
Of Knights and Pirates

Barbary Corsairing before and during the Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815

For Europeans, the Congress of Vienna held great promise before it even began in September 1814. Activists, pamphleteers and state officials across the continent expected that this exalted meeting of monarchs and statesmen in the Austrian capital would bring lasting changes, delivering a devastated Europe from its conflict-ridden past. After over two decades of incessant and destructive warfare, they hoped – and sometimes prayed – for the beginning of a new era, a time in which peace and progress would alleviate the sufferings of the previous decades. However, some argued that one final war would have to be fought before any lasting peace could truly begin: a decisive war against Mediterranean piracy. Franz Tidemann, the mayor of the Hanseatic town of Bremen, was one of those people for whom peace and piracy were incompatible.

Tidemann had ambitious plans for the whole of Europe. He anonymously published an essay on the continent's future: *Was könnte für Europa in Wien geschehen? Beantwortet durch einen Deutschen*.¹ Tidemann envisioned a Europe of cooperation, where mistrust would disappear as states worked together for the general well-being of the continent. As a Christian, Tidemann viewed religious precepts as a necessary means for the betterment of society. He had previously curated an anthology of prayers and hymns for prison inmates but scaled up his aims to embrace all of Europe in preparation for the congress.

Tidemann's plans appeared solemn at first glance, but they had violent undertones. He claimed that the destruction of the 'North African robber states' and the termination of their 'piracies' had to be central to any agenda of European peace.² Tidemann proposed the creation of a European 'protective alliance' at the Congress of Vienna. He argued that this alliance should start a winter offensive, directed against the regents of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, as

¹ [F. Tidemann], *Was könnte für Europa in Wien geschehen? Beantwortet durch einen Deutschen* (n.p. 1814). The text is listed among Tidemann's other works in H. W. Rotermund, *Lexikon aller Gelerhten, die seit der Reformation in Bremen gelebt haben* (Bremen 1818), vol. 1, 206.

² [Tidemann], *Was könnte für Europa*, 35–36.

well as their Ottoman overlords. In unison, the allied Europeans could ‘chase the Turks out of Europe’ and exclude them from the Mediterranean forever. Afterwards, the victors would be rewarded with the territorial spoils: Britain would obtain Egypt; France, Portugal and Spain could colonise North Africa; the other conquests would be distributed at a later congress.³

The assembled delegates in Vienna did not pay much attention to Tidemann’s plans. His schemes would probably have fallen on deaf ears after two decades of large-scale conflict had anyone read them. Yet Tidemann’s publication transcends concerns of readership and direct influence because his text spoke the language of its day. The Bremen mayor used the frameworks of progress and Christian duty, which also permeated that other great international project of the post-Napoleonic period: the reconstruction of Europe in a lastingly peaceful manner.⁴ Tidemann tried to link his plans to the broader remaking of the European international order. He directed his pleas to the Congress of Vienna because it was the place where that new order was to be constructed. His writing indicates that historical actors saw the fight against piracy as inextricably linked to 1814, which they considered a moment of great importance for continental security.

While negotiations in the Austrian capital delineated territorial settlements, coronated several newly independent monarchs and resulted in an official declaration on the abolition of the slave trade, they did not treat the issue of piracy. This paradox is the key concern of this chapter. Vienna’s Final Acts were the end product of these talks, and, though they did not mention ‘Barbary piracy’, their conclusion would nevertheless have a great impact on the international treatment of this newly perceived threat to security. The years 1814–1815 were an important turning point because they initiated a period of transition. The congress created an international context in which North African corsairing could be reconceived as a threat to security. This new perception of threat hinged upon misconceptions of the supposed fanaticism and irrationality that allegedly characterised North African privateering. As will become clear, it also disregarded the long history of diplomatic and commercial contact between political entities on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

Caution and Consistency: Why ‘Barbary Piracy’ Was Kept from the Vienna Talks

Concerns over war and peace ensured that senior statesmen did not officially discuss ‘Barbary piracy’ at the Congress of Vienna. Vocal proponents of

³ Ibid., 45–46.

⁴ On the Christian aspirations behind the new international order, B. de Graaf, *Fighting terror after Napoleon: How Europe became secure after 1815* (Cambridge 2020), 245–246.

violent action against the 'Barbary pirates' generally came from states that were openly at war or engaged in mounting conflict with one of the regencies. Tidemann glossed over the fact that Bremen had an uncertain diplomatic position. The status of the peace treaties between all Hanseatic cities and the Barbary Regencies was unclear in 1814, and Hanseatic ships ran the risk of corsair attacks.⁵ The newly independent United Kingdom of the Netherlands faced a similar situation. The Dutch minister of foreign affairs hoped 'the unspeakable depredations of the Barbary Regencies' would be 'an important subject of the deliberations of the Congress of Vienna'.⁶ But Great Power participants held different opinions on North African corsairing, and they dictated the topics of deliberation.

The Habsburg host of the assembly in Vienna, Foreign Minister Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859) played a pivotal role in keeping 'Barbary piracy' from the official agenda. He feared that forceful action against the North African regencies would come with grave consequences. Metternich dreaded the impact repressing piracy could have on Austria's diplomatic relations with the Ottoman sultan. Fearing Russian expansion in the East, the Austrian minister considered the stability of the Ottoman Empire more important to continental security than repressive action against the Barbary Regencies.⁷ He even went against the wishes of his highest superior, Habsburg Emperor Franz I (1768–1835), who ordered that the Barbary Regencies should be discussed at the congress, as corsairs from Tripoli had started taking Austrian ships.⁸ The Emperor thought that 'security for the Austrian flag' could only be ensured through the defeat of the regencies and wanted to make this a subject of international discussion. Still, as Brian Vick has shown, Metternich managed to keep Barbary corsairing from the agenda, acting in direct defiance of Franz I and his inner circle of advisors.⁹

Existing treaties, Metternich argued, provided ample protection for Austrian shipping. He pointed to old agreements between Austria and the Ottoman Empire, which had been renewed as recently as 1792. These agreements provided guarantees from the Ottoman sultan, ensuring the safety of Austrian vessels from Barbary corsairs. The Austrian flag, the agreement held, sailed under the commandment of the sultan, which meant that if a ship were taken, the sultan would ensure compensation for any losses from his North

⁵ E. Baasch, *Die Hansestädte und die Barbaresken* (Kassel 1897), 130–131.

⁶ Nationaal Archief, The Hague (NL-HaNA), 2.05.01, inv. 96, no. 1036, 'Van Nagell to King William I', 16-11-1814.

⁷ B. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA 2014), 222.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 222; D. Panzac, *Barbary corsairs: The end of a legend, 1800–1820* (Leiden 2005), 268.

⁹ Vick, *The Congress*, 221–223. Also, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (HHStA), StK, Kongressakten, 1, Folder 10, 'Matériaux pour le Congrès et des négociations séparées', n.d.

African vassals.¹⁰ As one Habsburg diplomat noted later in the nineteenth century, this *sened* (or treaty) was ‘one of the most beautiful documents in the history of Austrian diplomacy’.¹¹ With this old agreement in place, there was little use for actions of repression that could weaken and displease the one authority that already guaranteed safe Mediterranean navigation under the flag of Austria.

Britain’s delegates at the Congress of Vienna also felt reluctant to discuss violent action against North African corsairing. They too pointed to older treaties.¹² England had been among the first European states to enter direct diplomatic relations with the Barbary Regencies. In 1622, Algiers and England initiated a string of treaties between North African and European powers. Friendly relations, and even a sense of alliance, still existed at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. As the head of the British delegation in Vienna, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (1769–1822), readily mentioned those long-lasting diplomatic relations whenever the question of piracy repression arose. He too wanted to keep the region’s territorial status quo intact and feared that repressive action could easily hurt the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

Indeed, most senior statesmen in attendance at the Congress of Vienna stuck to the old means of engaging with Barbary corsairing, through treaties and guarantees.¹³ Pamphleteers like Tidemann leapt from pleas for security to calls for conquest, but that was precisely the leap that unsettled Great Power delegates. Still, their plea to act against the threat of ‘Barbary piracy’ soon became impossible to ignore. Tidemann and a group of likeminded actors posed a significant challenge to the old ways of dealing with the North African states. To understand the novelty (and problematic nature) of this challenge, we should first turn to the long history of European–North African relations. As we shall see, there was little inherently piratical or irregular about the maritime conduct and diplomatic status of the regencies across the sea.

The history of North African maritime raiding was part of a Mediterranean-wide phenomenon, bound up with questions of diplomatic relations between sovereigns. Starting in the sixteenth century, broader regional politics created an environment for this raiding. Indeed, the beginnings of Barbary corsairing,

¹⁰ HHStA, StAbt, Türkei VI, 7, Subfolder, ‘Nachtrag ad Polit: Berichte’, 1816, ‘Translated statement of Reis Rachid Mehmed Efendi’, 24-12-1792.

¹¹ HHStA, StAbt, Türkei VI, 8, Subfolder, ‘Turcica VI, Berichte, 1819, in französischer Sprache’, ‘Lützow to Metternich’, Bujukdéré 10-07-1819, fol. 111–117.

¹² NL-HaNA, 2.05.01, inv. 90, no. 4338, ‘Verstolk van Soelen to Van Nagell’, 25/18-10-1816.

