Cooperating with Competitors

Swedish Consuls in North Africa and Sweden’s Position in the World, 1791–1802

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Abstract

Small and weak powers are often forgotten in historical research. When we think about the world of any era and the states that acted within it we tend to focus on the great powers that clashed in major wars, explored the world and built empires. However, many states were not great powers, but that does not mean they were not active in international relations. This study addresses this problem. Sweden was during the eighteenth century a small power with limited resources but with a relatively large merchant fleet at its disposal. And it used this fleet in the Mediterranean carrying trade. To do this, Sweden needed to be neutral in European wars and have peace with the Barbary States of North Africa.

Sweden had a large network of consuls and agents in the region and they sent home information about what was happening. In this thesis I investigate what type of information they sent home and how they viewed Sweden’s position in the world. I also discuss what their views can tell us about Sweden’s position in the international system of the late eighteenth century. In their dealings with the North Africans the consuls often cooperated with consuls from other powers, remarkably often those of other weak neutral powers, especially Denmark and the USA. They also viewed these other neutrals as competitors, however, and that these were the ones that the Swedish consuls chose to cooperate with could seem like a paradox. But when examining the material the consuls sent home a picture comes forth of consuls who were very much aware of the limited economic and military resources the Swedes had, and who viewed the other neutral powers as equal powers. They understood that Sweden, Denmark and the USA were minor powers within a much larger system in which different powers affected each other in complex ways. They chose to cooperate with their competitors since these faced the same problems as the Swedes. Sometimes, they were in a position where cooperation was simply more fruitful than competition. To maintain the peace treaties at the lowest possible cost was the consuls’ first and most important duty.

Keywords: Mediterranean trade; Swedish trade; International system; Small power policy; Barbary Corsairs; French Revolutionary Wars; Consuls.
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Introduction

Late in 1797, a Swedish squadron of two warships under the command of Major Blessingh was sent to the Mediterranean. They were convoying the merchantman Speculation which was carrying presents for the Pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli. Blessingh was supposed to negotiate a peace treaty with the Pasha and restore peaceful relations between Sweden and the Ottoman regency of Tripoli. He was also ordered to make sure that presents for the Moroccan Sultan, which would be sent later, were delivered safely. This was done during a major European war when neutral shipping was threatened both by the North African Barbary corsairs and the belligerent European powers. But for the neutral powers, large profits were possible if they could only keep their ships safe. And they did everything they could to do just that. During the voyage Blessingh was caught in violent storms, he witnessed the French occupation of Malta and he threatened French privateers in Malaga that if they did not return the Swedish merchantmen they had captured he would open fire. And all the time he wrote home to Stockholm and reported what was happening. His reports and those of other Swedish commanders and of the consuls around the Mediterranean made up the information the Swedish Convoy Office, which was responsible for the Swedish affairs in the Mediterranean, had at its disposal.

The reports from the consuls and the commanders make up the material for this thesis. Through this material we take a look at what kind of information the Swedish representatives in North Africa sent home to Sweden and why they chose to send this specific information. The representatives constantly had to make choices about what information they would send home. The thesis asks how the Swedish representatives viewed Sweden’s role in the Mediterranean and what this can tell us about Sweden’s position in the world. We will see how the consuls and commanders thought of Sweden as a weak power in a large system and how this had consequences for what choices they could make. Their job was to make sure that the peace treaties with the Barbary powers of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli were maintained so that Swedish ships could continue to navigate the Mediterranean safely. To do this they had to consider what was happening not only to their own country’s affairs in the region but to those of other powers too. They were working under circumstances when those who appeared friendly often proved to be enemies and when those who appeared to be their foremost competitors would sometimes turn out to be their only friends. Circumstances changed quickly and communications were slow. The consuls and commanders had to be skilled and pragmatic and had to keep the Swedish government updated on every change. To be successful in maintaining the policy of neutrality, it was vital that the Swedes understood the Mediterranean trade as a system of many actors and their place within it.
Purpose and Research Questions

The Mediterranean trade and Sweden’s diplomatic relations with North Africa—understood as very important at the time—have received limited attention in mainstream Swedish historiography, but in recent years a few Swedish scholars have worked to renew the interest in this field.¹ A few popular works have also been published in the last 30 years, but they are very descriptive and often provide us with more questions than answers.² Much research in this field was done in the early years of the twentieth century, but the scholars then often had a national perspective and were seldom interested in taking Sweden’s position in the world into consideration, even though some did.³ Much of this older research was done close to a hundred years ago and much has happened since then in the way we do research in history, and with the recent interest in globalization and global history, it is odd that Sweden is still seldom viewed as a country with an interesting maritime history. I believe that if we wish to fully understand the Swedish trade in the Mediterranean we need to start focusing on it again and include the international context the Swedes were acting within.

The lack of interest in considering the Swedish trade in relation to an international context is, I believe, very problematic. When not taking into account the Swedish position in the world relative to other countries it becomes difficult to explain what Swedish ships were doing in the Mediterranean in the first place. It also becomes difficult to explain why Sweden accepted the high costs of keeping armed convoy ships in the region and of the peace treaties with the Barbary States. A national perspective also runs the risk of becoming too concerned with imports and exports as these are more visible in the archives than the money earned in the carrying trade. I do not mean to say that imports and exports were unimportant; the import of cheap salt was, for example, the reason that Swedish ships began entering the Mediterranean in the late seventeenth century, but the relative visibility of imports and exports in Swedish archives makes it easier to measure the results of these activities than it is to evaluate the results of the carrying trade. Furthermore, the results of the imports and exports were not that impressive for Sweden. A share of the lucrative carrying trade was what the Swedes were hoping for. The fact that so many ships were participating in the carrying trade, and that this participation was discussed by Swedish officials, is a clear sign that we need to include this in our explanations.

I believe that the most fruitful way of doing this is to include the international context Sweden was a part of in our explanations of the Swedish trade. One side of my purpose, then, is to

¹ See Müller 2004 and Östlund 2011.
² See Borg 1987.
³ See Ekegård 1924 and Olán 1921.
analyze the Swedish trade policy in the Mediterranean in relation to the international context, and thereby make it possible not only to describe what happened, but also explain why certain decisions were made and certain strategies chosen. But there is also another side of this approach that is equally important. It is that in international research on the Mediterranean trade, and in historical research in general, the great powers are usually in focus while smaller powers are left out. This can lead to the view that only the great powers were players in the international system, and that small powers were only reacting, rather than being actors in their own right. What I mean by international system will be explained in the theoretical section, but for now it is only necessary to understand it as a system where different units, in most cases states, interact with each other. This bias towards the powerful countries is of course hardly surprising, as the great powers indeed had more options and were able to affect the international system in more direct ways due to their higher military and economic capacity. But this view makes the explanations rather one-sided, and runs the risk of making it hard to explain the whole system, as not all units were great powers. Therefore, the other side of my purpose is to put the Swedish case, or rather the Swedish position in the international system, into our picture of the international system and thereby broaden our understanding of how the system worked in the eighteenth century.

To be able to build a working policy for Swedish trade in the Mediterranean, information about the region was essential. Without this, the Swedish policy-makers would have to rely on guesses and it is unlikely that they would have been able to decide on a policy that had any chance of being successful. Of course, they chose the wiser course. There was a large network of Swedish consuls in the region and the consuls supplied the Swedish state with regular reports of what was going on where they were stationed. At the same time, masters of Swedish merchantmen and commanders of squadrons of warships sent home reports about their missions, as well as unexpected occurrences. All in all, much information was sent to Sweden and this is a good source for information about Sweden’s position in the international system.

There were many different people and many authorities that in different ways were involved with or had interests in the Swedish trade in the Mediterranean region, but no public authority was as directly involved as the Swedish Convoy Office (Konvojkommissariet). The Convoy Office was in charge of organizing convoys and negotiating peace treaties with the Barbary States and it paid the Swedish consuls in North Africa. At times its funds were also used to pay for the release of Swedes who were held as captives in North Africa. My research questions, then, are:

– What information about their work did the Swedish representatives in the Mediterranean send to the Convoy Office and why did they choose to send this specific information? What was its purpose?
How did the Swedish representatives in North Africa view Sweden’s role in the Mediterranean and what can the information they sent home tell us about Sweden’s position in the international system of the late eighteenth century?

The two questions might seem quite different but they are both necessary to be able to explain the actions of the Swedes in the Mediterranean. The first question deals with source-criticism and is included because we need to consider what the representatives wanted to say with their reports before we answer the second question. If we answered the second question without considering the first we would risk treating everything in the reports as the truth. To reach the purpose of the study, both questions must be discussed. What material I will use and what specific period I will investigate will be discussed in more detail in the methodology section, but first we will take a look at the historical background and the theoretical assumptions that this thesis is based on.

The Mediterranean Trade in Previous Research

The Swedish trade policy during the eighteenth century was built on mercantilism. It contained two basic principles, protection of domestic interests and active participation in foreign trade. National self-sufficiency and large exports were the main goals. The Swedes tried to make others dependent on their products while they themselves would not be dependent on foreign products. In reality, however, the idea never worked very well. Trade between states required reciprocity.

After the end of the Great Northern War the Swedish leaders were sure that it was through active foreign trade that Sweden would be able to regain its position as an important player in the world. Since Sweden had lost the Baltic provinces, it had to begin accepting that it would not become the main player in the Baltic trade, and although the Swedish elite found it difficult to accept, as, for example, the wars against Russia in 1741–1743 and 1788–1790 show, they had to look further than the Baltic. And since they lacked colonies, the best place to find markets for Swedish products where the same idea of national self-sufficiency was uncommon was thought to be the Mediterranean. That salt was cheaper within the Mediterranean than in Spain and Portugal was also a reason to go to there. Swedish politicians thought that it was best for Sweden that the trade was done by Swedish ships and also that these ships should be used in the carrying trade.

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4 Ekegård 1924, pp. 2–5.
5 Ekegård 1924, pp. 21–22.
6 Ekegård 1924, pp. 200–208.
7 Ekegård 1924, pp. 94–100.
Mercantilism was attractive to the larger cities, and Stockholm played a prominent role in the decision-making. The bureaucracy that had been built up during the Great Power Era continued to play an important role during the eighteenth century and it was important in making the mercantilist thoughts the most important in the Swedish trade policy. During the Age of Liberty 1721–1772 the Crown lost much of its power and the Diet became the leading power in Swedish politics. The power over the trade policy was concentrated in the hands of a few major merchant houses that were tightly connected to the political-bureaucratic elite. There was criticism against the protectionist mercantile policy in Sweden, especially after 1750, but it would take until the middle of the nineteenth century before liberal thoughts made any widespread advances in Sweden.

One of the most important changes in the trade policy during the eighteenth century was the introduction of produktplakatet, a Swedish version of the British navigation acts, in 1724. This was meant to increase the demand for Swedish ships in the Swedish trade. The act stated that foreign ships could bring only those goods originating in the carrier’s own country, or that country’s colonies, into Sweden. This hit the Dutch transit shipping to Sweden especially hard, all but putting an end to it. The act also meant that the imported salt had to be carried exclusively on Swedish ships. A year after the introduction of the act, the absolute majority of ships that carried salt to Sweden were Swedish. This created a demand for Swedish ships to go to the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean, exactly as the Swedish politicians wanted. The act was not the result of theoretical economic thinking but reflected the interests of the Stockholm mercantile elite.

Right from the start, produktplakatet was criticized. Many believed that it would lead to higher salt prices and that Sweden could not compete with the major maritime powers. The protectionist Swedish trade policy continued to be criticized throughout the eighteenth century, but in 1801, when the king ordered the Board of Trade and the Convoy Office to investigate whether or not it was profitable for Sweden to continue trading in the Mediterranean, the two public authorities managed to defend the protectionist policy and show that it was necessary to continue. During European wars it is possible that the protectionist policy was what guaranteed that Sweden would be able to continue importing the necessary salt. As long as Sweden managed

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8 Ekegård 1924, pp. 273–274.
9 Ekegård 1924, pp. 136–142.
to stay neutral, Swedish ships could continue trading, whether or not European merchant fleets were able to do so.\textsuperscript{14}

There was also a military side of the act. The British navigation acts were intended to ensure that Britain had a good supply of skilled sailors, and the Swedish act had similar intentions. Leos Müller argues that this side of the Swedish act cannot be ignored, but Eli F. Heckscher, on the other hand, concluded that it was unimportant.\textsuperscript{15} Heckscher wrote that during the Age of Liberty the connection between economic and military goals, which had been important earlier, disappeared and that profits in the carrying trade were the only important concern in Swedish trade policy.\textsuperscript{16} The Swedish navy was indeed much smaller than the British; for example, in 1795, the British navy had 123 ships of the line and 160 frigates while the Swedish navy had only 13 ships of the line and 12 frigates.\textsuperscript{17} One must not forget, however, that the Swedish navy still required thousands of experienced sailors and that a large merchant marine would make it easier to supply the navy with these men.

