantic Ocean, he was to capture or destroy them. Upon his arrival in Algiers, he was tasked with... By entering into negotiations directly with the Dey.

At this stage, the demands of the United States focused on ensuring that the terms of peace would be honorable for the nation—whether achieved through war or otherwise. This was reflected in the Secretary of State's instructions, which stated: "Whenever negotiations may begin—whether before or after resorting to extreme measures (war)—the terms of peace must be honorable for the United States." Upon the arrival of Decatur's naval force at Gibraltar on June 15, it was learned that some Algerian fleet vessels had already entered the Atlantic Ocean but had since returned to the Mediterranean. Acting on the intelligence he had gathered, Decatur set course for the area where the Algerian ships were likely to be found. On June 16, 1815, the American frigate **Constellation** sighted a vessel near Cape Gata; it proved to be the Algerian flagship **Mashhuda**, commanded by the renowned captain Rais Hamidou, who was en route to Algiers. The American fleet gave chase, and as the Algerian ship attempted to alter its course toward the Spanish coast, the Americans intercepted it. In the ensuing engagement, Rais Hamidou was killed—an event that brought an end to the career of one of the greatest maritime legends. A commander celebrated for his victories and imbued with a fierce fighting spirit and valor, he had risen to a position of command through his sharp intellect and extraordinary courage. He had previously captured an American vessel in 1793, an act that contributed to compelling the United States to acknowledge the Algerian Regency's control over the Mediterranean. While space does not permit a full account of his heroism, it is certain that his death was the most significant loss suffered by the Algerian navy. Shaler made only a brief reference to the battle and the martyrdom of Rais Hamidou, despite their significance, and he did not mention the resistance offered against his own ship. In contrast, some Arab sources provide further details: the American fleet—consisting of ten vessels—surrounded Rais Hamidou's ship, initiating an unequal engagement. A cannonball struck the Rais's vessel, splitting it in two and killing him early in the fight. His successor, Ahmed Ould Omar—known as "Bash Rais"—cast his body into the sea and continued the battle for five hours. Many Muslims were martyred, the frigate was shattered, water flooded the gunpowder magazine, and numerous sailors sustained severe injuries. The American crew boarded and captured the ship; they were reportedly so enraged at failing to capture Rais Hamidou—or even recover his body—that they were seen kicking the ground in frustration. The surviving sailors were taken prisoner, and the ship was towed to Cartagena, Spain.

The events did not end there. Two days after this battle—in which Algiers lost its great captain, Raïs Hamidou—the American fleet encountered another Algerian warship, a two-masted vessel. A fierce confrontation ensued, which once again ended unfavorably for Algiers, resulting in the capture of the Algerian ship. With these two naval victories and the seizure of the vessels, the United States secured a position of strength in its dealings with the Regency of Algiers. The two captured ships were deposited in the port of Cartagena, Spain, while the American fleet proceeded toward Algiers, where its commander intended to initiate negotiations with Dey Omar Pasha. Upon his arrival in Algiers on June 29, 1815, Decatur anchored his fleet in the bay and hoisted a white flag alongside the Swedish flag on his flagship. This signal was intended to indicate his desire to negotiate, for which he sought the assistance and mediation of the Swedish consul. Subsequently, the Swedish consul, accompanied by the commander of the Algerian navy, boarded the American flagship **Guerriere**. There, they learned of the martyrdom of Rais Hamidou and the capture of the two ships, **Mashhuda** and **Estudio**. Admiral Decatur relayed all the details to them, and the news struck Algiers like a thunderbolt.