¹³ I. Ortayli, ‘Ottoman–Habsburg relations, 1740–1770, and structural changes in the international affairs of the Ottoman state’ in: J. Bacqué-Grammont et al. (eds.), *Türkische miszellen: Robert Anhegger: Festschrift, armağanı, mélanges* (Istanbul 1987), 287–298, 290–291; D. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700–1922* (2nd ed., Cambridge 2005), 88.

one author notes, coincided with a 'vast geopolitical crisis' in the Maghreb.¹⁴ Spanish 'crusading' forces encroached upon the North African coastline, taking or subduing important towns like Oran, Bougie (Béjaïa) and Tripoli between 1508 and 1510. Inhabitants of Algiers responded with calls on outside aid from the Ottoman sultan. He sent one of the infamous 'Barbarossa' brothers, Oruç Reis (c. 1474–1518), a soldier and seaman from the Aegean island of Lesbos. Oruç and his brothers succeeded in defeating and repelling the Spaniards. The Barbarossa clique then established a new state, the Ottoman Regency of Algiers, under the sultan's tutelage in 1533. Similar states were founded after Ottoman takeovers of power in Tripoli (1551) and Tunis (1574).¹⁵ Subsequently, corsairing grew in prominence because privateering replaced the massive galley battles that had pitted Christian and Muslim powers against each other, such as at Lepanto in 1571.¹⁶ On the Christian side of the religious struggle, the Maltese Order of the Knights of Saint John and the Tuscan-based Order of Saint Stephen countered North African corsairing and regularly harassed Ottoman shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁷ They carried out the same kind of privateering as the regencies, starting in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁸ Privateering thus became the main mode of warfare in the larger (though abating) religious antagonism around the Mediterranean Sea. Because it generated handsome incomes through prize taking and the ransoming of captives, North African corsairing had developed into a veritable industry by the seventeenth century – drawing in military men, adventure seekers and renegade Christians from all over the Mediterranean and its furthest hinterlands.¹⁹

The conduct of corsairing, even as an expression of global Christian–Muslim rivalry, nevertheless created opportunities for exchange, negotiations and agreements. The states of Europe and the regencies had established a long tradition of standing diplomatic contact and treaty relations by the nineteenth century. After the first Anglo–Algerine treaty of 1622, Dutch and French agreements with Algiers followed in 1626 and 1628. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the network of treaties expanded almost by the year. Austria (1725–1726), Sweden (1729–1741), Tuscany (1748–1749) and Denmark (1751–1752) added to the network as they made peace with

¹⁴ J. McDougall, *A history of Algeria* (Cambridge 2017), 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9–11, 37–38; K. Folayan, *Tripoli during the reign of Yusuf Pasha Qaramanli* (Ile-Ife 1979), 3; Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 9–13.

¹⁶ D. Hershenzon, 'The political economy of ransom in the early modern Mediterranean', *Past and Present* 231 (May 2016), 61–95, 67–68.

¹⁷ J. White, *Piracy and law in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA 2018), 5.

¹⁸ S. Bono, *Les corsaires en Méditerranée* (trans. A. Somai, Paris 1998), 68–73.

¹⁹ Hershenzon, 'The political economy of ransom'; M. van Gelder, 'Tussen Noord-Afrika en de Republiek: Nederlandse bekeerlingen tot de islam in de zeventiende eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 126:1 (2013), 16–33.

Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. Only Spain, Naples and Venice remained as the regencies' European enemies until they too began to seek peace in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁰

The ever-tightening knot of treaties indicates that the regencies were far from outlaw piratical entities. Still, European writers never entirely left undisputed the legal status of the regencies and the legitimacy of their privateering seizures.²¹ Discussions about whether the Barbary corsairs were pirates continued throughout the early modern period.²² Cornelius van Bynkershoek, a Dutch jurist working on the laws of the sea, maintained that the Barbary Regencies could not be piratical, precisely because of the international treaties they had concluded. In 1737, he wrote that the regencies were not pirate lairs 'but rather organised states, which have fixed territory in which there is an established government, and with which, as with other nations, we are now at peace, now at war'.²³ Whether a political entity could legitimately issue privateering licences depended, in Bynkershoek's outlook, on how that authority was treated by other international actors.²⁴

Treaties and international recognition did not mean the total absence of struggle and warfare. As Bynkershoek wrote, European and North African states were indeed 'now at peace, now at war'. Occasional conflicts upset peaceful relations, and many treaties of peace were formed and perpetuated through the use of force.²⁵ Cannonades, blockades and intimidating tactics made up the common diplomatic repertoire employed by European navies.²⁶ The authorities and officials of the regencies, for their part, sometimes took recourse to flagellation, imprisonment and execution in their diplomatic dealings with Christians.²⁷ Diplomacy could be violent. One Dutch commander in the mid-seventeenth century, for instance, tried to enforce an earlier treaty by hanging several captives from the topmast, in full view of

²⁰ The regencies also sent ambassadors to the countries of Europe for negotiations and as acts of courtesy. Tripolitan representatives, for instance, went to Paris in 1719–1720, 1774 and 1785; to the Netherlands in 1735; to Stockholm in 1756; to Venice in 1764; and to London in 1765 and 1773. Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 25, 28–29, 38, 40–41.

²¹ W. Brenner, *Confounding powers: Anarchy and international society from the Assassins to Al Qaeda* (Cambridge 2016), 176.

²² A. Rubin, *The law of piracy* (Newport 1988), 20–29, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

²⁵ F. R. Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest of North Africa and the Middle East: The opening of the Maghreb, 1660–1814', *Journal of North African Studies* 4:4 (1999), 1–26, 13.

²⁶ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 28–29.

²⁷ W. Spencer, *Algiers in the age of the corsairs* (Norman, OK 1976) 15; E. Plantet, *Correspondence des deys d'Alger avec la cour de France, 1579–1833*, vol. 1, 1579–1700 (Paris 1889), xliii.

the port of Algiers.²⁸ Yet the basis for such European–North African agreements – and the importance of violence therein – diverged from state to state. Entities with strong fleets, like England since the reign of Oliver Cromwell, or France from the late seventeenth century, consistently used naval might rather than payments when it came to the regencies. They opted for repeated maritime demonstrations to ensure the perpetuation of their treaties.²⁹ The British reluctance to discuss ‘Barbary piracy’ at the Congress of Vienna stemmed from these historical roots. For this reason, shipping under the British ensign had little to fear from North African privateering.

Commercial concerns also constrained and restrained the Great Powers. The regencies were solidly embedded in Mediterranean and trans-Atlantic networks of maritime trade.³⁰ European merchants sought the agricultural produce of the Maghreb and offered manufactured goods in return. Peace treaties allowed these commercial exchanges to expand.³¹ In his historical study of Tripoli, Kola Folayan has described the sorts of cargoes European ships exchanged. Barley, wheat, dates, medicinal senna leaves, olives, cattle, camels and hides left the ports of the Maghreb, while arms, ammunition, silks, linen, muslins and writing paper entered.³² Rather than being completely dependent on the revenues of privateering, the regencies drew most of their incomes from trade and agricultural produce.³³

Trade was a great incentive for the negotiated settlements between European and North African powers. Along with diplomatic relations, commercial ties intensified and brought increased competition between European states. British and French treaties included duty rates and anchorage fees.³⁴ Commercial institutions became more prominent on North African soil in the wake of peace and trade agreements. States established and extended consular offices, commercial houses became more firmly rooted and agents negotiated foreign concessions.³⁵ These foreign concessions were designated territories granted to foreign companies as ‘reserved markets’. They soon took the appearance of enclaves, filled with warehouses where export crops could be received, processed and shipped out. The largest of their kind were the

²⁸ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 29; J. Schokkenbroek, ‘Lambert Hendricksz en zijn jihad tegen de Barbarijse zeerovers’, *Leidschrift* 26:3 (2011), 117–129.

²⁹ B. Capp, *Cromwell’s navy: The fleet and the English Revolution 1648–1660* (Oxford 1989), 94; P. Earle, *The pirate wars* (St. Martin’s Griffin 2003), 73–75, 77–78.

³⁰ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 9–12. For the trans-Atlantic trade, S. Marzagalli, ‘Tunis et la navigation américaine dans les années 1800’ in: H. Amadou and M. Jerad (eds.), *Échanger en Méditerranée: Recueil d’études en hommage à Sadok Boubaker* (Tunis 2016), 187–201.

³¹ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 37.

³² Folayan, *Tripoli*, 60–61.

³³ McDougall, *A history of Algeria*, 13.

³⁴ Hunter, ‘Rethinking Europe’s conquest’, 5–6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

French-, British-, Genoese- and Spanish-operated concessions of Tabarka and Cap Negro, located in the grain-producing regions of today's eastern Algeria and north-western Tunisia.³⁶

The Barbary Regencies did not depend exclusively on corsairing for income. Nor were corsairing and commerce mutually exclusive.³⁷ Corsairs depended upon selling their confiscated goods or prizes; this act made corsairing profitable. Many captured ships and cargoes were exported back to Europe. Expat carriers looking for a bargain often bought stolen cargoes the moment they were brought in and adjudicated. Sometimes these merchants waited to buy the confiscated goods at the local markets and re-export them across the Mediterranean.³⁸

While peace agreements protected European shipping against corsairing and lubricated trade, they brought other advantages for the regencies. Treaty stipulations often generated income and provisions. North African rulers managed to obtain monetary and material tributes from smaller maritime powers in return for peace. Annual supplies of money, arms and shipbuilding materials flooded the ports of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli.³⁹ Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, North African rulers had largely turned corsair seizures from an uncertain source of income, dependent on chance takings at sea, into a latent threat that generated regular payments.⁴⁰ This was no superfluous benefit, as steady deforestation in the Maghreb and ever-increasing ship sizes made the maintenance of a sizeable fleet more and more difficult.⁴¹

The increasing number of treaties also allowed rulers in North Africa to wrest some independence from central Ottoman authorities. By the early nineteenth century, elites in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli had largely taken control over the regencies' foreign relations.⁴² Support from the Ottoman sultan had been vital when the regencies were founded, but as the North African states obtained the status of *pashalik* (province) they gradually became more autonomous.⁴³ In Algiers, the centrally appointed *pasha* was replaced from 1671 onwards by an elected member of the local garrison who held the

³⁶ Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 7.

³⁷ M. Fontenay, 'La place de la course dans l'économie portuaire: L'exemple de Malte et des ports barbaresques', *Annales ESC* 43 (1988), 1321–1347.

³⁸ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 202–207; M. Pearson, "'Tremendous damage" or "mere pinpricks": The costs of piracy', *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012), 463–480, 466.

³⁹ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 114–115; Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 9.

⁴⁰ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 40–41.

⁴¹ D. Abulafia, *The great sea: A human history of the Mediterranean* (London 2011), 532; M. Belhamissi, *Histoire de la marine algérienne (1516–1830)* (Algiers 1983), 67–68.