There has been significant discussion about whether or not the act had positive consequences for Sweden in the long run, but it is rather uncontroversial to say that it did succeed in creating a demand for Swedish ships. The Swedish merchant fleet grew steadily throughout the whole eighteenth century. Exactly how much it expanded is hard to say, but Heckscher came to the conclusion that between 1726 and 1760 the size of the Swedish merchant fleet grew from 21,000 lasts\textsuperscript{18} to around 60,000 lasts. Throughout the eighteenth century the fleet remained larger than it had been before the 1720s.\textsuperscript{19} The size of the fleet did, however, fluctuate much between years. During the period 1790–1804, roughly the period this thesis is concerned with, the number of ships registered in Sweden was between 598 and 1212 with the peak in 1804. The total tonnage was between 20,610 and 68,074 lasts with a peak in 1800. The figures differ much between the sources and exact numbers are difficult to provide.\textsuperscript{20}

To go to the Mediterranean was dangerous for merchantmen. The states on the North African coast, the Barbary powers, used their corsair fleets to capture and sell Christian merchantmen. And the belligerent powers of Europe often enforced the right to search neutral ships and take goods they considered to be harmful for their interests. If the goods were destined for enemy ports or risked ending up in the hands of the enemy, they were taken to prevent the enemy from

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Högberg 1969, pp. 216–220.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Müller 2004, pp. 64–65.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Heckscher 1908, p. 707.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Harding 1999, p. 292.
\item \textsuperscript{18} A “last” was a unit for measuring a ship’s carrying capacity and equal to 2,448 kg.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Gerentz 1951, p. 180.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Müller 2004, pp. 141–142.
\end{itemize}
getting them. Naval stores and weapons were often considered contraband. This had an effect on
the Swedes since many of their export products were naval stores.\textsuperscript{21} To protect the Swedish
merchantmen going to the Mediterranean, the Convoy Office was founded in 1724 and was to be
the public authority responsible for the safety of the Swedish merchantmen in the Mediterranean
region until its closure in 1867.

The Convoy Office organized convoys to the Mediterranean and was allowed to use two small
ships of the line, which were to be returned to the Admiralty in good condition following each
voyage. The convoy ships usually followed the merchantmen only as far as Cadiz. Although some
convoys were organized, it was quickly realized that they were not very effective. They were
never faster than the slowest ship in the convoy, meaning that voyages took longer times.\textsuperscript{22} And
even when the convoy ships entered the Mediterranean it was not at all certain that all ships
wanted to enter the same ports. The ability to take part in the carrying trade would be limited by
convoys since effective partaking in the carrying trade required that ships were not forced to visit
ports in any particular order. It also happened that ships were snatched away from convoys by
skilled corsairs that attacked when the convoy ships were prevented from interfering due to
unfavorable winds or due to the distance between them and the merchantmen furthest away.\textsuperscript{23}

As the convoys were ineffective, the Convoy Office quickly began negotiating with the
Barbary States instead. These states were the Ottoman regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli and
the independent Sultanate of Morocco. The Ottoman regencies were in theory bound to the
Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople but in practice they often chose their own foreign policies.
European states had established peace treaties with them since the seventeenth century and these
treaties often included that the Barbary State in question agreed not to take any ships or sailors
from the states it had peace treaties with, but in return for this it demanded tributes to be paid as
compensation for the lost source of income.\textsuperscript{24} A peace treaty with Algiers was signed in 1729,
followed by a treaty with Tunis in 1736 and another with Tripoli in 1741. It would take until 1763
before Morocco, the most powerful of the Barbary States, agreed to a peace treaty and the
Swedes had peace with all four of the Barbary States. The Moroccan peace was more expensive
than the other three combined. The peace treaties allowed Swedish merchantmen to enter the
Mediterranean without the risk of being captured.\textsuperscript{25}

Sweden managed to stay out of most European conflicts of the eighteenth century and used
its neutrality to gain a good share of the carrying trade. The conflicts meant good opportunities

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{21} Müller 2012, pp. 44–45.
\bibitem{22} Müller 2004, pp. 65–69.
\bibitem{23} Carlson 1971, p. 15.
\bibitem{24} Panzac 2005, pp. 9–12.
\bibitem{25} Müller 2004, pp. 58–60.
\end{thebibliography}
for neutral ships and the government in Sweden was well aware that this was the case. During major conflicts, the neutral countries sometimes cooperated by forming an armed neutrality with which to protect the neutral trade from pressure from belligerent powers. Neutrality in Europe required skillful diplomacy and so did the maintenance of the peace treaties with the Barbary States. The Barbary States were not keen on having peace with every Christian state since their corsair fleets needed to be kept busy. Weaker states with large merchant fleets were obvious targets since their ability to retaliate was more limited than the great powers’ ability to do so. One important task the Convoy Office had was to pay the salaries of the Swedish consuls in North Africa. The Swedish state needed information from the region to be able to know what to do and the network of consuls supplied this information.

The major and minor powers viewed the Mediterranean differently. For the major powers, political power in the region was much more important than for the minor ones. Although today often a rather forgotten area of interest for the British Empire, the Mediterranean played a crucial part for the British in the early modern period. They tried, and ultimately failed, to establish and hold a colony at Tangier, and they established naval bases at Gibraltar and Minorca. And to be able to keep these naval bases they needed resources from North Africa. Rather than being a struggle between Christianity and Islam, as the struggle with the corsairs is often portrayed, the British needed the North Africans’ cooperation in their struggle against other Europeans.

The major powers were also more concerned with the image of their power than the minor ones could be. France and Britain did not wish to give any tributes to the North African states so they considered everything they gave to be presents. Of course, for the Barbary powers it did not really matter what the great powers called their presents. They considered everything they were given to be tributes and a sign of their power. The power of the Barbary States slowly waned during the eighteenth century, and after 1750 both Britain and France began to give presents when they wanted to rather than when they were forced to. Weaker powers still had to give presents more regularly. What the French gave changed during the eighteenth century. At first they did not want to give weapons and naval stores but at the end of the century they began to see it as a sign of strength to be able to arm potential enemies. However, even though the great powers could do this after 1750, the British remembered what the Barbary powers had been and

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26 See Feldbaek 1980 and Müller 2012.
27 Olán 1921, pp. 96–97.
30 Colley 2000, pp. 18–19.
continued to fear them well into the nineteenth century. The Swedes and Danes were the last powers to pay tribute to the North African states and did this up until the 1840s when Morocco agreed to stop demanding presents from the Northern powers.

Both during the time period itself and in modern accounts of the Europeans’ dealings with the Barbary States, it has often been asked why the Europeans did not use their military superiority to destroy the corsair fleets and end the threat of the Barbary States. But this type of question underestimates the ability of the Barbary powers to defend themselves and overestimates the effects of bombardments of the ports. Sometimes the European powers did try to defeat the Barbary States by attacking their ports, but what was destroyed was quickly rebuilt. Furthermore, the North African territory was hard to invade, and the Moroccans had a large army. They were hard to defeat and the Europeans were not very keen on helping each other. I believe that one problem is that many have viewed the Barbary States as pirate strongholds rather than states and this has created the view that the Europeans should have been able to defeat them easily. This view, however, is flawed and must be rejected.

Eskil Borg, a popular historian who has written a book about the Swedes in Tripoli, has mentioned that it was in the interest of the major maritime powers that the Barbary States could threaten the minor powers since this could stop these from competing in the Mediterranean trade. However, it could be argued that it was also in the interest of the minor powers that were successful in maintaining peace treaties with the Barbary States that the corsairs could threaten minor powers that were not. Adrian Tinniswood writes that it was easier and cheaper to pay the Barbary States than to keep squadrons in the Mediterranean and to attack the corsairs or organize convoys. And, he continues, “…even less creditably, it ensured that the Barbary corsairs directed their attention towards poorer commercial competitors who couldn’t afford to pay them off”. A state that chose not to pay would place itself at a disadvantage compared to its competitors.

The fewer competitors there were, the better it was for those that could take part in the carrying trade. Also, the mercantile policies of the European states meant that international trade was a kind of everybody’s war against everybody. That the Europeans did not cooperate to defeat the Barbary States is therefore not that surprising. The Barbary States should be viewed as states that were using their particular advantages to be able to take part in the political system of

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34 See Kreüger 1856, pp. 211–221.
37 Borg 1987, p. 46.
38 Tinniswood 2011, pp. 278–279.
39 Ekegård 1924, p. 303.
the Mediterranean region, rather than piratical strongholds that it would be better to simply get rid of. The Barbary States were players in the international system that did the best they could with what they had, just like the European states. In fact, when Christians came to the Barbary Coast they were often surprised that the people were not as barbarian as they had thought. As Tinniswood writes: “Abstract notions of the Other as barbarian are hard to sustain when you come face to face with the reality.”

Sweden is the minor power this thesis focuses on, but two additional minor powers will also be of importance: Denmark and the United States. Denmark had a trade policy that was similar to Sweden’s. During the eighteenth century it tried to stay neutral in European conflicts and traded in the Mediterranean. The Danes had a large merchant fleet that was the fourth largest in Europe at the end of the century. They had limited exports and imports and mostly carried the goods of other powers. Unofficially, the Danish government supported that merchants from belligerent powers used Danish ships during wartime.

Denmark did not negotiate peace treaties with the Barbary States until the middle of the century and instead relied on a fund with which to buy back sailors unfortunate enough to be captured by the corsairs. This fund was built on payments the sailors themselves had to make. After peace treaties had been negotiated the risk of capture was much lower. The Danes kept a navy intended to defend Denmark against the Swedes, meaning that the navy was kept united and close to home and was always meant to be a little larger than the Swedish navy. The Danes did, however, keep small squadrons in the Mediterranean when it was necessary.

Compared to the European states, the United States was a latecomer in the Mediterranean trade. Before the independence, American ships had used British flags and enjoyed the same protection as the British. When they gained independence in 1783 many Americans hoped that they would be able to enjoy the same liberties in foreign trade as they did at home, and free trade was important for this to happen. The Atlantic world of the late eighteenth century was, however, not a world of free trade. When they lost the British protection they were at first not prepared for the problems the Barbary States would cause. Ships were taken by Algiers already in 1785, and not until 1795 would they get their peace treaty. They tried hard but were not prepared to pay the large amounts of money the Barbary States demanded. The US government did not have enough financial means to pay the Barbary States and had very limited rights to make

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42 Feldbaek 1980, pp. 20–22.
43 See Ressel 2011.
45 Feldbaek 1980, p. 22.
decisions on taxes. However, they were forced to accept to pay like the Europeans, but eventually they would choose to fight instead. They decided to build a navy of frigates and smaller ships that could be used to protect American shipping and threaten the North African powers. They also relied upon the help of the Portuguese, but as Portugal also often chose to pay rather than to fight, the Americans had to build their own navy.

In American popular literature, especially after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the wars against Barbary have often been portrayed as a kind of evidence that the United States has always fought against Muslim terrorism. This view has been questioned by scholars who instead have pointed out that the wars against Barbary were a continuation of the War for Independence. That the newly-independent Americans who had just defeated the British could be captured and enslaved by minor powers in North Africa was a shock to the American public. They had fought for political independence and now needed to fight for economic independence and to show the world that they were ready to run their own sovereign state. The United States chose a similar policy to that of the Danes and the Swedes, attempting to be neutral and trying to negotiate peace treaties with the Barbary States. The Americans wanted to be able to take part in the neutral carrying trade. At this time the idea of free trade was more important in the United States than in the European powers. The Europeans viewed the American merchantmen as newcomers that threatened to take market share from the established maritime powers.

**Theoretical Assumptions**

My theoretical assumptions can be said to be concerned with three levels. First there is the question about what an international system is. Second, there is the question of what it meant to be a minor neutral power within this system. And third, there is the question of what it meant to be a European consul in North Africa.

To explain the Swedish policy in the Mediterranean, I argue that it is useful to treat Sweden as a player in an international system of sovereign states. The international system is a concept that is widely used by scholars interested in international relations. Perhaps surprisingly, however, there is not much consensus even on what an international system is. As many international-
relations theorists are concerned with today’s world, when an international system can be said to be firmly in place, this lack of consensus is often not a problem. Generally, the international system is seen to have been born around 1500, when the modern state began to take form in Europe. As oceangoing ships were developed around the same time, this European system could then over the next five centuries be extended to the rest of the world. In a realist perspective, which has often been used to explain international relations, the great powers are the only significant actors and military-political decisions are the most important tools.  

Before the settlement of Vienna in 1815, balance-of-power logic and state sovereignty were the most important ways to organize world order. State sovereignty is about acknowledging that every state has the right to govern its own territory. Balance-of-power is built on checking power with power. If a state is considered to be too powerful, other states will form alliances to balance against the powerful state.

The international system is made up of sovereign states that compete with each other in an anarchic fashion and there is therefore nothing guaranteeing the states’ survival but their own ability to survive. States want security and will strive to increase their power and form alliances to guarantee this security. This realist view has been questioned for many reasons. For example it often fails to explain why states might choose not to exercise power even if they could do it.

Another problem with the realist view is that only the great powers are considered to have an agential quality within the system. One way to get around this problem is to allow for an international system that is broader than just great powers and power-politics. Barry Buzan and Richard Little have observed that a division of the international system into different sectors is important. They suggest a military-political, an economic, a socio-cultural and an environmental sector. At the very least, they argue, the economic sector must be given more room than it has traditionally been given. It is important to note that they do not think that the military-political sector is unimportant, but that it is one sector among many possible sectors. Acknowledging the importance of both a military-political and an economic sector is what I will do in this thesis.