This was not the end of the matter; rather, these disastrous developments served as a prelude to political pressures the Regency of Algiers had perhaps never before experienced. The Algerian side inquired about the terms of peace sought by the Americans. In response, William Shaler and Decatur sent a memorandum to the Dey, dated June 29, 1815. Its key points were that the President of the United States had appointed them to negotiate peace with the Dey; that, in accordance with their instructions, they were prepared to enter into negotiations—provided these were fair and honorable—to restore peace and mutual understanding; that such negotiations must be conducted on an equal footing, based on the same terms established with the most-favored nations (specifically France and Great Britain); and that they would not agree to any provision requiring the payment of tribute in any form. This memorandum was delivered to the Dey, accompanied by a letter signed by the President of the United States. The letter recalled the Regency of Algiers' declaration of war against the United States and the transgressions that followed, noting that the U.S. Congress had, in its most recent session, authorized hostile actions against the Algerian government. However, the naval fleet tasked with this conflict also carried an alternative: peace. The choice between these two paths was left to the Dey. Nevertheless, the peace sought by the United States was conditional, based on the principle that "neither side should demand more than it is prepared to grant the other." The Algerian and Swedish representatives received the letter and returned to the shore. The following day, they returned to the warship **Guerriere** with authorization to negotiate with the American side—though, in reality, the Algerian party found itself in a position of weakness following the preceding events. At sea, the might of the American fleet—with its cannons aimed directly at the city—exerted a negative influence on the course of negotiations, tilting the advantage in favor of the Americans. Instead of the discussions and bargaining the Algerian side had intended to pursue, Decatur took a document from his desk drawer—a draft treaty ready for signature—and handed it to the Algerian delegation. Algeria emerged as the losing party in these negotiations. While the Algerians had expected to discuss the amount of tribute the United States would pay for its acts of aggression against two Algerian vessels, they were instead confronted with American demands: the abolition of the previously agreed-upon tribute, the unconditional release of American captives (without ransom), and even a payment of \$10,000 from Algeria as compensation for the seizure of the ship **Edwin**. Stunned by terms unlike any Algeria had ever faced from another nation—and doubting that the Dey would ever accept them—the Algerian side sought the return of the two Algerian ships held by the Americans. The U.S. side agreed, as they deemed the vessels of no value to them. Thus concluded the first round of negotiations.

When the Algerians requested a truce for further deliberation, the Americans flatly refused, threatening to seize any Algerian naval vessels that appeared on the horizon before the treaty was signed and the captives released. Ultimately, the two sides reached a compromise: hostilities would cease once a boat flying a white flag departed from the shore, heading back to the American warship. The Swedish consul pledged that the white flag would only be raised once the Dey had signed the treaty and the American captives had been placed aboard the boat. This is precisely what occurred; within three hours of the meeting, the boat returned carrying the American captives and a copy of the treaty signed by the Dey. This swift resolution saved an Algerian cruiser—which appeared just as the boat was making its way toward the American warship—from potentially falling into American hands as a prize of war. Upon his return, William Shaler considered this to constitute a new peace treaty between the Regency of Algiers and the United States, signed on June 30, 1815—though for Algiers, it was a matter of coercion, leaving them no real choice in the affair.

On the day the treaty was signed, William Shaler went ashore to assume his post as Consul General in Algiers—a title granted to him by the President of the United States, contingent upon the signing of the peace treaty. The Dey received him with formal courtesy, as if he were a representative of a friendly nation, rather than someone arriving on a warship that had imposed a humiliating treaty upon Algiers. Subsequently, Consul Shaler sent a report to the Secretary of State, stating: "The Regency has moved quickly to fulfill the terms of the treaty, insofar as it depends on the will of its officials. They have delivered to me 127 bales of cotton and \$10,000 in cash, as stipulated by the treaty (Article 14). I have deemed this a full compliance with the terms of the agreement."

Among Shaler's first tasks after officially settling into his role as Consul General was to dispatch a copy of the newly signed treaty—intended for ratification by his government—aboard a two-masted vessel named the **Epervier**. According to the translator's introduction, the ship passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, but nothing further was ever heard of it; it appears the vessel, along with the document it carried, was lost in a storm that swept across the western Atlantic at the time.

Shaler was utterly astonished; events had unfolded with such rapidity that he found them hard to believe. He observed that it was in Algiers' nature to yield at the first sign of a threat. A mere fleeting glance, he claimed, convinced him that the power of Algiers was nothing more than a "ludicrous phantom." He lamented that his instructions did not permit the imposition of a truly punitive, deterrent measure against Algiers. He further noted that the treaty was negotiated under circumstances defined by the element of surprise and the absence of the Algerian fleet—which was out at sea—compelling the Regency to accept, without debate, nearly every condition dictated by the United States. The treaty was signed on June 30, 1815, laying bare the weakness and incapacity of the Algerians.