⁴² Spencer, *Algiers*, 28; Brenner, *Confounding powers*, 162–165.

⁴³ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 9–12; Folyan, *Tripoli*, 26–27; J. Abun-Nasr, *A history of the Maghrib in the Islamic period* (Cambridge 1987), 181.

title of *dey* (a honorific denomination derived from the Turkish 'deyi', meaning uncle).⁴⁴ Tunis and Tripoli each saw the establishment of local ruling dynasties, but their heads nevertheless kept calling themselves *beys* or *pashas* (both being Ottoman designations for appointed provincial rulers).⁴⁵ Symbols of rulership and the legitimization of power in each of the regencies bore the marks of attachment to the imperial centre and authority of the sultan, even if the deys and beys were internationally recognised as diplomatic powers in their own right.⁴⁶ In a recent work, historian Betty Anderson describes this development as part of a broader Ottoman shift from centralism to cooperation with increasingly prominent local ruling groups.⁴⁷

There were similarities in how the rulers of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli at times sought to benefit from central sponsorship and at other moments flouted the sultan's orders.⁴⁸ In all regencies, the ruler also acted as a military leader. The gains from privateering and the degree of control over local troops both legitimated and solidified authority. Corsairing had, by the late eighteenth century, largely become a state-managed affair, with the regencies possessing or holding shares in most vessels.⁴⁹ The changing fortunes of the corsair trade steered the personal standing of the deys and beys. Many of them ascended to authority or perished in military revolts over naval defeats and diplomatic setbacks.⁵⁰

Authority in the North African regencies depended on the presence of the Janissaries, an elite Ottoman military and administrative corps. As in the central Ottoman cities, they shaped political and urban life in Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. The Janissaries acted as power brokers in local politics and functioned as a guild of sorts in their operation of skilled trades and businesses.⁵¹ Local political stability improved when the regents had the ensured loyalty of this military group.⁵² It was therefore crucial to pay the soldiers sufficiently and on time. As would later become clear, when international pressure to abolish corsairing mounted, the Janissary garrisons could act as a

⁴⁴ McDougall, *A history of Algeria*, 37–38.

⁴⁵ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 9–13.

⁴⁶ McDougall, *A history of Algeria*, 37–38.

⁴⁷ B. Anderson, *A history of the modern Middle East: Rulers, rebels and rogues* (Stanford, CA 2016), 43–44, 46. Also, A. Hourani, *A history of the Arab peoples* (Cambridge 1991), 250–251.

⁴⁸ Brenner, *Confounding powers*, 162–165.

⁴⁹ Belhamissi, *Histoire de la marine algérienne*, 149; Chater, *Dépendance et mutations*, 172–173; Folayan, *Tripoli*, 26–27.

⁵⁰ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 17–20; C. Windler, 'Diplomatic history as a field for cultural analysis: Muslim–Christian relations in Tunisia, 1700–1840', *Historical Journal* 44:1 (2001), 79–106, 81–82.

⁵¹ C. Kafadar, 'Janissaries and other riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a cause?', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13:1&2 (2007), 113–134, 115.

⁵² Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 293–304.

formidable obstacle, hampering any attempt to completely end the practice of privateering.

Even if the Janissaries had a vested interest in privateering, the scope and intensity of the practice could change dramatically over time. The increase of commercial traffic and the proliferation of treaties meant that raiding dwindled significantly during the eighteenth century. Peace agreements simply offered fewer potential corsair targets. The privateering fleets of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli gradually shrank as a consequence. They were generally of a modest size by the end of the 1700s.⁵³ The corsair fleets of the Maltese Order and the Tuscan Order of Saint Stephen also steadily declined in size, almost in tandem with that of the North African corsairs.⁵⁴ The corsairing of the Barbary Regencies and the Christian orders, long a common feature of Mediterranean life, thus appeared to be moving towards a steady demise by the 1780s as relations ‘normalised’ and commercial exchanges only grew in significance.⁵⁵ Corsairing seemed near its end, but then the age of revolutions shook up the Mediterranean region.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars reversed the trend of corsairing’s decline. War between France and the opposing coalitions of European powers saw a large-scale return of privateering to the Mediterranean Sea in the 1790s. The main protagonists of this new chapter in privateering history included more than just North African corsairs – European belligerents also re-entered the arena.⁵⁶ In January 1793, the French Republic issued a decree calling for the outfitting of privateers. Soon, the *Sans-Culotte* and other hunters with revolutionary names roamed the waters.⁵⁷ This newfound French inclination towards privateering proved a particular nuisance to flags that lacked the backing of a sizeable navy. Austrian, Ragusan, American and Genoese merchants regularly complained about French consuls who condemned prizes under the slightest pretext and admiralty courts that rarely accepted appeals.⁵⁸ Corsican raiders, on the other hand, abused their British protection under the short-lived Anglo–Corsican

⁵³ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 163–164.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁵ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 43; McDougall, *A history of Algeria*, 45. For ‘normalised’, L. Merouche, *Recherches sur l’Algérie à l’époque ottomane*, vol. 2, *La course: Mythes et réalité* (Saint-Denis 2007), 255–256.

⁵⁶ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 168–169; R. Holland, *Blue-water empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London 2012), 14–15.

⁵⁷ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 90–91.

⁵⁸ L. Sondhaus, *The Habsburg Empire and the sea: Austrian naval policy, 1797–1866* (West Lafayette, IN 1989), 7–8, 14; S. Marzagalli, “‘However illegal, extraordinary or almost incredible such conduct might be’: Americans and neutrality issues in the Mediterranean during the French Wars”, *International Journal of Maritime History* 28:1 (2016), 118–132, 122–123.

Kingdom (1794–1796) to harass shipping. They even attacked Britain's Spanish allies.⁵⁹ Privateering rebounded as a tested mode of warfare among the European powers. States used privateers extensively during military conflicts following 1789, including in the War of 1812 and the Spanish American wars of independence, even as they repeatedly found that licenced raiders could not be easily controlled.⁶⁰

The first years following the French Revolution also brought a sudden upsurge in North African corsairing. The outbreak of war severely impacted trade with the ports of Marseille, Genoa and Livorno, which were some of the regencies' most prominent trading partners.⁶¹ North African regents compensated for their dwindling incomes with corsairing. Yusuf Karamanli, Pasha of Tripoli, extended the fleet from three 'rickety vessels' to eleven ships of war between 1795 and 1798.⁶² In Algiers, the estimated number of corsair vessels rose from eight to thirty during the first phases of the war. By 1798, Mustafa, Bey of Tunis, allegedly commanded a fleet of ninety-seven vessels.⁶³ All of these new North African ships proved useful with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in July 1798. As Sultan Selim III (r. 1789–1807) declared war against France in response, French prizes became 'new prey' for the Barbary corsairs.⁶⁴

North African regents did not always follow the directives of the sultan. They could reassert themselves internationally within this new context. War provided them with myriad possibilities to further their own agendas.⁶⁵ The rulers of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli began the era of the Revolutionary Wars by outfitting more corsairs and enlarging their navies, but this naval build-up was short-lived. There were more lucrative opportunities for the regents: the provisioning of troops and markets in Europe. As a result, North African corsairing decreased significantly again during the wars of the Napoleonic Empire (1804–1814).⁶⁶ This was also the time of British ascendancy in the Mediterranean. The Royal Navy had become the most dominant force in its waters, and British troops amassed on Malta and the Iberian

⁵⁹ J. Meeks, *France, Britain and the struggle for the Western Mediterranean* (Cham 2017), 132–133, 137–139.

⁶⁰ M. McCarthy, *Privateering, piracy and British policy in Spanish America, 1810–1830* (Woodbridge 2013), 17.

⁶¹ Only twenty-eight ships per year arrived in Marseilles from the Maghreb ports between 1793 and 1799; the average had been as high as 151 per annum for the 1789–1792 period. French ventures into Italy after 1796 further disturbed trans-Mediterranean commercial relations with Genoa and Livorno. Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 73–74.

⁶² Folayan, *Tripoli*, 26–27.

⁶³ Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 16.

⁶⁴ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 74–75.

⁶⁵ Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 16.

⁶⁶ Merouche, *Recherches sur l'Algérie*, vol. 2, 20; Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 331.

Peninsula. This expanding military complex depended largely on the regencies of North Africa for food, livestock and fodder.⁶⁷

British and French acceptance of the regencies' neutrality was crucial to their trade. Neutrality had been part of a long-standing regional tradition. Algiers' port remained open to all flag states with treaties, even in times of war. Established practices of corsairing generally followed the principle that a friendly flag could protect enemy cargo.⁶⁸ Maritime neutrality was embedded in the Mediterranean body of international law that existed between Christian and Muslim states.⁶⁹ This conception of maritime rights was more in line with the 'free ships, free goods' principle the smaller maritime powers of Europe tried to uphold against the Royal Navy's unlimited search for French contraband.⁷⁰

The tableau of European–Maghrebi relations, as it lay at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, saw the British and French governments clash over access to North African supplies. They both sought to maintain peaceful relations with the regents. The authorities of the regencies, for their part, benefitted from the conflict by transforming their corsair navies into merchant fleets.⁷¹ If anything, the spikes and drops of corsair activity in 1793–1813 indicate that the Barbary Regencies were not engaged in a permanent confrontation with Europe or Christianity. Zealous Christian pamphleteers and officials in Europe later presented a strawman of Barbary bloody-mindedness and fanatical violence that operated outside all legal norms, but in reality the foreign relationships of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli with the Christian powers were informed by the pragmatic considerations of a shifting international situation.