I believe that Buzan’s and Little’s way to acknowledge that several sectors can be, and are, important parts of the system rather than just acknowledging the military aspect, will make it possible to treat Sweden as an actor in its own right, rather than an unimportant player subject only to the wills of the great powers. A classic realist perspective, where only military power really matters and the great powers are the only players with enough power to be counted as actors,

58 Ikenberry 2001, pp. 10–12.
59 See Buzan and Little 2010, pp. 11 and 43–47.
makes it hard to explain neutrality. Neutrality would in such a view simply be a matter of inactivity chosen by states unable to choose anything else.

When economic concerns are also given importance in the analysis, neutrality suddenly becomes an active choice of policy for states that are able, for example, to take part in the carrying trade. Rather than being just a way to stay out of conflicts, neutrality becomes a way to profit from other states’ conflicts. However, the Swedish position as a major power within the Baltic also needs to be taken into consideration. Even though Sweden had a navy which, in theory, could be used in the Mediterranean to protect Swedish shipping, as in fact parts of it were many times, the power politics in the Baltic prevented the Swedes from sending more than a couple of ships at a time. Sweden was a major political player within the Baltic region, but was only a major economical player outside it.

The point of acknowledging a broader view of the international system over a classic realist one is that it can allow us to explain the policies of smaller powers within the system, and since many of the powers were small powers it will help us understand how the whole system worked. The small powers had to be careful and were of course often affected by the great powers in ways that were outside of their control. However, the fact that their choices were limited does not mean that they did not make any decisions at all or did not have active foreign policies.

The Swedish consuls, as we will see, dealt with a situation where they were supposed to maintain the peace treaties with the Barbary States at the lowest cost possible. They had to succeed despite limited resources. But the Swedish policy in the Mediterranean was meant to make it possible for Sweden to keep a large merchant fleet there despite these limited resources. One important side of this was to maintain the peace with the Barbary powers. Another was to stay neutral in European conflicts. Neutrality in Europe and peace with the Barbary States were clearly two sides of the same policy. Ole Feldbaek has shown how Denmark dealt with the problem of staying neutral by looking for help from other neutrals that the Danes thought would be sympathetic to the Danish problems. As has been mentioned, the Danes, just like the Swedes, wanted to use their neutrality to be able to sell cargo space and carry goods belonging to foreign merchants.

To do this, the Danish neutrality had to be respected and therefore the Danes claimed that the belligerent powers of Europe had no right to search neutral ships and take goods belonging to enemy powers from them. The British were of the opposite view. When the Danes in 1800 got into conflicts with the British because Danish frigates convoying Danish merchantmen had refused to allow British ships to search the Danish ships, going as far as to fire upon the British,

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60 Müller 2012, pp. 50–51.
61 Feldbaek 1980.
the Danes sought help from the Russians to be able to defend the principles of neutrality. The Russians were interested in pursuing a policy of armed neutrality as they had in 1780, together with the other neutral Northern powers Denmark, Sweden and Prussia. However, their trade was limited and for them it was more important that the Northern powers form a league which could help the Russians reach their foreign political goals. Sweden was also positive to this policy, but had interests that were clearly opposite to the Danish ones. They wanted to get compensation for convoys the British had seized in 1798 and were therefore interested in the principles of neutrality, but they were also interested in making the Russians accept a Swedish invasion of Norway, which belonged to the Danes.

The Danish policy is an example of how a neutral minor power, under pressure from a great power which threatened the neutrality of the minor power, chose to ask other neutrals for help. Together they could perhaps make the great power change its policy. Denmark sought the support of other powers that they thought would have the same interests as Denmark. But because Russia, as a great power, was more concerned with the power politics of Europe and because Sweden was hoping to take Norway away from Denmark, the Armed Neutrality of 1800-1801 did not really work out as the Danes had hoped. Instead they ended up in a war with Britain in early 1801, in which the Russians and Swedes were unable to send the help they had promised. The Danish policy failed, but it was built on an active foreign policy that was not unrealistic. Had they had more luck, and had the other powers been more interested in the neutrality principles than in expansion, their policy could have succeeded.

In a way, the same phenomenon can be seen in the Mediterranean. The neutral powers competed for shares in the carrying trade and it would be in each neutral country’s interest that there should be as few competitors as possible. That is, the fewer powers that had peace treaties with the Barbary States, the less competition in the carrying trade. In earlier research, however, the consuls of Sweden, Denmark and the United States, all of them neutral minor powers that were heavily involved in the carrying trade, often seem to have cooperated rather than competed. Signs of this cooperation are often quickly mentioned in passing in the literature, but the reason that the weak neutral powers cooperated has not been explained. To be able to give a reasonable explanation we need to understand how the consuls looked upon their countries’ position in the world. This is where the view of the world as a system of sovereign states can be useful.

63 Feldbaek 1980, pp. 70–71.
64 Feldbaek 1980, pp. 95–99.
65 See Feldbaek 1980.
Thus far, we have focused on how we should view the small powers within the international system and I have argued that we should allow for a view where the smaller powers’ policies are seen as active decision-making, a stance that requires that we take more than military-political decisions into consideration. But it is also interesting to discuss how we should view the Swedish representatives, since they will be the main characters of our story. First we must acknowledge that they were both individuals with their own interests, as well as agents of the Swedish state. That they were individuals is mainly a concern of source-criticism. It is important to remember that it would always be in their interest to show that they did a good job. As agents of the state, their job was to provide the state with information and to protect Swedish interests where they were stationed. Because they could write only a limited amount of information in their letters, they had to focus on what they thought was most important. To see why certain information was sent we must take into consideration what the representatives wanted to achieve with this information.

In basic terms, as agents of the state the consuls in North Africa could view themselves as actors on three levels. On the lowest and most narrow one, they were agents of the Swedish state. On a middle level they were agents of a minor neutral power and on the highest and broadest level they were agents of a European (or Christian) power. As we will see, all these levels were important to them and they used them in different situations to reach their goals. Depending on the situation they were in, they could choose to focus on any of the different levels to strengthen or protect the Swedish position in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

**Methodological Approach and Source Material**

To be able to answer my research questions I will present a case study with three cases during the period 1791–1802. This narrower perspective is because the period when the Mediterranean was the main focus for Swedish trade, roughly the years 1724–1815, is a long period and my questions require a rather deep investigation to be answered. It would not be possible to include the whole period and answer the research questions in a reasonable amount of time. However, I would argue that such a study would not be needed to answer the questions, but that they could be answered by a case study focusing on a more limited number of years.

During the period of my investigation, the Swedish trade policy was really put to the test. The French Revolutionary Wars of 1793–1802 made it difficult to stay neutral, but as has been mentioned, it was during times like these that the neutral carrying trade boomed for those who managed to stay out of the wars despite the difficulties of doing so. It was also during this time that the Swedish merchant vessels going beyond Cape Finisterre in Spain reached the number of
449 per year. This was a high number considering that the average number for the whole
eighteenth century was 150.67

That a great war was fought during the period and that the Swedish merchant fleet was very
large during this period are two reasons for studying these years. But the other side of the
Swedish trade policy, the peace treaties with the Barbary States, was also tested during these
years. In 1791 Algiers declared war on Sweden and in 1796 a conflict with the Pasha of Tripoli
began, resulting in the capture of more than 20 Swedish ships and around 200 sailors. During the
entire early modern period, perhaps 1,000 Swedish sailors were captured, meaning that 200 was
quite a significant number.68

In 1801, when war was declared by the Pasha against Sweden for the third time in five years,
the Swedes dispatched a squadron of frigates to the Mediterranean to end the conflict. It was not
a very successful operation, but in 1802 a new peace treaty was signed between the two countries.
This was a conflict in which the USA was also involved and Swedish and American warships
together blockaded the port of Tripoli and helped each other by arranging convoys for the
merchant ships of both countries. During the years 1791–1802 we thus have two conflicts with
the Barbary States that resulted in the declaration of war. The first was quickly resolved and the
other was not, leading to potentially interesting differences and similarities in the way the consuls
and naval commanders reported from these wars.

The French Revolutionary Wars and the wars against the Barbary States put pressure on the
Swedes in the Mediterranean, but despite these problems, and perhaps even because of them,
Sweden managed to keep a large merchant fleet in the Mediterranean. All of this shows that the
period of 1791–1802 was undeniably a period when the Swedish trade policy was put to the test.
This period includes much of what Swedish trade policy had been about since the end of the
Great Northern War in 1721. This was, in fact, the peak of the neutral carrying trade, with the
Napoleonic Wars of the early nineteenth century and their aftermath ultimately bringing an end
to its importance.

The three cases of my study will be presented in a more or less chronological fashion. We will
begin with a civil war in Morocco and examine the ways the Swedish consul there reported from
it during 1791–1795. This case will provide us with information on what the Swedish
representatives could do when the conflict was an internal conflict where they were stationed,
rather than aggression directed towards the Swedes. Then we will move our focus to the war with
Algiers in 1791 and the following events. Last we will look at the conflict with Tripoli of 1796–
1802. The two research questions will be discussed throughout the text.

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67 Müller 2004, p. 162.
68 Östfund 2011, p. 58.
We now move on to the source material. As there was a certain public authority in Sweden, the Convoy Office, that dealt with the issues surrounding the Swedish interests in the Mediterranean, a good deal of useful material for answering these types of questions can be found in its archive. From at least the 1740s, the archive is more or less complete. During the period of 1791–1797 there was a committee dealing with the questions of the Convoy Office, but its material is available in the same archive.

As the Convoy Office was in charge of organizing the convoys, negotiating the peace treaties, paying the consuls and, when needed, buying back captured Swedish sailors, there was significant correspondence between the Convoy Office and the representatives in the Mediterranean. The archive has also been largely overlooked in earlier research. That this thesis will focus so much on one public authority, and not the whole state, will in some ways make it a study of this particular Office, but since the Convoy Office was so directly involved in Swedish trade policy, use of the Convoy Office archive has much wider potential apart from study of the authority itself. Even though a study of the Board of Trade and of the different consulates could provide even more information, I maintain that these additional sources are not necessary to be able to reach the purpose of this study. However, this puts the focus of the study on the bureaucracy and how the state tried to uphold a position which from a mercantilist perspective was good for the nation. I will thus not be able to say much about personal interests and who actually gained or lost from this policy. The state is the level of analysis I have chosen, not different groups within it. For the purposes of this thesis, the consuls and other representatives are therefore seen primarily as agents of the state.

The archive of the Convoy Office is a well-structured archive where the incoming and outgoing letters are listed, which makes it rather easy to identify what each letter is about without having to go through every letter. The most important letters are the ones from the consuls in North Africa and the commanders of the different squadrons that were sent to the Mediterranean during this period, but there are others, among them other consuls around the Mediterranean. The focus has been on reports from Swedes in the Mediterranean and orders sent back to them or received by the Convoy Office from the king. The orders and reports are usually very elaborate and the reasons for why a certain order is needed or why the situation in the Mediterranean is as it is, are often explained. References to other countries are constantly made in the letters. All in all, examining this type of material is a useful way to provide us with insights to how the Swedes looked upon their position in the world.
Maintaining the Peace with the Barbary States

The study is divided into three parts. The first section focuses on Morocco from 1791–1795 and how Consul Pehr Wijk and Colonel Måns von Rosenstein reported from the civil war there. The second section focuses on the Algerians’ declaration of war against Sweden in 1791 and the following peace talks and payments of tribute. The third section begins in 1796 and focuses on the conflict with Tripoli which turned out to be the most problematic of the three conflicts. After the three parts I will connect them in a concluding chapter which will answer the two research questions.

Civil War in Morocco

In 1791 the Swedish 40-gun frigate Bellona was sent to Morocco carrying presents for the Moroccan Sultan. This was a journey which even under normal circumstances was problematic. What kind of presents the Sultan would accept and the question of how little the Swedes could send without provoking him were always important questions to answer before loading the ships and sending them to Tangier, where the Swedish consul to Morocco lived. And because the Moroccan court was situated in the inland, the presents, once they had arrived at Tangier, had to be transported over land to the Moroccan court. Only after this could the Swedes know whether or not their presents would be accepted and the peace secure. The journey of 1791 would, however, not turn out to be one of normal circumstances, and the following events would be even worse.

The Delivery of Presents and the Beginning of a Civil War

In a report to the Convoy Committee\(^{69}\) written at Gibraltar on July 5, 1791, and arriving in Stockholm in August, the commander of the Bellona, Colonel Måns von Rosenstein, wrote that he had not gone to Tangier as instructed and that he had instead remained at Gibraltar. Colonel von Rosenstein was a veteran of the American War for Independence in which he had served on both British and French ships, and of the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–1790. The mission in 1791 was his second mission to Morocco, with the first being in 1784–1785.\(^{70}\) The most important reason for staying at Gibraltar was that he had been instructed to do so by the Swedish consul to

\(^{69}\) The Convoy Office had been replaced by a Committee which answered to Statskontoret in 1791 as this was thought to be a cheaper solution than a separate public authority. It was, however, even more expensive and the Convoy Office was therefore restored in 1797. For our purposes it is more or less only a change of names.