William Shaler mocked the Dey's excessive confidence in Algiers' strength. He argued that the respect and esteem shown to the Regency by European nations had left the Dey "intoxicated with vanity and clinging to many illusions regarding his true power," leading him to believe that every nation ought to purchase his favor and friendship at the highest possible price. Yet, this "veil of vanity" was soon lifted when Commodore Decatur captured two of his warships and arrived with his fleet at the port of Algiers—at a time when the entire Algerian navy was away at sea, engaged in "piracy." These circumstances left Omar Pasha with no choice but to submit and accept the terms of the victorious United States. In Shaler's view, this was a rational decision on the part of Omar Pasha, reflecting an ability to grasp the dangers closing in on him from every

side. Nevertheless, it appears that the Dey remained hopeful of ridding himself of the inequitable treaty and chastising the United States. Omar Pasha subsequently adopted a stance that struck Shaler as ambiguous, showing a clear inclination toward returning to a state of war. On several occasions throughout the remainder of the year, reports reached the consul—leaving no room for doubt—that the Regency viewed the American fleet's operations in the Mediterranean as little more than a "parade of vanity and bravado" with limited real impact. It was believed that if the Regency demonstrated sufficient resolve and determination, it could compel the Americans to pay an annual tribute in exchange for the protection of their merchant vessels against pirate attacks. Shaler interpreted the Dey's position not as a sign of personal ill intent, but rather as a reflection of the broader national policy—a policy accustomed to the substantial gains derived from maritime activity. Furthermore, the deteriorating financial state of the United States, the erosion of confidence in the nation across Europe, the poor representation of its policies, and the circulation of inaccurate information regarding its actual resources were all factors that encouraged this perspective. Following the conclusion of the Algerian-American treaty, Decatur dispatched two warships to the port of Cartagena to escort the two Algerian vessels held there. He then proceeded with the remainder of his fleet to visit Tunis and Tripoli to settle other outstanding matters with those states, before returning to New York on November 12. On December 21, 1815, the U.S. Senate ratified the Algerian-American treaty—the terms of which had been dictated by Shaler and Decatur—and five days later, the President of the United States proclaimed it to be in effect. On January 22, 1816, the frigate **Java** departed from the United States, carrying the official, ratified text of the treaty to Consul General Shaler.

Tensions escalated as the authorities of the Algerian Regency exerted pressure on Consul William Shaler. The Algerian-American treaty was perceived by the Algerians as humiliating and harsh. The situation was further exacerbated by the American side's failure to honor the agreement—specifically regarding the return of the Admiral's ship, **Mashhuda**, which remained detained in Cartagena. The Dey repeatedly pressed Consul Shaler, reminding him of the United States' obligation to fulfill the treaty's terms, yet to no avail. In November, the Dey formally notified Shaler that if the United States did not return the **Mashhuda** at the earliest opportunity, he would consider the treaty null and void. Tensions persisted between the two parties until March, when the vessel was finally returned to the Dey. However, this belated action did little to assuage the anger and dissatisfaction of the Algerian side, which remained on the lookout for a suitable opportunity to abrogate the treaty. For his part, William Shaler believed that the Dey had fallen under the influence of the United States' enemies. He viewed the U.S. delay in returning a ship—captured prior to the signing of the treaty—as a mere pretext, leading him to claim that the United States had violated the agreement. Yet, the Dey was well aware that the vessel in question, then anchored in Cartagena, Spain, had been seized by the Spanish government on the grounds that it had been captured within Spanish territorial waters.

Disturbed by the Dey's statement, Consul William Shaler seized the opportunity provided by the arrival of a portion of the U.S. fleet in Algiers, commanded by Admiral Shaw. Shaler took refuge aboard the Admiral's flagship, where he claimed to have reached a verbal agreement with the Algerian government: the matters in dispute would be referred to the U.S. administration for resolution; the Dey would personally draft and seal a letter to the President of the United States; and the treaty would remain in full force pending the President's response. According to Shaler, this agreement allowed him to return to the shore and resume his duties at the consulate. However, the translator's introduction notes that Shaler had actually lowered the American flag from the consulate. Meanwhile, the American side—while an official treaty, which they themselves had

dictated, had been in effect for only a few months—devised a plan to bombard the city of Algiers. The American intent was to catch the city off guard, launching a surprise attack under the cover of night to maximize destruction and ruin. A French warship, however, discovered the plot and promptly alerted the Dey, revealing the details of the scheme. With the American ruse exposed, the Algerian artillery prepared for defense, and the American plan lost any chance of success.