Following these fluctuations, corsairing appeared as a viable solution once again when troubles in the regencies mounted after the Napoleonic Wars. The 1806–1813 period of highly lucrative trade with the warring powers of Europe had truly been exceptional, but due to internal and external pressures it came to an end as suddenly as it had begun. Local administrators and official interdictions in France and Italy gradually pushed Maghrebi merchants from ports along their coasts, restoring Christian predominance in the 'maritime caravan' trade with the Ottoman Empire in its old form.⁷² The regencies' international room for manoeuvre was increasingly curtailed as well, when

⁶⁷ Chater, *Dépendance et mutations*, 33 ; C. Gale, 'Barbary's slow death : European attempts to eradicate North African piracy in the early nineteenth century', *Journal for Maritime Research* 18:2 (2016), 139–154, 140–142 ; P. Mackesy, *The war in the Mediterranean, 1803–1810* (Cambridge, MA 1957), 6.

⁶⁸ Belhamissi, *Histoire de la marine algérienne*, 94–95 ; Marzagalli, 'However illegal', 130.

⁶⁹ Windler, 'Diplomatic history', 81.

⁷⁰ McCarthy, *Privateering, piracy*, 15.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷² Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 4.

peace in Europe closed the Christian ranks again. At the same time, internal troubles that had been mounting for about a decade reached a critical stage. Malcontents challenged central rule in all the regencies. Assassinations and banditry matched widespread hunger and discontent. Algiers and Tripoli faced uprisings in the interior over rising taxes and efforts to centralise rule. Aided by expensive European arms, authorities put down these revolts by Berber tribes and local clans.⁷³ The beys of Tunis were caught up in a string of palace coups, as Hammuda Bey's sudden death after a long reign in 1814 led to a family vendetta that lasted into the next year.⁷⁴ The Janissaries of Algiers murdered five deys between 1805 and 1815.⁷⁵ Successive natural disasters only intensified the troubles. Algiers, for instance, was hit by earthquakes, droughts and locusts in 1813–1815.⁷⁶ Dearth and disaster also left their marks on the body politic.

The Barbary Regencies turned to corsairing as one means of ameliorating these circumstances. Profits from seized cargoes would help satisfy the financial demands of Janissary troops. The end of the European wars provided new opportunities for prize takings. Under Napoleon's Continental System ships from the smaller Christian states of Northern Europe had disappeared from the Mediterranean, but now they returned. Their states had not paid the old tributes during the times of conflict, which the North Africans considered a cause for war, and so these reappearing ships became the targets of corsairs.⁷⁷ Algerine raiders took Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Hanseatic vessels, as well as Italian ships travelling under British protection. Tripolitans brought in French and Austrian prizes. Tunisian sailors carried out twelve raids on Calabrian and Sardinian seaside towns between May and November 1815.⁷⁸ Barbary corsairing resumed with a menacing ubiquitousness after a long decline and virtual disappearance during the Napoleonic Wars. European onlookers received the first signals of its resurgence just before the Congress of Vienna, where the spectre of piracy inspired many calls for violent action.

The Congress as a Stage: Pamphlets and Picnic Parties

Even if senior statesmen did not want it, the Congress of Vienna created an international context in which corsairing received new attention. After 1815, Europeans became increasingly convinced that North African corsairs

⁷³ Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 10–11.

⁷⁴ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 295–296.

⁷⁵ Folayan, *Tripoli*, 47–50; Abun-Nasr, *A history of the Maghrib*, 166–167, 183–184; Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 299–300.

⁷⁶ Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 293–294, 303–304.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 73–74.

⁷⁸ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 168–169.

symbolised both a piratical threat and a common concern. The rapid transition from categorising corsairs as ally or belligerent, during the recent wars, to outlaw and pirate in the new time of peace was a significant break with the past. In fact, the change was so conspicuous that some authors have argued that the congress ‘condemned’ Barbary corsairing.⁷⁹ The condemnation did not happen, at least from an international legal point of view, as the purported ‘piracies’ of the regencies remained excluded from Vienna’s Final Acts.

The congress reshaped conceptions of piracy and security on the Mediterranean Sea due to the power of diplomats, activists and ambitious individuals who travelled to the Habsburg capital to assert their claims. Even if they were not always officially invited, these actors proved important for the question of security in the Mediterranean. For them, the Congress of Vienna provided a stage on which to broadcast their wishes for European security abroad after establishing peace at home.

An ever-growing and increasingly diverse group of people came to Vienna in late September 1814 for the congress’ opening festivities. Thousands of spectators came to watch the crowned heads of Europe ride into the city. Many soon left again, but some, as one contemporary magazine stated, remained to ‘attend business’.⁸⁰ The British gentleman Sir William Sidney Smith (1764–1840) was one of those non-official attendees. An unemployed vice-admiral of the Royal Navy, Smith had come to Vienna as part of the Swedish delegation. Yet he mainly represented the new knightly order he had created (and commanded) himself: the ‘Knights Liberators of the Slaves in Africa’.⁸¹ It had one great cause: alleviating the plight of Christians who had fallen captive to Barbary corsairs. Such seizures accounted for part of the Mediterranean corsairing economy, generating additional incomes from the ransom of captives through largely formalised channels of exchange, involving Christian redemptive orders and fiscal instruments like the so-called *Sklavenkasse*.⁸² Captives generally depended upon their social status and

⁷⁹ Gale, ‘Barbary’s slow death’, 141–142; Brenner, *Confounding powers*, 180–181; Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 272–273.

⁸⁰ ‘Ueber öffentliche Vergnügen und Feste während des Congresses zu Wien (Fragment aus einem Briefen)’, *Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus und Mode* (December 1814), 771.

⁸¹ G. Sluga, *The invention of international order: Remaking Europe after Napoleon* (Princeton, NJ 2021), 140. Smith’s term of active service had largely ended by 1814, but he was made Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in 1815 and promoted to the rank of admiral in 1821. ‘Smith, Sir William Sidney’, *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1911) vol. 25, en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Smith,_Sir_William_Sidney, accessed 10-05-2017.

⁸² Hershenson, ‘The political economy of ransom’; M. Ressel, *Zwischen Sklavenkassen und Türkenpässen: Nordeuropa und die Barbaresken in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin 2012).

monetary means to avoid forced labour. Contemporaries viewed this form of bondage as tantamount to 'Christian slavery'.⁸³

Smith employed all kinds of means to publicise his cause and put the 'Knights Liberators' in the limelight at the congress. The former serviceman travelled from England to Vienna around 20 September and took up lodgings at the Gundelhof, just behind the Peterskirche in the city centre. He arranged a private audience with the Russian tsar and initiated correspondences with Metternich and French Foreign Minister Charles-Maurice, Prince of Talleyrand (1754–1838).⁸⁴ All this networking sought to boost publicity for a lavish, planned fund-raising event. On 29 December 1814, the 'Knights Liberators' held a charitable 'picnic' at the Augarten – a setting Smith was proud to describe as 'a house appertaining to his imperial and royal majesty the Emperor of Austria'.⁸⁵

Smith held the banquet right in the middle of the season for festivities. Judging by the agenda of Lord Castlereagh, late December was a time full of parties: On 26 December Metternich hosted a ball, followed on the 28th by a dance at the Habsburg court. Nonetheless, Emperor Franz I of Austria, Tsar Alexander I of Russia, King Frederik VI of Denmark, King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia and Prince Leopold of Sicily all accepted Smith's invitation and made appearances at the event.⁸⁶ Smith opened dinner with a quadruple toast to the sovereigns, the ladies of Europe 'and all other women on God's Creation', the Christian knights of his order, and the slaves 'in the hands of the infidel'.⁸⁷ One lady in attendance, Countess Elise von Bernstorff, the wife of a Danish delegate, later recalled that many hours of the polonaise ensued as the dancing crowd went down the stairs and around the galleries.⁸⁸ She also reminisced that Smith, fifty years old at the time, was an elderly, small and somewhat 'hunched' man, but that his powerful speeches and eccentric mannerisms (involving constant changes of the regalia he wore) put everyone in a good mood.⁸⁹

⁸³ R. Davis, *Christian slaves, Muslim masters: White slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast and Italy, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke 2003).

⁸⁴ National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM), SMT/13; 'Narischkin to Sidney Smith', 30-10-1814. Other correspondences are printed in E. Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, 2 vols. (London 1839), vol. 2, 316–317, 319–320.

⁸⁵ Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, vol. 2, 321–325.

⁸⁶ The invitation and 'List of illustrious chevaliers gathered at Augarten' are both in NMM, SMT/13.

⁸⁷ HHStA, StK, Kongressakten, 1, 'Fête des Chevaliers a l'Augarten', 29-12-1814.

⁸⁸ E. von Bernstorff, *Ein Bild aus der Zeit von 1789 bis 1835: Aus ihren Aufzeichnungen* (Berlin 1896), 158; K. Schneider and E. Werner, *Europa in Wien: Who is who beim Wiener Kongress 1814/15* (Vienna 2015), 56.

⁸⁹ Von Bernstorff, *Ein Bild*, 156–158.

According to the countess, writing some two decades later, the cause behind the event had had something to do with aiding 'black slaves'.⁹⁰ This was a common mix-up, even during the days of the congress. Smith complained to Metternich about faulty press coverage, repeating that his aim had been to raise money 'to nourish the Christian slaves in chains and remove them from the dark and unhealthy dungeons'.⁹¹ The 'Knights Liberators', Smith once more explained in another letter, would send the money generated at the picnic to European consuls in North Africa, so that they might set up hospitals and provide subsistence to the captives. In this way, the fundraiser intended to provide instant relief for the captured subjects while they awaited an 'ulterior measure for their deliverance'.⁹²

Smith laid out what such an 'ulterior measure' might be in a pamphlet he published in preparation for the congress. His *Mémoire sur la nécessité et les moyens de faire cesser les pirateries des états barbaresques* called it 'remarkable' that no one paid attention to the enslavement of Christians in North Africa, while the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade had gained increasing popularity.⁹³ The definitive redemption of the Christian captives, Smith argued, would never be attained by paying ransoms and tributes but could only succeed with intimidation and force. Smith denounced the payments that had long been such a common feature of European–North African diplomacy, calling it 'repugnant' that 'civilised peoples' would turn themselves into tributaries of 'robber chiefs'. It was an absurd and monstrous state of affairs, he claimed, 'outrageous' to religion, humanity and honour.⁹⁴

Smith proposed the creation of a multinational fleet commanded by the 'Knights'. It could monitor, arrest and persecute the 'pirates' on land and sea. He invited all interested governments to provide naval contingents for a supranational force, unaffected by European wars or political crises. According to the vice-admiral, who clearly did not lose sight of his own professional interests here, this combined fleet under his command would not only bring 'perfect security' to European maritime commerce, but it would also help 'civilise' the coasts of Africa by directing local initiative away from

⁹⁰ Von Bernstorff, *Ein Bild*, 156.