\(^{70}\) Nordisk familjebok 1916, pp. 923–924.
Morocco, Pehr Wijk. Wijk had reported to him that a civil war had broken out in Morocco where the Sultan’s brother, Prince Mulay Abderahman, had been declared new Sultan by the southern provinces of the country. If the presents were sent at that time, von Rosenstein argued, they would not only risk being taken by the rebels during the transport over land, but there was also the risk that the Sultan would come to lose the struggle and be killed. This could lead to a situation where new expensive presents would have to be sent next year, or worse, to a declaration of war against Sweden. As von Rosenstein’s orders were to keep the costs down, he saw no other option but to remain at Gibraltar and hope for the best.71

By not going to Tangier, von Rosenstein had chosen not to follow his orders and he clearly needed to argue for making this choice. He did this by pointing out that if the presents were given to the current Sultan, whose position was threatened, the risk was that the Sultan’s brother, if he won the war, would declare war on Sweden unless the Swedes sent new presents. That was a situation the Swedish state would want to avoid and therefore it was easy for von Rosenstein to argue for his actions.

In his report, von Rosenstein also mentioned that he had met with unexpected costs. Describing two ambassadors, a British and a Portuguese, who had recently spent considerable sums of money during their journeys in the country, von Rosenstein foresaw that the money he had been given for the transport would not be enough. He therefore needed to borrow more in Gibraltar or Cadiz. The reason money was needed for the transport from Tangier to the Moroccan court was that a lot of people were needed to transport the goods, and they would all expect a present for their trouble. As the Portuguese, the British and other European ambassadors had paid too much by competing with each other, the “barbarian” people of Morocco had become greedier, according to von Rosenstein. The Spanish and Dutch ambassadors were also waiting at Gibraltar for the civil war to end.

Here von Rosenstein set the Swedes apart from the other Europeans. He blamed the others for making the Moroccans, whom he considered to be barbarians, desire more presents than usual. Of course, in reality, the Swedes too competed with the other Europeans, but in von Rosenstein’s view this does not seem to have been important. What mattered to him was that the Swedish affairs suffered from the actions of the other Europeans. And his view also gives the impression that the Moroccans were growing greedier only because of the Europeans and not because they themselves saw chances to make more money.

71 RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 20. The year is given instead of volume number because not all volumes in the archive have visible numbers and can therefore only be found by looking for the specific year. “No. 20” points to the specific letter. That is, if one has the volume with the incoming letters of 1791, the letter with the number 20 is the one this specific footnote refers to.
Only a few days later von Rosenstein received a letter from Wijk telling him that the Sultan’s brother had been forced to turn back to the southern provinces, meaning that the presents could now safely be sent to Morocco. And on September 27, von Rosenstein could finally report that he had completed his mission. However, the Sultan had been angry because of the limited value of the gifts and said that he had expected twice as much, and von Rosenstein reported that only through a bribe could he be satisfied. After the bribe the Sultan declared that he was happy with the presents but warned that next time he would expect more. All this meant that the expedition had been more expensive than expected, but, argued von Rosenstein, because of what other powers had paid it had been necessary.

Wijk was the Swedish consul in Morocco. He had been consul since 1787, but had served as consulate-secretary there from 1779 and had therefore already been a long time in Morocco. He would become Consul General in 1793 and remain on this post until 1813. In 1815 he went back to Sweden. Wijk had sent regular reports to the Convoy Committee in which he explained the situation. The presents had originally been meant to arrive in 1790. In a report from April 23, 1791, Wijk wrote that he had not, as instructed, told the Sultan that the presents would come as late as July, but that he had instead informed him that the weather could make the journey take a longer time than expected. But to make sure the delay would not cause any problems he had sent the Sultan a small gift. It would have been far worse for the Swedes if the Moroccans had not already been engaged in a war with the Spanish. What worried Wijk, however, was that the Portuguese had spent so much on their presents that this was likely to have consequences for any ambassadors who could not pay as much. And now the Swedish presents were expected to come last of all the European presents when they earlier had been expected to come first. Wijk was worried. Here Wijk informed the Committee about what effects the actions of other states had for the Swedes. He, too, thought that the actions of the Portuguese were costly for the Swedish affairs but so was the delay of the presents.

In a letter from Wijk written on June 24, 1791, which in many ways includes the same information as the first report by von Rosenstein, Wijk gave more information about the conflict in Morocco. According to him, the two southernmost provinces had chosen a new Sultan and because the old Sultan had been too slow in going to these southern provinces to settle the matter, the conflict had escalated into a rebellion. But now the Sultan had finally given the order to call all the soldiers he could muster. Wijk warned that if the frigate with presents would not

72 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 21.
73 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 22.
74 Almquist 1912, p. 640.
75 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 37.
76 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 40.
come in 1791, it could have horrible consequences for Sweden. The Sultan was in return very dependent on the arrival of the Swedish presents and Spanish peace presents so that he would be able to pay his troops. But since the Moroccan crisis made it very problematic to give the presents, Wijk had sent letters to both Cadiz and Gibraltar to tell von Rosenstein to stay there and await further instructions.77

Both von Rosenstein and Wijk included information about other European countries in their information to the Convoy Committee. And when they did, it was mostly related to when and what they gave to the Moroccan Sultan. Both were annoyed that the Portuguese gave so much since poorer countries would have trouble to match the Portuguese and would thereby risk making the Sultan disappointed which in the worst case could lead to war. Both of the Swedes also wanted to make sure that the Convoy Committee understood why they had paid more than they had been ordered to. One interesting thing about Wijk’s comments about the British ambassador is that in one of his letters, he mentioned that the British ambassador had given too much as the British in Morocco could get “everything for nothing”.78 This seems to be a reference to the fact that the British naval power in the Mediterranean put them in a position where the Barbary powers did not dare to demand too much from them. At the end of the eighteenth century, the British could often choose to give presents when they liked rather than being forced to pay like the smaller powers. In his next letter, however, Wijk wrote that the British ambassador had given too little as all of the people at the Sultan’s court, from the lowest to the highest, now hated him.79 This observation suggests that perhaps the British could not do whatever they wanted after all.

A Civil War and the Art of not Taking Part

Although von Rosenstein’s expedition was successful in the end, the problematic situation in Morocco was not at an end and therefore the problems for Consul Wijk in maintaining peaceful relations between Morocco and Sweden continued. In fact, over the next couple of years the rebellion got far worse than it had been during the time von Rosenstein was there. In a letter written on November 29, 1791, Wijk reported how the Sultan, quickly after von Rosenstein left, declared that he wanted another 15,000 Spanish dollars. After a small bribe he once again declared that he was happy with the presents and that he would not expect presents from the Swedes more often than once every third year.

77 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 41.
78 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 40.
79 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 41.
Wijk continued to report what happened with other ambassadors and consuls. For example, he mentioned that an American envoy was said to be at Cadiz and that the Dutch ambassador had given a lot of money in cash, which was greatly appreciated by the Sultan as there was a troublesome shortage of cash in the entire country. The Moroccan war against Spain continued, he reported, and although peace negotiations had begun, there was no real hope for a peace in the near future. The governor of Tangier had declared that he was very unhappy with the gift he had been given by von Rosenstein. He said that he had expected at least as much as he had been given by the other European ambassadors, even more, as Sweden apparently was the country the affairs of which he could damage the most. As the governor was trusted by the Sultan, Wijk advised that the Convoy Committee would send him a gift so that he would have been given the same amount the Danish ambassador had given him, which was almost double the amount von Rosenstein had given originally. If the governor really could damage the Swedish affairs more than the affairs of other countries, or if he only said that to put pressure on Wijk, I cannot say. But it shows how uncertain the stability of the Swedish affairs was. Because of this, Wijk could easily show that what he paid was necessary. He wanted the Convoy Committee to pay the governor the same amount the Danes had given him, which shows how Wijk here considered Sweden and Denmark to be similarly important powers. He took the role of an agent of a minor power.

The rebellion had not been put to an end, but Wijk reported that it would probably end quickly if only the Sultan decided to go down to the southern provinces. If he did not, it would be very dangerous for him. In the next couple of reports, from February 27 and March 31, Wijk carefully explained what was happening in Morocco and how he and other consuls dealt with the situation. These reports were of course limited by the little information that reached Tangier, and Wijk was often aware that much information was just rumors, but this information is what he sent to the Convoy Committee, and is the information they would have at their disposal. The Sultan, called Mulay Liagid by Wijk, had finally waited too long to deal with the rebellious brother, and the consequences would prove fatal for him. Prince Ishem, another of the Sultan’s brothers, had been declared Sultan in his stead by the city of “Morocco”, by which I believe he meant Marrakech. The Sultan had entered Marrakech with his army, which, due to the shortage of cash, was very small. He pillaged the city and spared no one who got in his way. Even two foreign masons, a Swedish and a Danish called Ulander and Lipke, were killed as soon as they presented themselves.

80 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 37.
On February 13, Mulay Liagid had left the city to face Prince Ishem’s army, which was reported to have been much larger. Prince Ishem was defeated and reported killed, and in Tangier this was announced by a salute of all the guns of the fortress. On February 25, news that Liagid had died from the wounds he received in the battle arrived, and on the same day Prince Islemma’s son came to Tangier and announced that his father was now the Sultan of Morocco. This was also announced by a gun salute. When both the other Sultans’ deaths had been confirmed, the soldiers and people of Tangier swore fealty to the new Sultan. Islemma announced that he wanted to live in peace with the European nations, but that he needed to borrow money from them. Wijk had no money to lend him, and to his knowledge, no other consul did either.81

In the report of March 31, Wijk reported that Ishem had turned out to be alive and was now lord of the southern parts of Morocco. What little information he had also suggested that Mulay Abderhaman was still in the south and continued his fight there. Mulay Islemma was gathering his forces and controlled the northern part of the country while his brother Soliman had been declared Sultan in Fes and Meknes. Yet another two brothers, Prince Hussein in “Riss” and Prince Omar in “Tafilet”, wanted to rule. From the reports, then, it seems as if Morocco had gone from one to two to six Sultans in a very short time, and this was a very uncomfortable situation for Wijk and the other European consuls.

An example of just how uncomfortable the situation was is given as the report continues. In Tangier it was said that Islemma was the strongest of the three most probable candidates. Some felt that Soliman was the strongest, but Wijk thought that the eventual winner would most likely be Ishem in the south. Islemma wanted to borrow 1,000 Spanish dollars from every consul and since few believed he would win the consuls were not keen on lending him the money.

The consuls wrote a letter together in which they said that they would have to wait for their respective governments’ decisions before they could agree to do what he asked. The British consul was the only one who chose not to sign the letter as he had just received 1,500 Spanish dollars to give to the Moroccan Sultan. Another demand soon came from Islemma through which he threatened that a negative answer to his request would have consequences for the countries that chose not to do as he wanted. This threat made the Danish and Venetian consuls change their minds, but Wijk continued to resist. He did, however, send a letter to Islemma to remind him of the gifts Wijk had sent him earlier. It is not stated how much earlier, but it seems like these earlier gifts were from several years past. Wijk thereby tried to get around the problem. This was not accepted by Islemma.

81 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 38.
After a while some of Islemma’s troops arrived at Tangier and demanded that the consuls go with them to Islemma’s camp. All consuls gave excuses for not coming and no one went, but to be sure not to provoke him, as he after all could be the future Sultan of all Morocco, the consuls bought a gift and sent it to him. The problem of balancing between supporting the local ruler and not taking side in case it would eventually turn out to be the losing side was clearly something Wijk and the other consuls struggled with.82

Wijk’s strategy in this situation is interesting to discuss a little further. The European consuls tried to work together by stating that they could not do anything until their governments had been informed. To do this together meant greater chances that Islemma would have to accept their inaction and it would buy the consuls some time. The civil war meant that for Wijk and the other consuls the role as agents of European states became more prominent than what was usual. But at the same time, when given the option, they chose to set their own country apart from the rest of the Europeans. The British consul happened to have the requested money, Wijk tried to remind Islemma of old presents and the Danish and Venetian consuls judged that it was better to agree to pay than risk future war.

In the next letter, from May 31, 1792, Wijk wrote that the conflict was continuing, but that Tangier now had declared for Soliman instead, since Rabat and Salé had done the same. Islemma had left Tangier to take refuge at the Mulay Abslem sanctuary. Wijk thought that Soliman would be the best Sultan since he was both just and pious, but he had trouble paying his troops, and Ishem was said to be marching on Rabat with a great army. Ishem was however said to be debauching more than ever and this would probably be his downfall. All this information was not very reliable as the roads were dangerous and communication between the cities had more or less stopped.

Wijk also, in a request which sums up the situation nicely, asked the Convoy Committee to ask the king to send a letter to congratulate the Sultan of Morocco. They could leave the name blank so that Wijk during the translation could fill in the correct name with all the correct titles when he knew who had won the civil war.83 Wijk probably saw a chance to be among the first Europeans to be able to present such a letter to the new Sultan and thereby strengthen the Swedish position in Morocco. Since the court at Stockholm was relatively far away from Morocco compared to the other European courts it was probably more often the case that such letters would arrive later from Sweden than from the other countries. That the new Sultan might have wondered how the Swedish letter could arrive so quickly does not seem to have concerned Wijk.

