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Topic 1: Barbary Conflicts

For centuries, the Barbary Coast has housed a number of nations largely dependent on piracy.[[1]](#footnote-0) The wealth obtained from plunder and ransom remains a cornerstone of many of their economies, and any ship sailing in their vicinity risks becoming a share of their takings.[[2]](#footnote-1) This danger is well known to traders within the area, but in recent years has expanded to a troubling degree.[[3]](#footnote-2) Attempts to placate the pirates have succeeded in Algiers and Morocco, but the Pasha of Tripoli has proved an unmovable adversary.[[4]](#footnote-3) Prior tributary payments have proven insufficient to prevent the Pasha from declaring war on the United States and have created the dilemma in which the nation now finds itself.[[5]](#footnote-4)

Since the declaration of war in 1801, the costs have compounded. Though the intervention has been granted funding from Congress and has been working in tandem with the Swedish navy, few gains have been made.[[6]](#footnote-5) Without any noteworthy gains, the question remains as to whether the costs of war are worth more than the costs of continuous tribute. The president has clearly set himself in favor of war, but the congress will be the final voice on the matter. If congress is to decide this matter, both sides must be considered. The war has been expensive and shows no signs of stopping, but continuous tribute would likewise be a cost paid for an indeterminate length. On the one hand, if the pirates are satisfied through tribute, economic activities in the region can return to normal without the drawout disruption of war. But if the United States backs down, as Mr. Jefferson has proposed, it would be a sign of weakness. On top of this concern, there is the economic concerns of the tribute. If the United States relents to the pirates, the rates will likely increase as the Pasha has demanded in the past.[[7]](#footnote-6) Worse, should the United States give into the demands of the Pasha, other Barbery kingdoms may look to increase their own tribute rates. Though, this is speculation, it is necessary in making a decisive conclusion.

North Carolina’s economy is largely dependent on agricultural exports.[[8]](#footnote-7) As such, the disruption of this trade is concerning. If the nation is to reach any prosperity, the region must return to normality by reducing the barriers to trade. Given this, a swift and lasting solution must be reached along the Barbary Coast especially giving the continual barriers to trade caused by the Napoleonic Wars.[[9]](#footnote-8)

Seeking a swift end to the problem and a lasting resolution, it would be prudent to maintain a strong presence in the region while avoiding extensive military conflict. It is two decades since this young nation’s revolution concluded and as such, engagement in another extensive conflict would be illogical. Therefore, it would be prudent to continue defense of merchant ships in the area while refraining from full commitment of resources towards an extensive military campaign. Simply defending merchant ships in the area would preserve financial success in the region with only a slight depression at worst. These naval defenses could be paid for through a slight raise to the tariff rates on imported goods, for exhaustive funding would be unnecessary. At the same time, as the navy is increased through this spending, officers abroad must exercise restraint when combating the problem. The safety of American citizens abroad can be preserved without causing lasting political conflict in the region. Our soldiers must remain prudent in restricting their actions to only those necessary for the immediate preservation of economic interests. A larger military could run the risk of emboldening pugnacious instincts on the part of our commanders, but without such defense capabilities, the United States will be unable to preserve any foreign economic interests in the face of adversity. Ultimately, we will seek peace, but in the pursuit of this peace, the nation must be prepared for conflict. And without conflict, how can a just peace be ensured?

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Topic 2: Judiciary

The place of the court has been debated since the ratification of the constitution. The initial Judiciary Act of 1796 gave some specifics to the branch of government article in the constitution was uniquely vague.[[10]](#footnote-9) The Act was an effective compromise between federal and state judiciaries, balancing the authority of each, but the Judiciary Act of 1801 is widely seen as a violation of this careful compromise.[[11]](#footnote-10) By allowing appeals to be brought directly to the Supreme Court, the act expanded the power of the federal court to the detriment of the state courts.[[12]](#footnote-11) This has turned the debate into one more largely focused on the rights of states as a part of a larger nation. Moreover, with the recent decision of the Marbury v Madison case, the question remains about how the new tenants of judicial review may encroach upon the larger legislative process.[[13]](#footnote-12)

If an appointed court can strike down the acts of congress or the executive orders of the president, both being actions taken by officials chosen to represent an enfranchised population of voters, then does this not strike a blow to democracy? This is the question at the heart of the debates over the place of the judiciary. The constitution certainly has provisions for the court, but these provisions can be amended. Some in congress would have the potential oligarchs of a court cast out entirely, while others see them as a necessary check on the powers of congress, a bulwark defending the rights of democracy enshrined in the constitution. This question is bitterly divisive, but certainly relevant to the future of the nation.