⁹¹ Vick, *The Congress*, 216.

⁹² From a letter by Sidney Smith to the First Minister of Sardinia in Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, vol. 2, 321–325.

⁹³ W. Smith, *Mémoire sur la nécessité et les moyens de faire cesser les pirateries des états barbaresques* (London 1814), 1. A German copy is in Nationaal Archief, The Hague (NL-HaNA), 2.05.01, inv. 746, 'Sidney Smith to Van Nagell', 07-03-1816, Annex I, 'Schriftlicher Aufsatz. Über die Nothwendigkeit und Mittel die Seeraubereyen der Barbaresken einzustellen'. An English translation appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, no. 14436, 10-08-1815.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Mémoire*, 3–4.

piracy and towards other industries.⁹⁵ First, the 'Knights' would attempt negotiations with the Ottoman sultan. Smith proposed to urge the sultan to stop the deployment of Janissary troops to North Africa, as they were also used against European allies of the Ottoman Empire. If the sultan, however, did not comply, then, Smith assured, 'the barbarians in Africa' would be brought to reason with 'remonstrances, threats or reprisals'.⁹⁶

The self-styled 'philanthropic' agenda of the 'Knights Liberators' did little to belie its imperialist inclinations. While Smith did not argue for outright conquest and colonisation, he did propose that the Barbary Regencies should be kept in check with the constant threat of force. In so doing, he called into question the regencies' sovereignty as political entities on an equal footing. Smith rejected treaties and tributes as security practices, and thereby delegitimised the position of the regents of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli as sovereigns. The vice-admiral posited diplomacy with Barbary as an outdated absurdity. In his view, the 'progress of Enlightenment and civilisation' would leave no place for 'Barbary piracies' or 'Christian slavery'.⁹⁷

Smith's reasoning made security at sea dependent on whether the North African polities could fit a 'civilised' model of state or, in other words, on whether they could adhere to European ideals of diplomacy and regular warfare. Smith invoked the dichotomy of civilised versus barbaric and relied on historical trajectories of progress to justify the use of intimidation and force. The absence of a piratical threat to European shipping would be ensured only if governments 'useful to commerce' ruled over North Africa, living in 'harmony with all civilised nations'.⁹⁸ Smith asserted that concerted efforts of the European powers, on both the diplomatic and military level, were necessary to effectuate these changes. His writings provide an early conception of the inter-imperial order of security that was to emerge in the Mediterranean, shaped by cooperative action and with a pretence of 'universal' benefit.⁹⁹

These potentially far-reaching plans had little precedent. Smith therefore had to argue for their reasonability. He claimed that his personal expertise, experience and familiarity with the region guaranteed their usefulness and relevance. All his ideas, he argued, were the result of 'thirty years of study and profound examination'.¹⁰⁰ Smith referred here to his days of active service in the Mediterranean, when he patrolled Ottoman territories, cruising North

⁹⁵ Smith, *Mémoire*, 5–6.

⁹⁶ From a letter by Sidney Smith to the First Minister of Sardinia in Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, 325–328.

⁹⁷ Smith, *Mémoire*, 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁹ G. Weiss, *Captives and corsairs: France and slavery in the early modern Mediterranean* (Stanford 2011), 148.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *Mémoire*, 5–6.

Africa and the Levant. He had negotiated with the reis efendi (the Ottoman equivalent of a foreign affairs minister) in 1799 and been involved in the Royal Navy's crossing of the Dardanelles in 1807, which brought ships of war in view of Constantinople and caused great unrest among the populace there.¹⁰¹ Both operations aimed at creating an alliance with the Ottoman Empire against France.¹⁰² Smith became famous for his contribution to the Siege of Acre (1799), which thwarted Napoleon's Near Eastern campaigns – a battle he recounted so often and in such detail that it brought him the nickname 'Long Acre' in a play on a London street name.¹⁰³ At the Congress of Vienna, Smith referenced these experiences and encounters to position himself as a knowledgeable, serious individual with a worthwhile agenda.¹⁰⁴

Smith not only bolstered his arguments by showcasing his expertise and exploiting his personal fame, but he also tacitly linked his programme to more general activism. For instance, the opening lines of the pamphlet for the 'Knight's Liberators' presented their agenda as a logical extension to the abolition of the slave trade. Smith had close ties to leading figures of the British abolitionist movement and maintained a steady correspondence with William Wilberforce.¹⁰⁵ The vice-admiral had encountered Barbary corsairing and Christian captivity during his stints on the Mediterranean Sea. British Parliamentary debates on international abolition finally inspired him to take up the cause and go to Vienna.¹⁰⁶

Smith utilised the same sort of religiously inspired justifications to argue for change that also characterised abolitionist petitions. As one study of English abolitionism argues, much early nineteenth-century activism was marked by 'a fundamental concern for proper order in the world' – and this order could be defined in terms of Christian Providence or the progress of civilisation.¹⁰⁷ The 'Knights Liberators' were not a unique phenomenon. They fit seamlessly into that part of the post-Napoleonic public sphere characterised both by a distaste

¹⁰¹ Mackesy, *The war*, 171–181; A. Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The crisis of the Ottoman order in the age of revolutions* (Stanford, CA 2016), 171–172.

¹⁰² Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, vol. 1, 41–42, 150. The mission of 1807 brought out the poet in the admiral, who captured some of his later attitudes to Ottoman statehood: 'His empire's fate a thread alone doth bear, / Suspended hangs the blow of death in air; / ... 'tis not time to take / Revenge on Europe's scourge, Mahommed's race'. J. Barrow, *The life and correspondence of Admiral Sir William Sidney Smith*, 2 vols. (London 1848), vol. 2, 243–244.

¹⁰³ T. Pocock, *A thirst for glory: The life of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith* (London 1998), 221.

¹⁰⁴ Not always successfully, as contemporaries and historians found his grandiosity bordering on the ridiculous. One author calls Smith 'the maritime aspect of the Gothic Revival', C. Northcote Parkinson, *Edward Pellew, Viscount Exmouth: Admiral of the Red* (London 1934), 398–399.

¹⁰⁵ Barrow, *The life and correspondence*, 2, 371–373.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 366.

¹⁰⁷ D. Turley, *The culture of English antislavery, 1780–1860* (London 1991), 44.

of 'Godless', unchecked revolution and a strong conviction that societal changes were necessary, as long as they proceeded in an orderly manner. Smith, in effect, mixed Christian notions of obligation with Enlightenment visions of progress (and an Old Regime reverie of Romantic chivalric duty). The 'Knights Liberators' were an offshoot of the much broader upsurge in civic and Christian activism that was behind abolitionism as well as plans like the Holy Alliance.¹⁰⁸

Some authors, however, suggest that there was more to Smith's activism than professional experience and personal conviction. The vice-admiral had been a secret agent during the wars, involved in spying, smuggling and clandestine warfare against Revolutionary France. Smith was a cousin of Prime Minister Pitt and had been brought up at court, where his father was a gentleman usher to Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III (r. 1760–1820). Lines of communication were therefore short and informal, landing Smith a covert appointment to set up a military base on the uninhabited Îles Saint-Marcouf off the coast of Normandy in 1795. From there, he operated a spy network and carried out secret missions on the French mainland.¹⁰⁹ Historian of Tunisia Khalifa Chater suggests that Smith had secret instructions to test the waters for a British crackdown on the Barbary Regencies, which was allegedly informed by the capture of Malta and the need to take over the Maltese Order's anti-corsair mission.¹¹⁰ Smith's knightly endeavours would then have been a mere façade, but the internal embarrassment his efforts caused in British official circles appears to support a different conclusion.

The European press immediately noted that Smith's efforts put British statesmen in an uneasy position. Smith's personal fame – and the elaborate event he staged during the Congress of Vienna – certainly drew attention to the order's cause. One periodical, however, displayed scepticism about the feasibility of Smith's plans, stating, 'We wish that the noble organiser may not encounter his primary obstacle in the political maxims of his own country.'¹¹¹ British treaty alliances and maritime commercial interests clearly did not sit well with Smith's confrontational proposals. Moreover, the diplomatic views of Britain's congress delegates opposed ruptures in the international status quo. In a memorandum of 7 May 1814, Lord Castlereagh had warned against

¹⁰⁸ Turley, *The culture*, 17–21; S. Ghervas, 'Antidotes to empire: From the Congress System to the European Union' in: J. Boyer and B. Molden (eds.), *Eutropes: The paradox of European empire* (Chicago 2014), 49–81, 56–59, 63–67; M. Mazower, *Governing the world: The history of an idea* (London 2013), 31.

¹⁰⁹ Smith was caught when the ship he commanded ran aground. He was held at the Abbaye prison in Paris in 1796, T. Clayton, *This dark business: The secret war against Napoleon* (London 2018), 43–44, 49.

¹¹⁰ Chater, *Dépendance et mutations*, 218, 238–239.

¹¹¹ Vick, *The Congress*, 218.

the dangers of all-too-sudden and extreme political changes.¹¹² He penned this warning in relation to constitutional alterations in Europe, and it is easy to see how these ideas would also support moderate policies towards the Barbary Regencies. Forceful action could upset the regional status quo and antagonise the central authorities of the Ottoman Empire.