82 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 39.
83 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 40.
After this letter it took Wijk seven months before he wrote the Convoy Committee again. On January 3, 1793, he reported that nothing had happened which made it likely the conflict between the two remaining brothers, Soliman and Ishem, would end. During 1793 his reports were concerned with the civil war and he reported about troop movements and that both brothers lacked sufficient funds to fight. In a report from June 30 the same year, however, he wrote about the Spanish. They had up until then not shown much interest in the northern part of the country, but had suddenly decided to keep equally good relations to both brothers. The Spanish consul, who had fled when the war between Spain and Morocco began in the autumn of 1790, came back and vice-consuls had been sent to several cities. It was known, according to Wijk, that they did this because they wanted both Sultans to allow grain to be shipped to Spain, where there was a shortage. The people hoped that Soliman would be careful, since they remembered how bad the situation had been the winter before when there had been a shortage of grain in Morocco. However, Soliman needed the money, so it would not be surprising if he chose to sell some of the grain. After having spent quite a long time focusing on the civil war, Wijk once again began to write about a broader context. The situation had been confused, but as soon as he got enough reliable news so that he thought he could judge the situation he resumed reporting about it.

The End of the Civil War

Over the next couple of years, it became more certain that Soliman would win the civil war. But it was a slow process. On April 15, 1794, Wijk wrote the Convoy Committee that as it was still not certain that Soliman would win, he himself had not agreed on a time for presents to arrive, even though it had soon been three years since the last shipment of presents. He had told the people at court that he hoped that the war in Europe between the French and the British and their allies would not cause any problems for the Swedes when sending the presents. He wrote that he had, more than any consul, reason to fear that Soliman would declare war on Sweden as the Moors thought the treaty with Sweden to be the one with the least advantage for Morocco. Soliman wanted presents from all European powers but had not yet said it clearly, since all treaties stated that the presents were intended for the ruler of all of Morocco, which he not yet was. He was, however, fitting out four frigates which Wijk thought was meant as a reminder to the Europeans that he could use his navy against all neutral flags. He also thought that Soliman would ask for the presents to be paid in cash, which he would try to avoid.

84 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 28.
85 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 30.
86 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 81.
In this letter, then, Wijk warned the Swedish government that he would soon need money to secure Swedish interests in Morocco. Important to note is that in this letter he also showed how uniquely troublesome the affairs were for Sweden but also for the neutral countries in general. If the situation truly was especially bad for the Swedish affairs or if Wijk was only trying to make his warning be taken seriously is hard to know, but it does seem unlikely that he would lie about the treaty with Sweden being especially disliked by the Moroccans.

In his next letter, from January 20, 1795, Wijk reported that Ishem for his own safety had gone to a sanctuary after Mogador had declared for Soliman. He also wrote that he thought he could negotiate for a better treaty than the one the Swedes already had, and on better terms than the Danish and Venetian treaties. He thought Soliman would agree to receive the present in cash, which he had been instructed in a letter from the Convoy Committee from August 14, 1794, to suggest to the Sultan. He also expected that Soliman would ask for presents from all European countries Morocco had treaties with to celebrate him becoming the new Sultan. Wijk suggested that these presents should be sent at the same time as the usual presents and said that the Sultan would appreciate anything that could be used against defenseless merchantmen, like four- and six-pounder guns. Two galleys were expected to be sent out to hunt Ragusan shipping and Wijk requested orders on what to do so that Swedish ships would not be attacked as well.

The Danish consul was also waiting for orders from his state, but he had the right to buy one year’s worth of presents if he had to, and he had informed the Sultan about this. The Sultan had then answered that the Danish flag was safe. Wijk seems to have been using the Danish example to suggest that he should be given the same right, but did not ask directly. It would of course be convenient for Wijk if he too could do this since Stockholm was even further away than Copenhagen and information therefore took longer to travel between Wijk and his government.

On April 8, 1795, Wijk could report that the peace with Morocco was now not far from broken. He had been forced to spend some money to make sure the peace was respected, since he had not received an answer from Sweden in time and therefore had not had any choice. The Danish and Venetian consuls had both received their respective governments’ answers to when the presents would come so they were safe. The galleys mentioned in the previous letter had started to search for American shipping to attack which was unexpected since they had been promised the same safety as other nations. Wijk was called to the Prince who told him that since the six months Soliman had given Sweden had nearly passed and no answer had come from the Swedish government, the Sultan considered the peace treaty broken. Wijk pointed out that the six months had not yet passed and that he did not think this was the Sultan’s own idea but the idea

87 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1794, No. 83.
88 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 93.
of some secret enemies of Sweden. Wijk wanted to go to the Sultan and talk to him. The Prince agreed to help in exchange for a present. A letter from the Swedish king did, however, turn up which assured the Sultan of Morocco of his friendship and that the presents were to be sent as soon as possible.  

Finally on July 20 and after four years of unstable relations with Morocco, Wijk could report that the frigate Diana had arrived and that the peace with Morocco was, at least for the moment, secure. But this was, he reported, after three Swedish merchantmen had been captured and brought into Tangier. When the Swedish presents arrived, however, the Swedish crews were allowed to return to their ships, which luckily had not yet been sold off.

What does all of this say, then? Wijk sent a lot of detailed information to Sweden, and so did von Rosenstein on his journey. Generally, Wijk’s reports were structured around three parts where he described what he was doing in one part, what was happening in Morocco in another and what the other European consuls were doing in the remaining part. There are a couple of shifts visible in the material. When the civil war had not yet turned into the confused conflict it would become, and when the Swedish presents were on their way, Wijk and von Rosenstein related to the other consuls as annoying and incompetent. That they spent too much was the most important critique they had about the other consuls, and this probably had to do with the fact that the Swedish representatives were all too aware that Sweden was too poor to be able to compete against these expensive presents. Wijk was, however, also using the example of what other consuls did to explain his own choices, as he for example informed the Committee that other ambassadors also waited at Gibraltar, as he had told von Rosenstein to do.

When the civil war finally and seriously broke out after the presents had been delivered and Mulay Liagid had died, the European consuls seem to have cooperated much more. When Wijk described specific consuls during this period, it was mostly to explain when and why some consuls chose not to cooperate with the others. During this confused period, Wijk focused on trying to give as much information as he could about what was happening, even when the information he had was unreliable, and he was often focused on showing that what he spent was absolutely necessary to spend, and that he did keep the costs down as much as possible. After the civil war had ended he informed the Committee that the peace treaty between Sweden and Morocco was in serious danger of being broken. During this time he focused on the other weak neutrals, especially the Danish consul’s rights and that the Danish and Venetian consuls got answers from their governments faster which secured their peace treaties and further weakened the Swedish position.

89 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 94.  
90 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 95.
During the entire period, it seems as if Wijk considered the Danish and Venetian affairs in Morocco to be the ones most comparable to those of Sweden. Other consuls were, in Wijk’s view, mostly spending too much or were referred to in a way which was simply stating what they were doing. The Danish and Venetian consuls Wijk referred to in a different manner. He used them much more to measure his own work against. What they were doing that he found good, he wanted to do himself, and sometimes, like when they changed their minds and paid Islemma what he wanted when he threatened them, Wijk used their example to show how he had chosen a cheaper, and thereby better, way. Granted, Wijk did not have any money so he was unlikely even able to change his mind and pay Islemma, but he presented it as if he managed to choose a way which consuls of comparable nations dared not. And when he was to try to negotiate a better peace treaty, it was the Venetian and Danish treaties he thought he could get better terms than.

All in all, then, Wijk seems to have been very aware that Sweden was a poor country which had to play a different game than the rich ones, but also that he, through skill, could choose different ways than the ones chosen by other poor and minor powers. He was constantly giving as much information as he could about the region as a whole and gave explanations to why things happened and to how the peaceful relations to Morocco could be maintained. He did this in relation to an international context with many different players that affected each other in different ways, rather than just in relation to Sweden and Morocco. When he did this, he constantly changed between focusing on setting Sweden apart from the rest of the Europeans and focusing on the common interests between different neutral powers or the Europeans as a group. How he chose to present the Swedes depended on which focus he thought would bring the best results for the stability of the Swedish affairs.

The Algerian War

In late December 1791, the Convoy Committee received two letters that carried the news that the Dey of Algiers had declared war on Sweden. The first letter, from the Swedish agent in Lisbon, Kantzow, informed the Committee that he had asked the Portuguese Queen to order her patrolling warships to protect Swedish shipping and help inform Swedish ships of the danger. It was not unusual that the Portuguese helped neutral countries when they were attacked by the Algerians. The Americans often asked them for help, and they usually provided it when they were at war with the Barbary States.91

91 Peskin 2009, p. 2.
Kantzow also reported that the Swedish ships at Lisbon had gone to St. Ybes (Setubal) to buy salt before going back home. In the second letter the Swedish agent in Cadiz, Christiernin, wrote that the Swedish agents in the Mediterranean had acted quickly and thanks to the 40 days of respite the Dey had given Sweden, the news would probably be known in the entire Mediterranean region before the Algerian corsairs would begin capturing Swedish ships. Therefore Christiernin thought that most Swedish merchantmen would be informed about the danger and be able to avoid it. The Swedish agent at Gibraltar, the Englishman Robert Anderson, had hired two boats that cruised the Strait to inform all Swedish ships about the danger. And the Portuguese had sent out a brig of war to search for Swedish ships and send them into the closest port. The brig had found eight merchantmen that had gone to Gibraltar, and Anderson thought it would be fitting to reward the Portuguese commander with a present.

In a letter written on December 30, Claes Grill in London reported to the Convoy Committee that he had informed all vice-consuls in English, Scottish and Irish ports about the war with Algiers and that he had hired a cutter to cruise between Dover and Calais to inform all Swedish ships about the danger in the Mediterranean. Information about the war had come to him from the Swedish consul to Livorno, Törngren. In a letter from May 18, 1792, Törngren informed the Committee that he hoped the war with Algiers could be ended quickly, especially since the French flag was enjoying less safety than usual which meant good opportunities for neutral carriers like Swedish ships, if only a new peace treaty could be agreed upon.

From this, it is clear that when Algiers declared war on Sweden, the Swedish consuls and agents in the region and even as far away as in England did what they could to inform both the Swedish state and all Swedish ships about the news so that no Swedish ships would be captured. The measures taken would turn out to have the desired effect; no Swedish ships were taken during the war, but the peace treaty, on the other hand, would not come cheap.

**The Arrival of a New Consul**

The Swedish consul to Algiers, Brandel, had been consul there since 1766. The first report to arrive from him was written on January 26, 1792, and was written in Livorno, which was where he had gone after he left Algiers when the war broke out. He informed the Committee that he was waiting for Lieutenant Matthias Skjöldbrand, who had been chosen to be the Swedish consul.

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92 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 33.
93 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1791, No. 47.
94 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 66.
95 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 67.
96 Almquist 1912, p. 474.
ambassador during the peace talks. Skjöldebrand would later also, as the Dey would not accept Brandel’s return, take over as new consul. Brandel wanted to take a look at the presents Skjöldebrand was bringing before he took them to Algiers so that they would be fitting, and he had sent letters to his friends in Algiers and asked them about the situation there. He also reported that no Swedish ship had been taken.97

On April 23, he wrote that he had, after a long period of waiting, finally got some information from Algiers. He had several friends in high positions there, and they wrote that when they had asked the Dey if it was not better to begin peace talks with Sweden, he had answered that not until they had taken seven or eight prizes would he be interested in doing so as only then could the terms be dictated by him. The Dey was angry because the Algerian corsairs had not managed to find and capture a single Swedish merchantman. He had asked if the Swedes were the only ones in the world who would not fall into his hands and who would not allow him to show his might on the seas his first year as Dey of Algiers. He had also replaced the commander of the corsair fleet as he suspected the old one of being a friend to the Swedes.

A Jewish trader named Duran had also tried to convince the Dey to end the war with the Swedes. Duran had said that the Swedes were prepared to pay and were well supplied with iron and naval stores. But to this, the Dey had answered that the Swedes were not happy to give presents and usually gave less than everyone else. When all other nations had given him presents when he became the new Dey, the Swedes had only made excuses like being in a war with Russia, something which did not concern the Dey. And besides, he had enough naval stores already. No, he needed only prizes and slaves, especially now, since the Spanish had recently paid for the freedom of their countrymen who had been held by the Dey. Duran advised the Swedes to bide their time.98

On April 30, Brandel reported that he thought the answers he had received from Algiers to mean that a peace would be possible but at a considerable price. A quick solution would, however, be necessary for Swedish navigation. On May 5 they hoped to be able to go to Algiers on a British brigantine, but only Matthias Skjöldebrand and his brother and secretary Per Eric would go; Brandel did not think he would be anything else than a problem in Algiers since he was not liked by the new Dey. Brandel had made sure to tell the Skjöldebrand brothers what he knew about Algiers and put them in contact with all his friends there. The peace would be certain he thought if only the Swedes would be prepared to pay for it.99

97 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 41.
98 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 43.
99 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 44.
Apparently, then, even though the news Brandel received might seem to have suggested that a new peace treaty was unlikely, Brandel was hopeful. This suggests that he understood that it was in the Dey’s interest not to show any interest in concluding a new peace treaty so that the Swedes would become prepared to pay a considerable amount of peace presents. And Brandel also said that it would be an expensive peace, but he was of the opinion that it would be worth it. He informed the Swedish government about what the Dey had said and what he thought the Dey’s words meant.

As the ships of those days were dependent on wind and square-rigged vessels are notoriously bad at sailing against the wind, they would not sail on May 5. On May 14, however, Brandel could report that Matthias and Per Eric Skjöldebrand were finally on their way to Algiers. It had taken more time than expected, but Brandel thought that was well since his contacts in Algiers would have had more time to prepare for their arrival, and it also meant they did not have to arrive during Ramadan, during which it was very hard to get close to the Dey. After this, Brandel continued to report from Livorno what Matthias Skjöldebrand and his brother had achieved in Algiers, but since Skjöldebrand was the one responsible for the peace talks, we now turn our attention to him and his reports.