As a result of America's hostile intentions and the delay in returning the seized warship, the Dey withdrew from the exchange of treaty ratifications with the United States. On April 16, 1816, he declared that he no longer considered the treaty binding—though he remained committed to the article stipulating a three-month grace period for reflection before the resumption of hostilities. Through Consul William Shaler, the Dey sent a sealed letter to the President of the United States, outlining the existing difficulties. He proposed reverting to the 1795 treaty as a basis for rebuilding Algerian-American relations on a sounder footing, asserting that the United States had violated a provision of the peace treaty by failing to return a warship previously captured by American forces. Consequently, he argued that a new treaty was necessary, and he awaited a response from the U.S. President. The letter sent by the Dey reached the President of the United States. In October, the Dey received a response from the U.S. President, dated August 21, which was stern in tone. Among other points, the letter downplayed the failure to return the ship—characterizing it as a fleeting incident caused by Spain—while noting that the vessel had, in fact, been returned. It accused the Dey of exaggeration and described his previous communication as containing threats. The U.S. President asserted: "The United States, while desiring no war with any nation, will never purchase peace; this is a fundamental principle of our policy. Peace is preferable to war, but we would choose war over the payment of tribute." The President also rejected the accusation that his country had broken its promises. He appointed Consul Shaler and Commodore Isaac Chauncey—the commander-in-chief of U.S. naval forces in the Mediterranean—to act as negotiators with the Algerian government, tasked with reaffirming and implementing the most recent treaty between the two parties, renewing the peace agreement, and resolving outstanding disputes. However, some researchers suggest that this letter was merely an American maneuver to de-escalate the situation. It appears that President Madison had sent a separate letter to his Secretary of State, James Monroe, on June 25—less than two months before his message to the Dey—in which he outlined the United States' firm intention to maintain the existing treaty without offering any concessions whatsoever. While the United States favored peace, it remained prepared for war and would not permit any amendments to the terms of the latest treaty—a point the Dey was expected to understand clearly. The envoy sent by the U.S. President—acting on behalf of the Secretary of State—clearly and firmly articulated American policy and the nation's resolve that no amendments would be made to the treaty. It was, therefore, unclear why the U.S. President's letter to the Dey raised the issue of negotiations and the selection of negotiators. According to Shaler, the matter was resolved with great ease; following the events that had unfolded in Algiers and the losses inflicted by Lord Exmouth's expedition, the United States faced no difficulties in the negotiations. A treaty—the terms of which were dictated by the American side—was signed on December 23, 1816, as will be discussed further on.

The aforementioned expedition, which took place in late August 1816, was a formidable naval campaign led by Lord Exmouth, involving both British and Dutch fleets. The city of Algiers was subjected to a bombardment that resulted in heavy losses for the Algerians: the city's fortifications were destroyed, and the majority of the Algerian fleet was set ablaze. This outcome proved advantageous for the United States and for Europe in general. Consul Shaler, who was present, provided a precise account of the incident. Beyond

the material damage, the expedition dealt a significant political and military setback to Algiers; the Dey was compelled to accept all of Lord Exmouth's demands, which included the unconditional release of approximately 1,200 Christian captives and the return of ransom payments previously made by nations under British protection. Although Shaler was an eyewitness to the Exmouth expedition and is considered an important source regarding it, a comparison of his account with a local source reveals many significant details that he failed to mention—most notably the fleet's ruse of hoisting white flags, which signaled peace rather than war. Shaler persists in denying this deception, even when Dey Omar brought it up during a friendly visit by the American fleet—a point we shall address later. 5. The Friendly Visit of the American Fleet in October 1816 and Signs of Renewing the Peace Treaty: Following the "Exmouth" expedition and the losses it inflicted upon Algiers, an American fleet—commanded by Commodore Chauncey—appeared in the Bay of Algiers in October. The fleet consisted of the following naval vessels: the **Washington**, **Java**, **United States**, **Constellation**, **Erie**, and **Peacock**. According to Shaler, this force of six warships was capable of completely destroying the city of Algiers and its fortifications, especially given the weakened state the city was in at the time. The arrival of the fleet struck fear and panic into the Algerians; as Shaler made his way toward the fleet, he sensed their palpable anxiety, as they fully expected an attack on the city. Shaler, however, reassured them, asserting that the American fleet was there on a friendly, peaceful mission. He claimed that the Americans would never engage in hostilities without first notifying him, in his capacity as consul. Upon his return from visiting his nation's fleet, Shaler was received by Dey Omar, who appeared to be in a state of great agitation. While Shaler regarded this reception as an honor, he nonetheless expressed his regret over the Algerians' lack of faith in American honor. He informed the Dey that, should war ever break out between Algiers and the United States, the latter would be guided by its own established principles—governed by a strict code of honor—in the conduct of such a conflict. Shaler claimed that the Dey felt a sense of shame upon being reproached by the consul; the Dey also noted that he had not been entirely certain of the fleet's identity or whether the arriving vessels were indeed American. The Dey continued speaking to the consul—who was present as a witness—and reminded him of how, on certain occasions, he had himself fallen victim to appearances; the Dey's intention was to remind Challeur of the deception involving the land-based fleet.