Smith nevertheless attempted to obtain support from the British government. In one of his personal writings, the vice-admiral noted that official backing would be necessary to realise his plans for the creation of a combined fleet. Without it, he wrote, 'I must confine myself to friendly invitations addressed to my fellow *knights*.'¹¹³ Support from the Foreign Office or the Admiralty never came, and Smith would even receive several official letters slapping him on the wrist for his 'rogue' conduct.¹¹⁴

Still, the unemployed commander and his knightly order were not entirely without allies or official supporters in Vienna. The 'Knights Liberators' found friends among delegates of several smaller European powers. Independently, representatives of the Italian principalities and German city states also tried to put the threat of 'Barbary piracy' onto the congress agenda. One example is the Florentine Prince Corsini, who represented Tuscany and sent a long letter to Castlereagh. He urged Great Britain to reprimand the North African regencies. The Italian states were unable to protect their navigation themselves, the Prince argued, and without British help their trade would be seriously jeopardised.¹¹⁵

Representatives of the German Hanseatic cities made similar arguments. The Lübeck delegate, Senator Johann Hach, carried to Vienna what was certainly the longest memorandum on Barbary corsairing. The volume, subtitled *Ein Völkerwunsch*, totalled 438 pages. The largest part of the text provided historical illustrations of the Barbary regents' 'unfaithfulness' concerning international treaties.¹¹⁶ The author, a local gymnasium professor with poetic sensibilities named Friedrich Hermann, directly petitioned the congress.¹¹⁷ He proposed a new 'crusade' that would 'cleanse' the Mediterranean of corsairs, whom he framed as 'childlike,' 'mentally ill,' and an 'obstacle' to maritime trade.¹¹⁸ Hermann listed the benefits of a crusade

¹¹² De Graaf, *Fighting terror*, 64.

¹¹³ Howard, *Memoirs of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith*, vol. 2, 325–328. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁴ The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 8/11, 'Bathurst to Melville', 27-09-1816, fp. 26–27.

¹¹⁵ TNA, FO 139/21, 'Prince Corsini of Tuscany to Castlereagh', 15-10-1814, fp. 79–84.

¹¹⁶ F. Hermann, *Ueber die Seeräuber im Mittelmeer und ihre Vertilgung: Ein Völkerwunsch an den erlauchten Kongreß in Wien* (Lübeck 1815), 12–206.

¹¹⁷ Some of Friedrich Hermann's other works included *Der erste Morgen an Schillers Grabe: Eine Dichtung* (Lübben 1805); *Urania: Eine Sammlung romantischer Dichtungen* (Lübben 1806); and *Argwohn und Unschuld: Drama in 3 Akten* (Lübeck 1824).

¹¹⁸ Hermann, *Ueber die Seeräuber*, 343, 376.

against North Africa, including the restoration of Christian and national honour, security on the Mediterranean shores and sea, commercial and scientific progress and dealing a 'deathly blow to Islam'.¹¹⁹

Hermann's book came with a thirty-page list of literature references, which allows us to better understand how new security concerns repurposed older Enlightenment ideas.¹²⁰ One of the publications he cited most frequently was the *Histoire des deux Indes*, which contained only a small section on North Africa but was nonetheless hugely influential in shaping attitudes towards the Barbary Regencies.¹²¹ This 'multi-authored bestseller of pre-Revolutionary Europe,' as one historian describes it, was edited by French writer and priest Guillaume Thomas Raynal and first appeared in 1770.¹²² It set out a broad judgment of European colonial expansion, while singling out the Barbary Coast as one area that could benefit from the spread of 'civilisation'. Later editions of the work contained a passage suggesting that a 'universal league' could end tyranny in North Africa, stop piracy, and open up the regencies for useful commercial exchange.¹²³

Threads of this eighteenth-century thinking run throughout the various publications aimed at putting piracy on the congress agenda. Calls for decisive and sometimes multinational action against 'Barbary piracy' existed long before Smith's proposal. As Ann Thomson clarifies in her *Barbary and Enlightenment*, European writers in the eighteenth century gradually began to think of the Barbary Regencies as polities that were still in an earlier stage of historical development. These authors, she notes, also came to see the Barbary Regencies as a part of the African continent and as a gateway to its unbounded natural riches. The commercial potential of North Africa could be opened up, but the constant, tyrannical warfare of privateering stood in the way. Endurance of this warfare was considered a result of the narrowly self-interested policies of most European governments, who happily concluded treaties and let the corsairs target their rivals. Pleas and proposals for European action became increasingly common in these quarters of Enlightenment thought.¹²⁴ The Congress of Vienna provided an opportunity to turn those plans into action and capitalise on ascending internationalist

¹¹⁹ Hermann, *Ueber die Seeräuber*, 398–405.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 417–437.

¹²¹ A. Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment: European attitudes towards the Maghreb in the 18th century* (Leiden 1987), 4, 130–132; D. Todd, 'Retour sur l'expédition d'Alger: Les faux-semblants d'un tournant colonialiste français', *Monde(s)* 10:2 (2016), 205–222, 216–217.

¹²² D. Todd, 'Transnational projects of empire in France, c. 1815–c. 1870', *Modern Intellectual History* 12:2 (2015), 265–293, 268.

¹²³ Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment*, 130–135.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 130–132, 137.

conceptions of the ‘Barbary pirate’ issue, as Tidemann, Smith and Hermann tried to do.

Still, this was not an easy feat. Metternich’s unwillingness to allow ‘Barbary piracy’ into the official negotiations was only one of the difficulties at hand. Hermann’s tome found little reception at the congress due to its difficult German prose and Teutonic size.¹²⁵ Senator Hach opted for a personal approach and arranged many private meetings in which he discussed concerted measures against Barbary corsairing to push the issue onto the agenda. Though one of his Hanseatic colleagues characterised Hach as a ‘rather boring’ man, a Dutch representative recounted that he became remarkably frenetic during discussions of Barbary corsairing.¹²⁶ Hach’s ceaseless comparisons between ‘black’ and ‘Christian’ slavery animated him. Like Smith, he questioned the selectivity of acting against the ‘African slave trade’ while allowing the ‘enslavement’ of Christian captives in North Africa to continue.¹²⁷ This inconsistency in policy ultimately allowed the issue of ‘Barbary piracy’ to edge closer to the negotiating tables, as abolition became the subject of one of the most drawn-out debates of the congress.

Negotiations on abolition became linked to the perceived threats of North African corsairing because many contemporaries did not see any problems in equating ‘black’ to ‘Christian’ (or ‘white’) slavery.¹²⁸ Smith, Hach and other like-minded individuals consciously emphasised the slavery aspect of ‘Barbary piracy’ as a threat to European security. The press also bolstered associations between these two types of slavery. Abolition and Barbary corsairing became popular topics in European periodicals, which increasingly put the two together and thereby reinforced Smith’s narrative.¹²⁹

Of course, Christian captives’ forced labour in North Africa (with the opportunity for ransom) was a totally different system of unfree labour from the trans-Atlantic operation of chattel slavery.¹³⁰ Capturing people and ransoming them was also hardly unique to the regencies. Like corsairing itself, the enslavement of captives had been common practice well into the eighteenth century on all sides of the Mediterranean. Italian states forced captive Muslims to build the Vatican’s fortifications, to dig Livorno’s canals and to

¹²⁵ Vick, *The Congress*, 218. Despite its size, one of Hach’s colleagues from Bremen still managed to lose a copy of the book among his other papers. M. Hundt, ‘Widerstreitende Interessen und gemeinsame Bedrohungen: Lübeck und Bremen in den ersten Jahrzehnten des 19. Jahrhunderts’, *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 87 (2008), 92–116, 102–103.

¹²⁶ Hundt, ‘Widerstreitende Interessen’, 101–102, 104.

¹²⁷ NL-HaNA, 2.05.10.10, inv. 18, no. 15, ‘Van Spaen van Voorstonden to Van Nagell’, 04-10-1814.

¹²⁸ Weiss, *Captives and corsairs*, 5.

¹²⁹ Vick, *The Congress*, 217.

¹³⁰ McDougall, *A history of Algeria*, 32.

erect the Caserta Palace that belonged to the Bourbon kings of Naples.¹³¹ In 1789, the Moroccan Sultan Mohammed ben Abdallah (r. 1757–1790) ransomed six hundred slaves from Malta. When France conquered the island nine years later, Napoleon chose to liberate the two thousand Muslims still held in its prisons.¹³²

The linking of 'black' and 'white' slavery nevertheless became particularly important in Vienna and resulted directly from the priority placed on abolition by official instructions for the British delegation. Domestic campaigns headed by Wilberforce and other activists had made abolition a popular cause in Britain.¹³³ Accordingly, an immediate international ban on the slave trade was one of the main British congress goals.

Abolitionist negotiations in Vienna quickly sank into a mire of mistrust and disagreement. French, Spanish and Portuguese delegates asked for colonies or financial concessions in return for prospective dates of abolition.¹³⁴ Castlereagh was convinced that foreigners mistrusted Britain. He thought that others viewed British abolition as some cunning attempt to gain competitive advantages in colonial commerce. According to Castlereagh, this mistrust made it 'impossible to persuade foreign nations that this sentiment is unmixed with the views of colonial policy'.¹³⁵ The changing international context did make abolition costly. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, several European powers regained their colonies from Britain, the sugar trade was going up again and the Royal Navy could no longer enforce anti-slave trading policies as it pleased: This made the ban on the slave trade appear much more detrimental to British commerce than it had upon its declaration in 1807.¹³⁶

International sceptics referred to enslaved Christians to indicate British goals had little to do with altruism. They wondered why, if philanthropic considerations so moved the British government to end the slave trade, it did so little to end this other kind of slavery operating on Europe's borders. Spain's representative, Pedro Gómez, Marquis of Labrador (1755–1852), called the British position inconsistent.¹³⁷ When British delegates suggested equating

¹³¹ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 218.

¹³² Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 23–24.

¹³³ P. Kielstra, *The politics of slave trade suppression in Britain and France, 1814–48: Diplomacy, morality and economics* (New York 2000), 22–55.

¹³⁴ J. Reich, 'The slave trade at the Congress of Vienna: A study in English public opinion', *The Journal of Negro History* 53:2 (1968), 129–143, 137.

¹³⁵ A. Zamoyski, *Rites of peace: The fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna* (London 2007), 346.

¹³⁶ H. Berding, 'Die Ächtung des Sklavenhandels auf dem Wiener Kongress 1814/15', *Historische Zeitschrift* 219:2 (1974), 265–289, 276–277.