Matthias Skjöldebrand was the son of Erik Brander who had been consul to Algiers before Brandel. Before going to take up his position as consul to Algiers he had been a lieutenant in the regiment of Västmanland. He would serve as consul in Algiers from 1792 and as Consul General there from 1793 until 1801.

Before we move on to his reports from the actual peace talks and the treaty, we will look at a few remarks he made in his reports from Livorno. Skjöldebrand feared that the peace treaty would be expensive since all nations were competing and trying to surpass each other. In a report from April 23, he wrote about the bad news Brandel had received that the Dey was not interested in peace talks until he had managed to take a few Swedish ships, but Skjöldebrand hoped the Dey would change his mind as he was known to do that often. He thought that the Spanish had been far too generous as they had paid 500,000 Spanish dollars, ceded the fortress of Oran and given 103 cannons for the peace treaty with Algiers. This was far too much for a poor country like Sweden, and it would be problematic if it had made the Dey desire more of the same. He therefore wanted to go quickly to Algiers to take advantage of the Dey’s changing temper. He also thought it would have been better to travel to Algiers on a Spanish frigate as it would put more pressure on the Dey, but since they were in a hurry a merchantman would have

100 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 45.
101 Almquist 1912, p. 612.
102 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 55.
to do. It was bad, he thought, that Europeans had to pay tribute to a state of pirates, but at least Sweden, according to him, had thus far been the least burdened by these payments. In a letter from April 30 he mentioned again what the Spanish had given but also that the Turkish Sultan had given Algiers seven ships to use in the corsair fleet.

In his reports, then, Skjöldebrand made more mentions about other powers and what effects their affairs had on Sweden than Brandel did during his time in Livorno. Just like Wijk and von Rosenstein, he thought that when the richer powers gave expensive gifts it put Sweden and other poor countries in a problematic position by making the Barbary powers greedier. Skjöldebrand was also one of the few Swedish representatives who wrote of the Barbary States in terms of pirates. Others did call them barbarians, but usually did not write about piracy, at least not in the material to the Convoy Committee and Convoy Office. That he did mention that Sweden had usually not been as burdened with payments to the Barbary powers as other countries is also interesting. It would be easy to think that when the Dey said the Swedes gave less than all other European states he simply said that to justify his war, but when even the representative whose job it was to keep the costs as low as possible seems to have agreed with the Dey, then it seems as if this really was the case.

In some earlier research, the fact that Sweden seems to have paid less than other European powers has been pointed to as a way to legitimize that Sweden tolerated the costs. Eskil Olán has further mentioned that it perhaps was because the Barbary leaders knew too little about Sweden to be able to make demands which were in proportion to Sweden’s ability to pay. If Sweden really did pay less is hard to know, and not as interesting as the fact that in both Skjöldebrand’s and the Dey’s views, this was of importance. The Dey got a reason to declare war and the Swedes got a way to set themselves apart from the other Europeans. If they paid less but managed to maintain the peace they could be said to be doing better than the rest.

A New Peace

On July 2, 1792, Matthias Skjöldebrand wrote home to report that a peace treaty had finally been signed. When Skjöldebrand and his brother arrived in Algiers, several of the Dey’s favorites had agreed to help arrange a meeting with the Dey in exchange for suitable gifts if they succeeded. The Dey was prepared for a meeting if the Swedes could promise that Brandel would not come back to Algiers. If he did come back, the Swedes would not even be allowed to disembark their
ship. Skjöldebrand had brought a letter from the king, which he translated. The Dey wondered why the Swedish king wrote to him when they were at war but agreed to listen.

In the letter, Gustav III explained how his war against the Russians helped the Ottoman Empire, the Dey’s ally, and he would rather come to an agreement with the Dey than fight a war against him. He wanted to protect the realm’s navigation and trade, and he considered the war a consequence of the intrigues of scheming foreigners. The Dey answered that he had already said that he was not interested in ending the war, but since Sweden had friends in Algiers, he agreed to think about it. Here the Swedish king argued like one of the great powers. France and the Ottomans had a tradition of relatively good relations thanks to their shared enemy the Habsburgs. Likewise, Sweden and the Ottomans had a common enemy in the Russians so their relations too had been rather good during the eighteenth century. And the Swedish king seized this opportunity to take up a position as one of the important friends of the Ottomans and hoped this would help in the Swedish-Algerian relations. This was something the Danes could not do. Denmark and Russia had close relations thanks to their shared interest of limiting Swedish power in the Baltic. In this case, then, the Swedish and Danish positions in North Africa were different.

After reading the king’s letter Skjöldebrand asked the Dey to consider that Sweden was a poor country that lacked the resources many other countries had. The Dey answered that he had asked the other consuls about Sweden and did not think it to be particularly poor. Skjöldebrand argued differently than the king. While the king chose to use the balance-of-power logic of the great powers, Skjöldebrand chose to present Sweden as a poor and minor state. The point was probably that Skjöldebrand was very concerned with his orders to keep the costs down and thought that the best way to do this was to convince the Dey that Sweden was friendly, but poor.

Among the Dey’s demands for accepting peace were a yearly present of naval stores worth 25,000 Algerian sequins and a personal present to the Dey of 100,000 sequins in cash and naval stores equal to what the Danes had given him. He also wanted presents, as was usual, to congratulate him on his position as new Dey and to mark the beginning of Skjöldebrand’s position as new consul. If Sweden did not accept these terms they could forever forget about a peace treaty.

According to Skjöldebrand, the Dey, by giving him an offer so unexpectedly, hoped to surprise Skjöldebrand and make him accept the terms without thinking them through. But he was

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107 Algiers was officially a province in the Ottoman Empire, but followed its own foreign policy and was largely autonomous. It seems likely that the Swedish king chose to avoid writing about the Ottoman Sultan as the Dey’s lord and therefore chose to use the word “bundsförant” which suggests a more equal relationship.

not going to let himself be tricked so easily. His mission, after all, was to achieve a peace at the lowest cost possible. And so he tried, and succeeded, to haggle. The yearly present was lowered from 25,000 Algerian sequins to 12,000, and he managed to lower the personal present to the Dey of 100,000 sequins and naval stores by more than half. He also managed to convince the Dey not to demand anything to congratulate him on becoming the new Dey. Skjöldebrand wrote that the French war would mean good opportunities for Swedish ships, which presumably meant that he thought that, given the problematic relations the European great powers were in, it would be bad if Sweden missed the opportunity by being at war with a North African power. This was why Sweden really needed a quick solution to the conflict. The Dey told Skjöldebrand not to talk about the favorable terms with anyone. So, after being offered a peace treaty at the same terms as Denmark, and then managing to make the terms better through haggling, Skjöldebrand agreed to the terms.

Skjöldebrand had tried to get information about what other powers paid and the Spanish treaty he thought would have cost at least seven million Spanish dollars, and all other nations would have paid something in proportion. He thought that the yearly costs of most states’ treaties either already were or would soon be higher than the costs for Sweden. This was due to the unfortunate dependency almost all of Europe, because of the competition between the countries of Europe, were in with this “barbarian power”, against which even large navies had achieved nothing but making the Dey think himself to be invincible.

So, when Skjöldebrand reported about the costs of the new peace treaty he showed how it could have been even more expensive, both by comparing the costs with what other states had paid and by showing how he had managed to lower the costs through haggling. By doing so, he presented himself as crucial to the success of the discussions. But he also supplied the Swedish government with information about the treaties of competing states. In the negotiations Skjöldebrand focused on presenting Sweden as a minor power, but he showed how he had made sure that Sweden did better than the other minor powers.

The favorites of the Dey had helped and would require presents. The British consul had also helped by letting the Swedes stay at his house. This had also had the good effect of letting the Swedish flag fly side-by-side with the British, the European country which enjoyed the most respect in Algiers. He should also, thought Skjöldebrand, receive a present for his help. Skjöldebrand’s father had been consul in Algiers and his old friends had also helped, and the Dey liked that Skjöldebrand was born Algerian. It was important that Sweden would honor its part of the treaty. Venice would probably end up in a war with Algiers, and Portugal, Naples and others who had sought peace with Algiers for a long time would probably have to wait even longer now.
that Sweden had gotten its peace. The Dey was going to write the Americans and tell them it was now too late. The Americans did have very problematic relations with Algiers during this time. The Dey already had the crews of two American ships in Algiers and in 1793 he would capture even more. Not until 1795 would the Americans have their peace treaty. These events would cause the Americans to begin building a navy, something which many Americans had been against before the North African powers began showing the Americans how vulnerable they were. ¹⁰⁹

Skjöldebrand then came back to the presents that were needed for different people who had been helpful. One problem was that all the fine rings and clocks the Spanish and French let rain over Algiers had meant that all the officials in Algiers had come to expect much more than they had twenty or thirty years before. Just like we saw Wijk do, Skjöldebrand used the examples of other states to explain why he had been forced to spend so much. He wanted to make clear that it was not his fault that the Algerians were requiring so much money.

Sweden was seen as equal to Denmark and Holland which meant that Sweden would have to give as much as these countries when they gave presents. It would also be important to give some presents to the commander of the navy when giving naval stores so that he would not try to find anything to criticize. Skjöldebrand also included a copy of the Danish peace treaty with Algiers so the Committee would have it.

He then reported that a Neapolitan man-o-war had hunted two Algerian xebecs which had tried to escape by seeking refuge under the guns of a small French fort. But due to the limited respect the French flag enjoyed at the time, the Neapolitan simply went in and sunk the two xebecs. The crews managed to get ashore and were helped back to Algiers by the French. On the Dey’s command, one of the captains was strangled and the other beaten on the belly until he was dead. The French affairs in Algiers had been uncertain even before, but the Dey now declared war on France. This made the French quickly declare that they would replace the lost ships. They could therefore save the peace, but everyone in Algiers knew that the Dey agreed to restore the peace because his fleet was not ready to leave port and that he did not want to repeat the failure to capture any ships, as he had done with the Swedes. The Swedish and British affairs were secure, but the Spanish were apparently doing whatever they could to disturb the affairs of all other nations. This is an example of how Skjöldebrand reported about the affairs of other European states in Algiers. He reported about what had happened but also described his analysis of what it meant and connected the events to the Swedish affairs. After this very long and

¹⁰⁹ Peskin 2009, pp. 115–119.
detailed report Skjöldebrand continued to report of the events in Algiers, and his problems were far from over.

Before we move on, however, a short discussion of what the information presented this far can tell us is in order. Skjöldebrand’s letters show how he and the people involved in the peace talks looked upon the Mediterranean trade and the Swedish-Algerian relations as a system. The things one country did had effects on other countries, both directly and indirectly. For example, the Swedish king tried to convince the Dey that his Russian war was helping the Ottoman Empire and therefore indirectly also the Dey. And that the Spanish were prepared to pay large sums for a peace treaty had consequences since it made it hard for poorer countries to compete with them. It is also clear that both Skjöldebrand and the Dey treated Sweden as a power comparable to other weaker powers like Denmark and Holland. Skjöldebrand tried to convince the Dey that Sweden was poor, but the Dey did not really believe him, and in the end it seems as if it was Skjöldebrand’s skillful diplomacy that made the treaty cheaper than it could have been. That Skjöldebrand wanted to show how he was skilled is hardly surprising, but it is interesting to see how he used different tactics in different situations but that an awareness of the nature of an international system was present in much of what he wrote. This was much like what Wijk wrote, and Wijk too tried to make sure the Committee understood that what happened which was not good for Sweden was outside of his control and, therefore, not his fault.

The European War gets in the Way

In Skjöldebrand’s next report, written on July 4, 1792, he reported that due to the problematic situation in Europe with a war probably coming and due to the impatience the Dey had shown, he had sent a copy of the demands for naval stores on another route so that he would be more certain that the information would actually arrive in Stockholm. It was important that the presents were of good quality, because if the Dey found any reason to be unhappy with the naval stores, that would cause nothing but trouble, as it for a long time had for both Holland and Denmark.110

His last report of the year was written on August 7. He once again mentioned that it was important that the presents were sent as soon as possible. The commander of the Algerian navy, who apparently was likely to cause problems for the Swedes as he usually did what he could to find anything disappointing with the quality of the naval stores that were delivered, had been given a present and Skjöldebrand was hopeful that he would now not cause any problems. What had happened was that the commander had returned from Constantinople with a lot of presents

110 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 59.
and with a letter from the Ottoman Sultan to the Dey, recommending the Sultan’s friend and brother the British king, his friends the French and Swedish kings and more generally the king of Denmark and leaders of Holland, and Venice. Spain was not mentioned, however. Here it does seem like Sweden was separated from the other minor powers, which usually did not happen, but was probably appreciated by the Swedes. And Sweden and France were both seen as friends by the Sultan, which seems to suggest that the balance-of-power-logic where the enemies of the Sultan’s enemies were his friends was used by him as well. Skjöldebrand had, during the time the commander was in Constantinople, left the presents meant for him at his house, which had pleased the commander. He had said that only the Swedish consul had proven his respect for the commander while he was away. The other consuls now came out of fear.\textsuperscript{111}

1793 would prove to be at least as intense for Skjöldebrand as 1792. On January 1, he wrote his first report of the year. The ship carrying some of the presents had arrived and was waiting to unload, but there was a Dutch ship in the way and it was hard to say how soon it would be finished.\textsuperscript{112} Two weeks later, on January 14, he could report that the powder had been of good quality but that the Dutch ship was still unloading. Skjöldebrand wrote that from the Dey’s reaction to the Dutch presents, Sweden could learn much. The masts had not been of the demanded size, and only with bribes could the Dey be convinced not to reject them. However, when one of the twenty masts turned out to be just a little rotten, the Dey grew so angry that he declared war on the Dutch and told the consul to leave Algiers within three days.