The following day, Commodore Chauncey, accompanied by senior naval officers, paid a courtesy visit to the Dey, who expressed his satisfaction. Acting on the Commodore's advice, Shaler boarded the flagship **Washington** to discuss and coordinate matters regarding dispatches expected from the United States. Upon their arrival in Gibraltar, they received—via the American vessel **The Spark**—their credentials as commissioners authorized to renew the peace treaty with Algiers. 6. Renewal of the Peace Treaty between Algiers and the United States: Shaler and Commodore Chauncey received their credentials as commissioners to renew the peace treaty with Algiers. They also carried a letter from the President of the United States, responding to a communication sent by the Dey on April 24th. Well-informed about the precarious political and military situation in Algiers, the American commissioners decided to present the Dey with an ultimatum, accompanying the President's letter. In accordance with their instructions, they sailed toward Algiers aboard the warship **Washington** and the vessel **Spark**, arriving on December 8, 1816; the remainder of the fleet proceeded to the port of Mahón (in the Balearic Islands). Due to adverse weather conditions and the risks associated with anchoring in the Bay of Algiers, Shaler went ashore alone, undertaking to conduct the negotiations and finalize the matter directly with the Dey, as previously agreed. On the 17th of the month, negotiations commenced between Dey Omar and Consul Shaler. Shaler

presented the letter from the U.S. President along with a memorandum from the commissioners. While Dey Omar maintained a courteous and decorous demeanor, he—according to Shaler—strove to avoid renewing the Algerian-American treaty and resisted acceding to the American terms. He complained about the time the U.S. President had taken to respond to his letter—counting the elapsed months on his fingers—and requested a corresponding period of time to deliberate; however, his request was rejected.

Shaler noted that the Dey appealed to him, invoking his sense of honor, and reminded him that he had personally witnessed the calamities that had befallen the Regency during this period—events that had left it at the mercy of the United States. ...the United States—urging the latter not to exploit the current difficulties and setbacks. Shaler, however, replied that regardless of any personal sympathy he might feel, he and his fellow negotiator could not deviate from the instructions of the President of the United States. To do so would constitute a direct disobedience of official orders. He further noted that these instructions had been drafted—as evidenced by the date they bore—before the calamities that had befallen Algiers were even known in the United States. Faced with Shaler's firm stance and his refusal to yield to the Dey's demands, the Dey found that accepting the American terms was unavoidable. According to Shaler, the Dey remarked: "These disasters have deprived me of the means to resist; I therefore agree to renew the treaty on the terms you have proposed—or any other terms you choose to dictate—provided that you furnish me with a document, written in your own hand and bearing your seal, attesting that you have coerced my will." Shaler responded that the terms he proposed—under the mandate of the U.S. President—were reasonable and such as would be put forward under any circumstances; he readily agreed to provide the requested document. Thus, a peace treaty was concluded and signed on December 23, 1816.

The renewal of the peace treaty between Algiers and the United States took place under exceptional circumstances—circumstances that were, to say the least, highly unfavorable to the Regency. The Dey was left with no real choice; his hands were effectively tied. As for the American side, during the consultations between Consul Shaler and Commodore Chauncey, both maintained that they had been appointed specifically to negotiate the restoration of peace between the two nations. They further argued that the demands made by the Algerian authorities lacked legitimacy, given that the United States had already committed to returning the two vessels. ...the two [vessels] that had been seized by the American fleet prior to June 1815. The American government had faithfully honored the commitments it made thereafter; consequently, the negotiators (William Shaler and Commodore Chauncey) proposed to the Dey that the peace treaty be renewed on the following bases: First, the renewal of the peace treaty concluded in June 1815, maintaining the same wording and content as agreed upon between the Regency's authorities, the Consul General, and Commodore Decatur. Furthermore, an amendment to Article 18 of the treaty was proposed—at no additional cost—by adding the following provision: "The United States agrees to the abrogation of Article 18 of the treaty, which grants the United States, within the ports of Algiers, privileges exceeding those accorded to 'most-favored nations'—that is, nations that also maintain treaties with the Regency." The removal of this article was intended to demonstrate the United States' commitment to pursuing and preserving peace, as well as to reinforce the friendly relations between the two nations. As for the second basis—which concerned a clause in the treaty's translation that would have obligated the United States to provide "consular gifts" to the Regency—the negotiators explicitly and formally rejected this, stating that the United States would not agree to any provision requiring it to offer gifts to the Regency or its officials under any circumstances. The United States remains committed to the terms of the treaty and intends to abide by them; it leaves the choice between peace and war to the Regency, noting that the United States—