¹³⁷ NL-HaNA, 2.05.10.10, inv. 18, no. 15, 'Van Spaen van Voorstonden to Van Nagell', 04-10-1814.

slave traders to pirates, it became even easier to mirror the abolition of the slave trade to the repression of ‘Barbary piracy’.¹³⁸

Despite such misgivings, plenipotentiaries of Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Prussia and Austria agreed to draft a joint declaration on 20 January 1815. It stated that each power would end the slave trade as soon as possible but only at a date every government could set for itself.¹³⁹ A few weeks later, on 8 February, the different delegates settled on a final version: the ‘Declaration of the Powers, on the Abolition of the Slave Trade’.¹⁴⁰ It took several more months of talks before this agreement made it into Article Fifteen of Vienna’s Final Acts. Negotiations on a range of other questions dragged on – until the proceedings of the congress were suddenly shaken up by the return of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The erstwhile emperor and scourge of Europe, congress attendees discovered, had escaped from exile and landed on the coast of southern France on the first day of March. He represented exactly the kind of hegemony that the multilateral negotiations, moderate proposals, anti-revolutionary aims and concerted efforts of the Congress of Vienna sought to make a thing of the past. On 23 March 1815, the four allies issued a plan to foster ‘mutual security’ in a lasting manner, until France’s total defeat – and after. This plan went further than the common war aims and peace agreements of the Treaty of Chaumont and the Treaty of Paris (1814), as the allies laid the foundations for a collaborative regime of occupation that had to avert any future threat posed by France. The reappearance of their old nemesis had brought the Great Powers even closer together, making them adopt shared security measures that were to be extended into peacetime and binding them to repeated multilateral discussions in which they handled matters of collective security.¹⁴¹

The impact of the March 1815 agreement for ‘mutual security’ endured after Napoleon’s final defeat. The spirit of mutual assurances was retained after the Battle of Waterloo. It was echoed in the Final Acts of the Congress of Vienna and integrated into the Second Treaty of Paris of November 1815, which definitively settled the occupation of France and led to the creation of the Quadruple Alliance between Austria, Prussia, Russia and Great Britain. Great Power statesmen extended their guarantee of ‘mutual security’ into peacetime, donning the authority to decide on continental issues. For

¹³⁸ Berding, ‘Die Ächtung des Sklavenhandels’, 280.

¹³⁹ Reich, ‘The slave trade’, 137; J. Klüber, *Acte des Wiener Congresses in den Jahren 1814 und 1815*, 8 vols. (Erlangen 1818), vol. 8, 9–28.

¹⁴⁰ Klüber, *Acte*, vol. 8, 9–28. The declaration, however, was a mere statement of intent – the courts of Portugal and Spain would not sign treaties of abolition until the bilateral agreements with Great Britain of 1817, which took another hefty portion of bargaining by the Duke of Wellington and other British agents.

¹⁴¹ De Graaf, *Fighting terror*, 72–76.

France, this meant that the allies stationed an occupation army. For the rest of the continent, it meant that preserving peace and retaining the 'balance of power' would be based on mediation. The guarantee of 'mutual security' entailed the international management of security issues and the concerted employment of Great Power force, even after wartime.¹⁴² This fledgling security culture also created diplomatic frameworks for further negotiations and repressive efforts concerning the purported threat of North African corsairing.

Although the reappearance of Napoleon set these new policies into motion, it also stymied efforts to deal with the regencies. It drew congress attendees away from negotiations in Vienna. Several of the main congress participants had left the Habsburg capital by the end of the ten-month long meeting. Sidney Smith had left Austria for Brussels, hoping to join the campaign against Bonaparte. He even travelled to Waterloo, where he organised the transportation of the wounded after the battle. He chartered wagons to carry the abandoned casualties to hospitals and largely paid the bills himself.¹⁴³ When the Final Acts of the congress were read out to the remaining attendees in Vienna on 9 June 1815 – a week before the Battle of Waterloo took place – Smith was not there. Its many stipulations did not include the cause that he and others such as Hach, Prince Corsini and the Marquis of Labrador had raised at the congress, but it would soon become clear that the Final Acts made Barbary corsairing appear in a whole new light.

The Spoils of Peace

The Congress of Vienna impacted European engagement with the Barbary Regencies but not because it directly condemned corsairing. The Final Acts altered the framework in which European contemporaries understood corsairing, allowing them to frame 'Barbary piracy' as a security issue of mutual concern. The conclusion of a general peace created opportunities for these new attitudes to develop into unprecedented policies of cooperation. Contemporary European attitudes towards Barbary corsairing were influenced by the idea that peace was a common project and that the typically self-interested politics of security could be overcome. This idea would eventually effectuate a turn towards violent intervention in North Africa.

An additional article of the Second Treaty of Paris already indicated that 'Barbary piracy' would only gain in prominence as a matter of international negotiation. The article noted that Great Powers ambassadors would convene in London sometime in 1816 to talk further about pressing matters, particularly the abolition of the slave trade. Tsar Alexander I (1777–1825) then

¹⁴² De Graaf, *Fighting terror*, 90–92.

¹⁴³ R. Liverpool, *Knight of the sword: The life and letters of Admiral Sir William Sidney Smith* (London 1964), 198–200.

suggested also including the ‘piracies’ of the Barbary Regencies. The Russian monarch had been approached by Spanish and Portuguese diplomats to ask for his mediation and now took the opportunity to follow up on their request. In addition to humouring the Iberian governments, Alexander wished to bring an immediate end to the string of hostilities corsairs of all three regencies had carried out against Russian ships.¹⁴⁴ Yet his proposal also clearly echoed Smith’s plans in its calls to ‘liberate the Mediterranean of the Barbary piracies’ by creating a ‘defensive system’.¹⁴⁵

The Congress of Vienna represents a turning point in the conceptualisation of security for Europeans. Important characteristics of a new security culture presented themselves for the first time during its meetings and informal events. The Final Acts and the abolitionist declaration signalled a moralising turn in international politics, rooted both in a rising evangelically infused internationalism and an ascending humanitarianism.¹⁴⁶ As Fabian Klose clarifies, the Vienna declaration ‘not only created an international humanitarian norm but also conceived the corresponding international apparatus to enforce it’.¹⁴⁷ The efforts of Smith and other activists pointed to the internationalisation of common issues, framed as shared security threats endangering fellow Christians.

In a more general sense, the normative ring of the Final Acts further delegitimised the Barbary Regents as internationally accepted sovereigns. A tone of moral righteousness and the rhetoric of international legality bolstered claims that Barbary corsairing represented a piratical threat warranting repressive measures. The ‘Declaration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade’ proved particularly instrumental for furthering this idea. The statement contained vague language concerning an end date for the slave trade, but its moral tone was clear. It held that the slave trade was ‘repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality’. Therefore, the signees agreed on ‘putting an end to a scourge, which has so long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity’, stating that the ‘public voice, in all civilised countries, calls aloud for its prompt suppression’.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ *Vnešnjaia politika Rossii XIX i načala XX veka: Dokumenty rossijskogo ministerstva inostrannykh del* (Moscow 1960–1974), series 1, vol. 8, 278–279, ‘Nesselrode to A. d’Italinskii’, 12(24)-04-1815.

¹⁴⁵ HHStA, StK, Kongressakten, 16, Folder 16–2, ‘Diverse mémoires’, 16-2-11, ‘Abolition de traité des nègres et des piraties des Barbaresques’, n.d.

¹⁴⁶ F. Klose, ‘In the cause of humanity’: *Eine Geschichte der humanitären Intervention im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 2019), 31.

¹⁴⁷ F. Klose, ‘Enforcing abolition: The entanglement of civil society action, humanitarian norm-setting, and military intervention’ in: F. Klose (ed.), *The emergence of humanitarian intervention: Ideas and practice from the nineteenth century to the present* (Cambridge 2016), 91–120, 93.

¹⁴⁸ Berding, ‘Die Ächtung des Sklavenhandels’, 282–283, 285.

The wording of the declaration on the slave trade, by extension, touched upon the conduct of the Barbary Regents as well. Christian captivity – and the practice of corsairing tied to that captivity – appeared in the same morally dubious light as the trans-Atlantic trade in humans. Brian Vick has described the abolitionist declaration as ‘the first truly humanitarian measure cast in universalist terms to emerge from a diplomatic gathering’.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, we ought to remain aware that post-congress engagement with the Barbary Regencies also demonstrates how such humanitarianism did not apply to all peoples and creeds in the same manner. Rather, humanitarian measures meant international condemnation and violent intervention for the ‘piratical’ and ‘infidel’ polities of North Africa, as contemporaries thought they now opposed the ‘civilised’ and ‘popular’ abolitionist agenda.

The consecration of peace through the Final Acts further effectuated a closing of the ranks among European powers. As Matthias Schulz has argued, the Final Acts were the ‘first general peace concluded as a multilateral treaty’, providing ‘a kind of “constitutional” order of Europe’.¹⁵⁰ This order was exclusively Christian, European and ‘civilised’. Muslim powers were not part of it, but they would soon notice its workings. Respect for old arrangements with the North African regencies did not instantly disappear. Still, the development of public international law in Europe, based on the new web of multilateral treaties and diplomatic deliberation at congresses, did raise uncertainties about the legal standing of North African sovereigns.¹⁵¹

The Ottoman Empire’s status within the developing Congress System remained another particularly complicated question, pointing to the inconsistencies of the new diplomatic order. Ottoman representatives had been invited to come to Vienna but with the caveat that they would be accorded ‘the rank of the fourth class’ – the same rank as that of Europe’s smallest sovereign entities. Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) rejected the invitation.¹⁵²

With this closing of the ranks, old ambitions of a universal league against ‘Barbary piracy’ for the first time became a possibility. The peace of 1815 made the ideas for cooperative action and the prospects of a new inter-imperial order on the Mediterranean more than millenarian dreams. ‘Barbary piracy’

¹⁴⁹ Vick, *The Congress*, 204.