The democratic republicans have come out largely opposed to the presence of the supreme court in its present form. The actions of President Jefferson alone are proof of this, but the position is in need of some amendment. The prevailing argument is that such a court encroaches on the freedom of the states and that the federal government is seizing too much power, especially over elected officials. These are worthy concerns, but, as is written in the federalist, a series of articles tacitly endorsed by Secretary Madison through his participation, “the supposed danger of judiciary encroachments on the legislative authority, which has been upon many occasions reiterated, is in reality a phantom.”[[14]](#footnote-13) Perhaps Alexander Hamilton, the author of that particular article, is a bit glib on the subject of concern, but his perspective is worthy of consideration. Given that Supreme Court justices are appointed by congress, and can be impeached as per Section 1 Article 3 of the constitution.[[15]](#footnote-14)

Therefore, the supreme court should be allowed to stay, though it shall also be watched carefully to ensure that its members are upholding the responsibility as justices. Breaches in judicial conduct can be considered and, in extreme cases, used to impeach the justices. This will give the elected bodies of congress and senate the opportunity to check the court should its justices threaten the integrity of the federal government. If necessary, a reaffirmation of state courts could also be taken into consideration so as to more clearly draw the line between state and federal jurisdiction, but this is likely. So long as the courts uphold the constitution,and so long as the congress has the power to remove justices who violate the terms of the constitution, there is no cause for serious concern on the subject of the court’s place. If the court goes on to conduct itself in a manner unbefitting a republic, then its powers my deserve restriction through constitutional amendment, but for now congress can leave the court to its own devices, while maintaining the scrutiny of the rightly skeptical, both sides fully aware of what shall happen in the event of broken confidence.

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Topic 3: Louisiana Purchase

The Louisiana territory remains a sticking point in international diplomacy. As the French look to establish a new colonial empire in the Americas, especially after the revolt in Haiti, the territory will be vital to the security of the nation.[[16]](#footnote-15) Furthermore, the territory is a location of vital economic opportunity in the form of untapped natural timber and precious metal resources among others.[[17]](#footnote-16) The territory may be untamed and largely uncharted, but the land is fertile enough in the eyes of President Jefferson to deem worthy of a potential purchase, and he has made an offer. This could be an important step in furthering the interests of the nation, especially given that the vital New Orleans port has been closed to the United States in the past, setting a troubling precedent for a nation seeking to establish itself.[[18]](#footnote-17)

If this offer is to succeed, there are a few matters to decide. First and foremost, the question of price must be attended to, but more importantly, the purchase of land cannot occur without some concern for how the territory will be governed, divided, and how slavery will be installed. However, before these concerns can be addressed, the territory must be purchased and mapped, but this does not take away from their relevance in discussions of the purchase in general.

From the perspective of a North Carolinian Democratic Republican, the purchase has no conceivable downside for the country. The economic value alone makes the investment worthwhile, but beyond that, the concerns of other elected officials are ultimately not relevant in the furthering of the nation. On top of preserving the economic interests of the nation, the purchase will benefit the thousands of Americans straining for the freedom to expand past the borders of our nation. The problems proposed by congress are superficial and irrelevant to the larger discussions. The question of statehood and slavery are problems that can be solved at a later date. The entrance of states into the union has been settled in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and therefore there is no true question of statehood.[[19]](#footnote-18) Providing that the territory is surveyed, which should be simple to enact.

To preserve the integrity of the nation, the purchase will allow for greater mobility on the part of American citizens as well as economic expansion through the use of the resources in the Louisiana territory. The funds needed for the transaction can be obtained by a marginal increase to the tariff rates, the exact quantity of which will depend on the price and payment length requested by France in the treaty. The territory, once obtained, will be surveyed and divided as the government sees fit. The divisions will be decided by geographic features with some input from relevant native populations. Once the territories have been divided, they shall enter the union once they reach a required population and economic threshold as laid out in the Northwest Ordinance. As the territories apply for statehood, they will decide for themselves whether they will enter as slave states or free. There should be no restrictions placed on the status of slavery in these territories so that they can decide for themselves which option they prefer, and maintaining their sovereignty. With these general provisions in place, the Louisiana Purchase can progress unhindered by the doubts of neurotic politicians.

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