Skjöldebrand continued the report by describing how not even a year had passed without problems concerning the delivering of naval stores, which both the Dutch and the Danes had faced. Masts had been rejected even when they had been of very good quality. These things had always happened, but had become worse in recent years. According to Skjöldebrand, the Spanish were the reason for all this, since they did all they could to make it harder for other nations to keep good relations with Algiers. They had sent a shipwright to serve the Dey, and he seemed to have orders to secretly make sure that all that was demanded would have measurements which were impossible to live up to so that the Dey would have reason to be unhappy and even declare war on the unlucky nations. One would think, Skjöldebrand continued, that this “little shipwright” could be bought, but then he would simply accept the bribe and run to his protector, the commander of the navy, and show him what he had been given to make him declare unworthy goods worthy. This only led to a suspicious Dey. But if he was given nothing he got angry and declared the goods unworthy anyway. The worst, however, was that if any country would go to the Spanish court to ask them to stop what they were doing, the Spanish would

\textsuperscript{111} RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1792, No. 60.
\textsuperscript{112} RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 31.
simply report this to the Dey who would then declare war on the nation who had tried to discuss it with the Spanish.\textsuperscript{113}

If this was really true or not, I cannot say, but Skjöldebrand often blamed the Spanish for making the situation problematic in all sorts of ways. It is possible that he was simply using the Spanish as scapegoats. The demanded dimensions of the masts would, in any case, prove very problematic for the Swedes. Just finding the unusually large masts, considered contraband by the warring nations of Europe, and then getting them to Algiers was difficult. And they were impossible to find within Sweden so they had to be bought elsewhere. The failure to convince the Dey that this was a problem almost cost the Swedes the peace.

One reason for Skjöldebrand to report about the Spanish shipwright was that in a letter from the Committee from November 6, 1792, the Committee had told him that some of the demanded measurements for masts and yards were unreasonable and would be impossible to fulfill. Skjöldebrand was ordered to see if it was possible to replace these with nails and cannons and, if so, in what quantities. He was told not to promise anything before he got the Committee’s answer.\textsuperscript{114} Given these orders from the Committee it is clear that Skjöldebrand had an incentive to find the source of the problem and of course it would be better for him if this source was outside of his control. The story with the Spanish shipwright fits this quite well and even if it is not unlikely that it really was the case that this shipwright did try to make life harder for the European consuls, it is probable that Skjöldebrand was doing what he could to present himself in the best light possible.

Skjöldebrand’s report of January 14 continued. The Spanish shipwright was one kind of problem for the Swedish delivery of presents. Another was the decrease in value of the goods. The Danes and the Dutch had for a long time out of fear of threats of war sold goods in Algiers cheaply, sometimes even at a lower price than they were bought for. This meant that goods worth 12,000 Algerian sequins in Sweden would be valued less than that when they reached Algiers. As the goods also were made more expensive due to the high freight rates and as many goods were rejected anyway, causing war, Skjöldebrand thought that it would be better if the yearly presents could be paid in cash rather than in goods. If it was not possible to get the Dey to agree to this, he hoped that he would at least agree to demand fixed numbers of goods, or only goods Sweden had a good amount of and which could be sold in Algiers at the best price. He had needed to buy presents to give to a newly appointed “Hagia de Cavallas.” The old one, to whom Skjöldebrand had given presents when the peace treaty was signed, had very unexpectedly been strangled. It was a reminder that little was certain under the current Dey. He suspected that more

\textsuperscript{113} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 32.
\textsuperscript{114} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1792, No. 40.
people in the government would be replaced in a similar manner, which would require more gifts, which he asked the Committee for.

The Committee sent their answer on February 25, 1793, and said that they thought Skjöldebrand’s idea was a good idea. They sent a list of goods Sweden had a good amount of so that Skjöldebrand would know what they could offer. They also informed Skjöldebrand that they could not send the rest of the presents until they knew if the Dey would accept receipt of goods other than the ones he had asked for. If war broke out between France and Britain, which seemed likely, it would be hard to send ships to Algiers at all.

In Skjöldebrand’s next report, written on February 13, he confirmed that his suspicions had been correct; more officials had been replaced, and he had been forced to buy the new ones presents. One positive thing was that the old commander of the navy had been banished from the country. Another was that the war with the Dutch had meant that the Swedish ship was now able to unload the presents. The Dey was unhappy that it was taking so long for the presents to be unloaded, and Skjöldebrand was doing what he could to make sure Sweden would not get into trouble when the Dey found out that all of the presents would not be delivered at this time. He would have to bribe people, even though he had been ordered by the Committee not to give more until the Committee had agreed to it. Such a system would simply not work. One could not tell the Dey he had to wait five or six months for an answer. All nations needed a consul and they had to be able to work freely. He was doing what he could to keep the costs down, but what he gave was necessary, he argued. This referred to the orders of November 6, 1792.

In Skjöldebrand’s report of June 12, 1793, the Committee received new information which showed that the Algerian war with the Dutch also had negative consequences for the Swedish affairs. Skjöldebrand was happy that the Committee had agreed to his idea of sending the yearly presents in cash instead, but he had had no Opportunity to bring the idea to the Dey. This was because the war had made sure that the yearly supply of naval stores from the Dutch would no longer come, meaning that it was unlikely the Dey would agree to lose the supply from Sweden as well. But some other country would probably reach a peace settlement with the Dey soon. The United States had tried for a long time and Prussia had recently begun, and as soon as any of these was successful, Skjöldebrand would use the opportunity to continue with his plan.

On May 28, 1793, the Committee wrote Skjöldebrand and told him that the European war made it impossible to send the remaining peace presents at that time as no convoy would be able to protect such a cargo. They had, however, begun storing the goods so that they could be sent as

115 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1793, No. 45.
116 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 33.
117 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 35.
soon as the situation in Europe allowed it.\footnote{118}{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1793, No. 46.} On August 12, Skjöldebrand reported that to tell the Dey that the European war was stopping the Swedes from sending the presents was a bad idea. The Dey had already told them that he never was at peace with all Christian nations and even when Spain had sought to close the Mediterranean by blockading the Gibraltar Strait, both Denmark and Holland had always found ways to get their presents to Algiers anyway. He said that the Swedes should also manage this if they wanted to. But Skjöldebrand would write and tell them what the Dey would answer this time. Furthermore, he hoped the Committee would make a decision to send the presents soon since the leaders of the Barbary powers lacked both reason and patience. The Dutch had used frigates to bring the presents when needed and he hoped the Committee would realize the importance of getting the presents to Algiers, one way or another. The Dey was waiting for the presents to arrive so that he would be able to declare war on some other nation, which would be good for Swedish trade and navigation.\footnote{119}{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1793, No. 36.}

The European war made it difficult for the Swedes to live up to their promises to the Dey. As naval stores were considered contraband, the war made it more difficult to deliver the presents. And that the demanded presents were of unusual measurements and that the Dey’s war with the Dutch made the Dey more dependent on deliveries from other minor powers made the situation look more and more hopeless for Skjöldebrand.

### Threats of a New War

On December 6, 1793, Skjöldebrand reported about the Dey’s reaction to the delay; he would not accept that the naval stores could not come during 1793 so instead he declared war on Sweden. However, Skjöldebrand managed to get him to wait with the war if Skjöldebrand’s brother went to the Swedish king with a letter from the Dey informing the Swedes about his terms for peace.\footnote{120}{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 82.} In a report from February 27, 1794, we learn that Skjöldebrand had too little money for buying the usual rings and clocks needed for the Dey and his closest friends. The situation the Swedish affairs were in required more presents than usual. The Danes were also late with their present of naval stores and therefore also had to pay more than usual to keep the Dey and his friends happy.\footnote{121}{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 83.}

But on April 13, Skjöldebrand reported that the Danish consul had paid much to buy time, but when the Dutch came and bought peace for a much higher price than the Swedes had done, the Dey sent out his cruisers to capture Danish ships. Luckily for the Danes however, their ship
carrying the presents finally came. The Dutch had tried during their peace talks to get the Dey to allow them to pay their yearly present in cash rather than naval stores. Skjöldebrand was informed about this and as he knew that the Dey was dependent on receiving naval stores and only could allow one Northern power to pay in cash, he tried to get the Dey to allow this to the Swedes instead. He succeeded but had to promise gifts to all the people who helped him.122

On July 6, Skjöldebrand reported that his brother came with the frigate Grip and many of the remaining peace presents, but still no naval stores. They had been promised for two years. The Dey was angry at first but was calmed with personal gifts. However, everything would be lost, he reported, if the naval stores were delayed any longer. When the rest of the presents had come and everything had been valued he would pay what remained of the last two years’ yearly presents in cash. Then he would begin paying the yearly presents in cash instead, if the Dey allowed it.123

On July 16, he reported that the Dey wanted to give the Swedish king a present consisting of horses and rare animal skins, but since the plague was in Algiers, Skjöldebrand thought this was a bad idea. Instead he received a Turkish sword the Dey had received from the Ottoman Sultan and two bottles of rose oil. Skjöldebrand thought these were rather meek presents, but they were important since the Dey had given no other Christian king presents like these.124 When the leaders of Barbary did things that set Sweden apart from most or all of the other Christian nations the Swedish representatives would report about it. It was seen as positive to be treated differently than the other powers. One could think that the problematic situation the Swedish affairs were in would make Skjöldebrand try to keep a low profile but as the examples above show, he did not do that. Instead he was very active and this shows that the Swedish policy in the Mediterranean was not a policy built on inactivity, but rather that active diplomacy was seen as the most effective way to further Swedish interests.

In the next report, written on August 16, Skjöldebrand gave a lot of information about what was happening. It was good that Per Eric, his brother, could assure the Dey that the remaining presents were coming. The Dey had during the last two years declared war against France, Denmark, Venice and Holland. The first three had been resolved at once but had required large sums and the Dutch war had been very expensive to end, and already after four months the Dutch were being threatened with war again if the peace presents did not arrive. Spain had been threatened more than once and the British consul, who was said to have secret orders to damage the Swedish and Danish affairs, was threatened daily. The Swedes were not long ago dangerously

122 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 84.
123 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 86.
124 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 87.
close to war, and the Portuguese and Americans had been refused peace treaties. The Dey also threatened his own people, his neighbors and even the Ottoman Sultan.\textsuperscript{125}

The picture Skjöldebrand painted here was one of a mad and dangerous Dey. He did not present any evidence that the British consul really did try to damage the affairs of Sweden and Denmark, but it is not unlikely. The British were annoyed that the neutral powers used their neutrality to take shares of the carrying trade.\textsuperscript{126} Also, the neutral powers did carry goods belonging to the enemies of Britain. This meant that the neutral powers were not only damaging British commerce but that their actions also were damaging to the British war effort. The British would therefore have an incentive to limit Danish and Swedish navigation in the Mediterranean.

Skjöldebrand continued the report by writing that not even two months after the \textit{Grip} had come to Algiers, the Dey began counting the days and asking when the rest of what was owed him would come. And when Skjöldebrand’s own ship came with orders from the Convoy Committee, Skjöldebrand found out that there had been a very serious misunderstanding between him and the Committee. He thought he had been very clear that the Dey needed masts and planks badly, but since the Committee had sent him 40,000–50,000 sequins in credit it seemed as if they had thought that the Dey had already agreed to let him pay all remaining presents in cash. He thought the masts and planks were coming and now he found out this was not the case. The credit he had received instead would hardly help. To make sure the Dey would not declare war, he had to lie. He gave small gifts to the Dey and said that he would use his own ship to bring the Dey salt, which was needed in Algiers. Then he said that the ship that would carry the masts really had left Sweden but that the Russian court was arming either against Sweden or the Ottoman Sultan, something which the Dey already knew, and therefore did not allow masts to be shipped out of Russia which was the only place they could get the masts from. The Swedish king was very sorry, but he could not force another country to sell. Skjöldebrand told the Dey that the king would like to compensate him with cash. The Dey was furious and said that he had grown tired of waiting. The Swedish representatives often accused the North Africans of lying but as this example shows, when the Swedish affairs were threatened, they had no problems lying to the North Africans.

Skjöldebrand tried to get the Dey to wait a little longer but was asked if he wanted to trick the Dey for another two years. Skjöldebrand was just back at his house when he got the news that the Algerian cruisers would be sent out to search for Swedish ships and that the Dey had changed his mind; he would allow Skjöldebrand to pay in cash what Sweden owed Algiers, but then the consul could leave because the two countries were now at war. Skjöldebrand only answered the

\textsuperscript{125} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1794, No. 88.
Dey that he had once said that he wanted to be Skjöldebrand’s father in Algiers, and asked him to show this now. His friends at court did what they could to make the Dey change his mind about the war but he simply answered that he suspected all of them to be bribed by the Swede, which Skjöldebrand in his report wrote that they indeed were. In the end, the Dey agreed to give the Swedes four months respite, which Skjöldebrand knew was going to be too little, but his friends told him that they would try to get the Dey to allow a longer respite when he had calmed down. Skjöldebrand asked the Committee to send the remaining presents as quickly as possible, otherwise there was nothing more to do but warn all Swedes in the Mediterranean about the danger.