¹⁵⁰ M. Schulz, ‘The construction of a culture of peace in post-Napoleonic Europe: Peace through equilibrium, law and new forms of communicative interaction’, *Journal of Modern European History* 13:4 (2015), 464–474, 465.

¹⁵¹ Windler, ‘Diplomatic history’, 79–80. On its later impact, J. Pitts, ‘Boundaries of Victorian international law’ in: D. Bell (ed.), *Victorian visions of global order: Empire and international relations in nineteenth-century political thought* (Cambridge 2007), 67–88, 67–68.

¹⁵² O. Ozavci, ‘A priceless grace? The Congress of Vienna of 1815, the Ottoman Empire and historicising the Eastern Question’, *English Historical Review* 136:583 (2021), 1450–1476.

could now be more resoundingly posed as a threat to European security, to be eradicated definitively in a concerted manner. The terms in which historical actors described such cooperation at the Congress of Vienna differed, ranging from the crusading rhetoric of Tidemann, Hach and Hermann to Smith's proposals of diplomacy and maritime policing. Yet the underlying conceptions of the threats posed – and interests at stake – had similarities. The Barbary Regencies menaced commerce and navigation through their perpetual warfare, thereby destabilising order at sea and subjecting Christians to slavery. These threats, or the idea of them, made corsairing a shared international concern. For this reason, the Congress of Vienna marked a significant break from the past. It hinted at altered European–North African relations and signalled the coming of a new era in which old proposals of 'enlightened opinion' could be turned into action.¹⁵³ This 'era-consciousness' inspired the idea that the Barbary Regencies and their corsairs were an anomaly, out of place in a world reconfigured with a new international order.¹⁵⁴

Simultaneously, European actors noticed that power relations within the Mediterranean had changed. There had been a considerable build-up of naval forces operating in the Mediterranean during the Napoleonic Wars. The Royal Navy's presence in particular increased as the British Empire obtained various regional footholds and created sizeable military complexes on these holdings.¹⁵⁵ European forces also had become much more powerful than their North African counterparts. Ships of eighty, ninety or a hundred cannon had come to fill the ranks of many European navies, following technological innovations in the preceding centuries that were enabled by economies of scale and the growing apparatuses of the fiscal–military state.¹⁵⁶ Squadrons made up of such warships outclassed the North African fleets, which rarely contained ships of over seventy cannon.¹⁵⁷ The ensuing differences in power dynamics impacted naval battles as much as overarching ideas of righteous order and proper diplomatic conduct. The appeal of certain 'civilised' or 'enlightened' principles became all the greater now that the option of forcibly implementing them presented itself. In return, such moral principles became the pillars that had to sustain and justify naval predominance, as would

¹⁵³ For 'enlightened opinion', Thomson, *Barbary and Enlightenment*, 130–132.

¹⁵⁴ W. Pyta, 'Kulturgeschichtliche Annäherungen an das europäische Mächtekonzept' in: W. Pyta (ed.), *Das europäische Mächtekonzept. Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongress 1815 bis zum Krimkrieg 1853* (Cologne 2009), 1–24, 22–23. For a similar dynamic in the British repression of piracy in India, S. Layton, 'Discourses of piracy in an age of revolutions', *Itinerario* XXXV:2 (2011), 81–97, 82.

¹⁵⁵ There were still many debates in Westminster about whether these conquests had to be maintained after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Holland, *Blue-water empire*, 12–13, 22–24.

¹⁵⁶ C. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780–1914* (Malden, MA 2004), 62–64.

¹⁵⁷ Hourani, *A history of the Arab peoples*, 259–260; Panzac, *Barbary corsairs*, 27–28, 32.

become clear during the bombardments and violent interventions against 'Barbary piracy' that followed over the next two decades.¹⁵⁸

Asymmetries of power did not immediately materialise into action. Governments of smaller and larger powers continued to conclude treaties with Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli in the years right after the Congress of Vienna. The deys and beys previously had several means at their disposal to push back against European encroachment, as American historian Frederick Robert Hunter has explained. They tried to establish commercial monopolies, made use of inter-European rivalries and pursued the practice of privateering.¹⁵⁹ In the post-Vienna context, the latter two options became increasingly difficult, but they did not disappear overnight. Smith, Hermann and Tidemann could call for forceful action all they wanted, but it remained unclear as to how such concerted action would transpire. Who could instigate multinational means of repression? On the basis of which diplomatic agreements? And how were European naval contingents going to be brought together in a single operational framework? The promise of a follow-up conference in London suggested some possible answers to these questions. Still, this promise was only a first, preliminary step. Activist pamphleteers and smaller powers' officials at the Congress of Vienna had pushed the idea of 'Barbary piracy' as a threat to security, but how that idea was going to be turned into practice was still uncertain.

A Warlike Postscript

An intervention of a non-European power against the Regency of Algiers, which took place just weeks after the Final Acts, provided European contemporaries with one possible answer to their lingering questions. While the delegates of Europe's powers went about their negotiations, dances and picnics, something else was happening on the other side of the Atlantic. The United States government sought to reap its own benefits from the conclusion of a new peace. The Treaty of Ghent of December 1814 had brought an end to the Anglo-American War of 1812, in which British troops had ransacked Washington and destroyed the White House. In the midst of this conflict, the regent of Algiers, Dey Hadj Ali (r. 1809–March 1815), also declared war on the United States. He did so because of overdue and insufficient payments of

¹⁵⁸ What David Turley has written about British abolitionism could apply for European anti-piracy policies as well: 'As the British recognised their predominant position in the world, antislavery laid claim to putting moral fibre into the exercise of international power and in doing so promised to help sustain the predominance by prescribing as fundamental features of other societies forms of commerce and labour in accord with British values.' Turley, *The culture of English antislavery*, 46.

¹⁵⁹ Hunter, 'Rethinking Europe's conquest', 14–15.

tribute and was allegedly backed in his resolve by a statement of alliance from British Prince Regent and later King George IV (r. 1811–1830).¹⁶⁰ The Treaty of Ghent that ended the war with Britain allowed the US government to redirect its attention to Algiers.¹⁶¹

A squadron of ten ships left New York in May under the command of Commodore Stephen Decatur.¹⁶² En route to Algiers, off the volcanic rocks of Cabo de Gata in the southeast of Spain, the American fleet encountered the frigate *Mashouda*: the forty-six-cannon flagship of the Algerine navy. The Americans quickly encircled the ship, catching its captain Raïs Hamidou by surprise. In the exchange of fire that ensued, the Algerine commander fell, ending a distinguished career of thirty-five years.

While Italian historian Salvatore Bono has called Raïs Hamidou the last of the famous Barbary naval commanders, he also represents one of the first victims of the changing international engagement with North African corsairing.¹⁶³ Historian Abun-Nasr describes him as ‘the idolised hero of the Algerine community’.¹⁶⁴ Born a tailor’s son in 1773, Hamidou made a rapid rise in the navy and became especially renowned for the capture of a Portuguese frigate of forty-four cannon in 1802. The captain made such a name for himself that, upon taking office, the mistrusting Dey Ali ben Mahmud (r. 1808–1809) exiled him to Beirut.¹⁶⁵ After his return to Algerine service in 1809, Hamidou was made the head of his own squadron and reeled in Sicilian, Neapolitan, Spanish, Dutch, Swedish and American prizes before meeting his end on 17 June 1815.¹⁶⁶

Following the battle, the victorious Americans dragged Hamidou’s frigate to Cartagena in Spain and kept the 406 Algerine crewmembers imprisoned. The fleet then sailed on to Algiers, where the newly acceded Dey Omar Agha (r. 1815–1817) underwent the first defeat of his two-year reign. He agreed to a treaty without tributes.¹⁶⁷ The peace agreement further stipulated that

¹⁶⁰ The Algerines wanted tributes in the guise of naval stores like masts and lumber made from American timber. This would make the regency less reliant on Dutch and Scandinavian supplies. Sending heavy items such as masts across the Atlantic was an expensive and complicated exercise, and the Americans often sought to avoid it. R. Parker, *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A diplomatic history* (Gainesville, FL 2004), 128, 132.

¹⁶¹ Brenner, *Confounding powers*, 190; Marzagalli, ‘However illegal’, 119.

¹⁶² Folayan, *Tripoli*, 33–36; Gale, ‘Barbary’s slow death’, 141.

¹⁶³ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 153.

¹⁶⁴ Abun-Nasr, *A history of the Maghrib*, 166.

¹⁶⁵ A. Devoulx, *Le Raïs Hamidou: Notice biographique sur le plus célèbre corsair algérien du xiii^e siècle de l’hégire – D’après des documents authentiques et pour la plupart inédites* (Algiers 1859), 114–115.

¹⁶⁶ Bono, *Les corsaires*, 153.

¹⁶⁷ According to the chancellor of the French consulate in Algiers, the peace treaty created great consternation among inhabitants of the city. Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), 22PO/1/31, no. 20, ‘Journal d’Alger, 01-12-1814–30-07-1815’, entry for 30-06-1815.

American captives, in the event of future wars, should be treated as prisoners of war and not as slaves – an arrangement European governments soon came to demand for their subjects as well. Decatur was well aware of the international impression this affair would leave. The ‘successful results of our small expedition’ would, he hoped, ‘induce other nations to follow the example; in which case the Barbary states will be compelled to end their piratical system’.¹⁶⁸

The American display of force did not miss its mark. An English pamphleteer took the campaign as proof that ‘half a dozen ships of war’ could ‘reduce’ Algiers ‘into complete humiliation’.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, little over a year after Decatur’s expedition, another set of warships sailed to Algiers. This fleet carried out a mission on behalf of all the powers of Europe, who, as Dey Omar Agha would learn, had been brought together by the Congress of Vienna.

¹⁶⁸ Cited in F. Leiner, *The end of Barbary terror: America’s 1815 war against the pirates of North Africa* (Oxford 2006), 173.

¹⁶⁹ W. Hone, *The cruelties of the Algerine pirates: Shewing the present dreadful state of the English slaves and other Europeans at Algiers and Tunis* (London 1816), 7.