while desiring the former—is equally prepared for the latter. To ensure the content of the memorandum was clearly understood, an accurate Arabic translation was attached. The Dey was requested to provide a written response in English, French, Spanish, or Italian—or alternatively, through a foreign consul authorized to act as a guarantor. Accuracy in translation; signed by William Shaler and Chauncey, aboard the frigate *Washington* in the Bay of Algiers, December 9, 1816.

Consul Shaler conducted the new negotiations from a position of significant strength. The encounter resulted in the American side issuing an ultimatum to the Dey, in which they rejected the annulment of the previous treaty. They also contested a provision in the Algerian version of the treaty—one that required the United States, like other nations, to provide consular gifts to the Dey. Curiously, the U.S. Secretary of State had explicitly authorized the American negotiators to accept this condition as a mere formality. The ultimatum further demanded additional privileges for the United States, making it clear that William Shaler steered the negotiations in a manner detrimental to Algeria.

Thus, on December 22, the "farce" of the negotiations—as described by the translator of the memoirs, Ismaïl El-Arabi—came to an end. In January 1817, Shaler sent the text of the renewed treaty to his government; however, due to an oversight, the Senate failed to ratify it until 1822, at which point it was declared to be in full effect.

The United States succeeded in becoming one of the few nations to secure a separate treaty with Algeria that did not require the payment of tribute—a significant achievement at the time. Shaler emphasized that his country had not purchased Algeria's goodwill through endless tribute and gifts; rather, it had compelled the "Barbary" states to respect the American flag at sea. He argued that the existence of "piracy" had necessitated the maintenance of an American base in the Mediterranean to safeguard the nation's honor and interests—a development that also proved highly beneficial in strengthening the U.S. Navy. Conclusion:

In concluding this study, it can be affirmed that the memoirs of William Shaler document the nature of the relationship between the Regency of Algiers and the United States during a critical period—a time marked by the decline of the Regency's political and military power, which shifted the advantage toward the emerging modern power, the United States. However, despite the significance of these memoirs, researchers should not rely on them exclusively; they must also consult other sources, particularly those of local origin.

- Algerian-American relations fluctuated between peace and hostility, influenced by various circumstances specific to both sides. Initially, the situation favored the Regency, which succeeded in compelling the United States to respect its terms and its standing in the Mediterranean. Yet, Algiers' declaration of war against the United States in 1812 proved to be an ill-conceived move, ultimately resulting in significant losses for Algiers.

- The Regency of Algiers lost the position of strength it had once held during its negotiations with the United States. It was forced to accept the terms of the 1815 peace treaty and subsequently renew that treaty in late 1816—a shift driven by the growing power of the United States, contrasted with the political and military decline of the Regency.

- The Algerian Regency made strenuous, yet futile, efforts to extricate itself from the unwanted peace treaty, which had stripped it of all the privileges it previously enjoyed in its dealings with the United States.

- Throughout its nineteenth-century negotiations with Algiers, the United States operated from a position of strength; consequently, it did not yield to any of Algiers' demands. This is consistent with the nature of international relations, where the stronger or victorious party dictates the terms of peace. - During negotiations with Algiers—led by Consul William Shaler and his associates—the United States insisted on not paying any form of tribute. They adhered to a core principle in their relations with Algiers: "Peace is better than war, but war is better than paying tribute."
- Although the peace treaty between Algiers and the United States was renewed in late 1816, the situation remained unchanged. The difficult political and military circumstances facing the Regency contributed to a decline in its standing. The terms of the treaty were effectively imposed upon Dey Omar; he even requested a written, sealed statement from Consul William Shaler confirming that the treaty had been concluded against his will.
- During the final phase of Ottoman rule, the Regency of Algiers saw a significant decline in its naval fleet, which had been exhausted by wars with various European powers. Furthermore, the 1816 joint British-Dutch expedition—known as the Exmouth expedition—inflicted severe destruction upon the fleet, effectively shattering its international reputation.
- The American negotiators, headed by William Shaler, steered the talks. Shaler played a pivotal role in the unfolding of events; as the American Consul in Algiers, he proved to be firm and unyielding in pursuit of his country's interests, showing no political flexibility toward the Regency.

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