The misunderstanding in the correspondence between Skjöldebrand and the Convoy Committee caused a lot of trouble. On October 24, 1794, the Committee explained what had happened in detail. They had gotten the impression that they could pay the remaining presents in cash. This had led the king to order the acquisition of the remaining peace presents to be stopped. And now they knew that this had been a bad decision. Planks of oak were impossible to get anywhere so it was lucky that they already had managed to buy those before they were ordered to stop. The masts, however, could not be sent quickly since they could only be bought in Riga because of the war. They had to be shipped to Sweden first though and that would take time. However, the Committee told Skjöldebrand to inform the Dey that the planks they did send were much more expensive than the masts which showed that it was neither neglect nor cost that was the reason the masts were not already in Algiers. They also included some other goods that the Dey had not asked for but they hoped he would like anyway. Some minor goods were still remaining to be sent but the Committee hoped that they could either be replaced with cash or other goods, or that the Dey would agree to receive them after the war in Europe had come to an end.127 Thus, what had happened was that the Convoy Committee had, just as I did when I read the material, misunderstood Skjöldebrand’s reports. The consequences were almost catastrophic.

On December 3, 1794, Skjöldebrand reported that he continued to try to make the Dey decide not to declare war. The Dey had no masts but was arming his ships in preparation for a war against the British, which meant the masts from Sweden would be very welcome. Skjöldebrand had offered both of his own two ships to carry the Dey’s goods almost or entirely free of charge. Carriers were expensive during this time of European war so the Dey used the Swedish ships he was offered. However—and this was Skjöldebrand’s plan—the Dey could not declare war on Sweden as long as Swedish ships were at sea carrying his own goods. Skjöldebrand had

127 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1794, No. 90.
apparently also received some wooden planks which he had given to the Dey. This had made the Dey like him a little more than the other consuls, who, however, still had the advantage of being able to keep their promises to the Dey. The Dey had said that he would be sad if he had to break the peace with the Swedes as the Swedish consul, like his father, always did what he could. But if his court would not keep their promises he would be forced to declare war on them.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 96.}

In his reports, Skjöldebrand used the examples of the other powers to show how easily provoked the Dey was. This would show the Committee that it was not possible to wait longer and that no excuses could be made. The remaining goods had to be sent. He also showed how his actions, time after time, saved the Swedes from a declaration of war. The picture one gets from his reports is that the Swedes were lucky they were not at war already but if they did not send the remaining presents soon there was nothing more that could be done.

**The Arrival of the Last of the Presents**

It would turn out that the Committee took the problem seriously and that they would work hard to get the remaining peace presents sent, despite the problems of sending naval stores during a major war. On February 1, 1795, Skjöldebrand reported that he had received a letter from a Mr. Toutin, informing Skjöldebrand that Börgeson, one of the two captains on their way to Algiers, had had an accident in the Baltic and would probably not be able to continue. Skjöldebrand would therefore try to get the masts in Cadiz instead.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 97.} But on February 19, he could report that both ships were now in Algiers. Both Skjöldebrand and the Dey were surprised that Börgeson had made such a quick journey, despite losing a mast and hitting both ice and sandbanks damaging the hull of his ship even before he had left the Baltic. The ship would probably need to be careened for repairs, but at least it was there. Börgeson had brought a lot of planks but no masts. The Swedish affairs were safe for the moment, but Skjöldebrand said a larger ship with the masts was on its way.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 98.} The ship carrying the masts would not be sent from Sweden until June.

The Convoy Committee informed Skjöldebrand that a ship under the command of Master Berg had been sent loaded with very fine masts. The Committee also asked Skjöldebrand to make sure the Dey understood how hard it had been to acquire the masts.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1795, No. 71.}

After Skjöldebrand’s report of February 19, the European war made communications between the Committee and Skjöldebrand increasingly difficult. Not until June 13 could he write again. He had received no word from the Committee and could not know what he was supposed to tell the
Dey. A Danish ship had arrived with goods the Dey had asked for and this was only seven months after the Dey had made the order. The other nations were also giving the Dey what he asked for.\textsuperscript{132} On October 20, the Committee sent a letter to Skjöldebrand and informed him that two more ships had been sent with the last of the presents.\textsuperscript{133} On November 27, Skjöldebrand reported that the Swedish and Danish consuls had been called up to the Dey and was told that he wanted to build two frigates and needed some materials for them. He then placed two identical orders, one for each consul, and said that now he would see which court would prove to be the most devoted to him.

Skjöldebrand thought that it was very important that the Danes did not deliver the materials first. He hoped that an agreement could be made to send everything in one and the same Swedish ship so that everything could be sold at the same price, which would be good for both countries.\textsuperscript{134} Skjöldebrand’s suggestion can be seen as a way to make sure that the Swedes would not lose to their competitors, which they probably would if they did not cooperate since Stockholm was further away from Algiers than Copenhagen. Cooperation would therefore probably be more beneficial for the Swedes than for the Danes, but Skjöldebrand hoped the Danes too would see some advantage in cooperating with the Swedes.

On December 20, 1795, Skjöldebrand could report that the Swedish ship carrying the masts had anchored just half an hour earlier and that he would report as soon as he knew more about how they would be received. He thought it was good that the Committee had reported to him that they had begun buying the rest of the goods the Dey had asked for, but he thought it would be best to wait with sending them until he had seen if they would really be needed. However, that they were ready to be sent would make the Swedish affairs rest more securely. That they had already been on their way for two months he could not know, since he apparently had not received the letter with this information.\textsuperscript{135} Evidently, even after all the trouble he had faced he still tried to keep the costs as low as possible.

On January 3, he reported that the unloading of the masts went slow but that the Dey was now sure that the Swedish government had never wanted to break any promises.\textsuperscript{136} And on February 13 he could finally report that all of the cargo was now ashore. He had bribed the people who were going to measure and weigh the goods, partly because he wanted them not to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1795, No. 99.
\item[133] RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1795, No. 73.
\item[134] RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 62.
\item[135] RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 63.
\item[136] RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 64.
\end{footnotes}
find any problems that were not there, partly because he hoped they would not care about any problems that were actually found.137

On February 15, he reported that his idea about paying the yearly present in cash would have to be discussed each year. The Dey would not change the treaty. The amount was the same as Denmark, Holland and now also America were to pay, and the reason he did not want to change any of the treaties was that he always needed to be sure he would get naval stores so that he could keep his navy in a good condition. Otherwise it would not be possible for him to declare war on whomever he felt like declaring war on. The Dutch peace was saved only through high costs and he would probably soon declare war on Denmark. Who would then supply him, if the Swedes would only pay cash? Even the British were in a war with the Dey and they had earlier been the only European nation the Algerians respected.138 Finally, on April 5, 1796, Skjöldebrand could report that the two ships carrying the last of the presents had come to Algiers on March 23 and 26. Some of these goods had been promised almost four years earlier. Skjöldebrand also reported that two Danish ships had been captured.139 And on May 22, he wrote that there were 16 Danish ships in the port. Of the consuls, only the Swedish was not daily harassed by the Dey.140

All in all, then, the reports from Consul Skjöldebrand show that he viewed the Swedish affairs in relation to an international context in which what you did had effects on others in complicated ways. The information he sent included information about what he did, what the Dey did, what the other European consuls did and why everyone did what they did. What consequences the actions had for others was also often mentioned. Both by him and the Dey, Sweden was viewed as a minor power which was comparable to other minor powers. Skjöldebrand therefore sometimes used the examples of these other minor powers as a way to show that what he did was something they all had to do, since they all faced the same problems. Sometimes he also showed how he had managed to do better than these other minor powers or how the other minor powers were doing better than the Swedes. But when they were, he was careful not to present it as if it were his fault. He carefully reported about everything he thought the Convoy Committee needed to know about the situation in Algiers in a way which gave them much information about the broader context. And he always tried to present himself in a good light.

There is no doubt that there was a lot of competition between the different consuls and that it was considered good when other powers got into wars with the Dey. However, nothing suggests

137 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 65.
138 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 66.
139 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 67.
140 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1796, No. 71.
that Skjöldbrand actively sought to make the situation worse for the other consuls. When what he did had negative consequences for other countries, like the peace treaty of 1792, he reported about this, but in a rather neutral way. He simply reported the consequences as he understood them, not as goals in themselves. After all, he was annoyed that other consuls were said to do this and reported it to the Committee. The ones he was most annoyed with were the Spanish and to some extent the British, even if the British had helped during the peace talks. And when the Dey arranged for the Danes and Swedes to compete, Skjöldbrand even suggested that it would be better to cooperate. This might very well have been because he knew that Stockholm was further away than Copenhagen and also had a shorter sailing season, something which he also tried to tell the Dey, but he told the Committee he thought it would be better for both countries to cooperate. In the end, the Swedish affairs were of course his main concern, but he used both cooperation and competition to get where he wanted. Keeping the Mediterranean open for Swedish shipping was more important than closing it for competing shipping, even though he was aware that when competitors got into trouble, it was good for Swedish shipping.

**Captured Swedes and the Blockade of Tripoli**

In this section, we will move our focus to Tripoli and the conflict between this regency and Sweden between 1796 and 1802. This section will be a little different compared to the previous two, but as we will see, it will provide us with interesting results which will show how complicated the situation was for the Swedish representatives in the Mediterranean region. The first reason that this section will be different is because it will focus on more people. During the conflict there were three different consular agents with direct responsibility for the Swedish affairs, and there were three different naval officers who visited Tripoli as negotiators. They negotiated one peace treaty each, even though, obviously, only the third would be ratified by both parties and provide the basis for a lasting peace. Therefore, while the previous two sections had one “main character”, this section will have six. The second reason is that because of the intensified warfare between the major powers of Europe, the communication between North Africa and Stockholm became slower and less reliable, and this led to a situation where it was less clear for the Swedish representatives which actions could and should be taken. To illustrate this it fits perfectly that our story begins with much confusion in 1796.
Rumors of Unstable Relations with Tripoli

There are hardly any letters about the situation in 1796 available in the archive of the Convoy Office. Two letters were sent from the Convoy Committee to the Swedish consul to Tripoli, Johan Widell, and from the first, from October 27, it is clear that Widell had negotiated a new peace treaty with the Pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, who had required the Swedes to send presents to him as recognition of his position as the new Pasha. The Committee promised that these presents would be sent as quickly as possible but the frozen Baltic made it impossible to send them before the spring of 1797. In the second letter, from December 8, we can see that the new peace treaty had been negotiated on May 31, and that the Pasha had given the Swedes six months to send him the required presents. However, already in August a Tripolitan corsair had taken a Swedish merchantman commanded by Master Grundberg. After this, the Pasha had agreed to give the Swedes another four months respite, but since he had already broken his word once, the Committee found it harder to trust him. However, they could now hope that the letter informing Widell that the king was going to send the presents would arrive in Tripoli before it was too late.

The Committee informed Widell that the presents were ready to be sent but that they were waiting for the ice to melt so that a ship could be sent. Furthermore, they told Widell to make sure that the Pasha understood that the presents were to be sent and reminded him to write as often as there were ships in Tripoli bound for Europe. That Widell wrote too seldom was something the Committee found problematic. Widell had been consul in Tripoli since 1778 and by 1797 he was 71 years old. The risk was that he had simply become too old to fulfill his duties.

Early in 1797, there were some letters sent to and from the Convoy Office that give a little more information about what was happening. In a letter from the king from February 24, 1797, it becomes clear that it was not one but two Swedish ships that had been captured and that the Pasha was angry because he had not received a letter from the Swedish king congratulating him on his new position. The Ottoman Sultan and the Algerian Dey had acted and sent the Pasha letters telling him to cease capturing Swedish ships and restore peaceful relations. After this the Pasha had simply taken the cargo of the two Swedish ships and declared that he was happy with this solution. The king wanted the Convoy Office to instruct Widell to tell the Pasha that even though the costs of the two cargoes had been high, the king would still send the Pasha his

141 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1796, No. 40.
142 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1796, No. 41.
143 Almqvist 1912, p. 639.
144 The Convoy Office was restored in January 1797 and replaced the Convoy Committee.
presents during the summer.\textsuperscript{145} In a memorandum to the Lord High Chancellor of Sweden (rikskansler) from January 12, 1797, the Convoy Office informed the chancellor about the situation.\textsuperscript{146} Apparently, the Pasha wanted 200,000 Spanish dollars for peace and another 7,000 Hungarian ducats each year. This was unreasonable, thought the Convoy Office. They further thought it would be best if a brig of war accompanied the ship that carried the presents as this could help protect Swedish ships in the Mediterranean and also be given as a present to the Pasha in case he did not like the other presents. On February 15, in a second memorandum to the Lord High Chancellor, the Convoy Office wrote that they thought the Swedes should send out ships to convoy Swedish merchantmen and send out word that the danger of war with Tripoli was now over.\textsuperscript{147} The information that the danger was over would, however, soon after turn out to be horribly wrong.

In a letter to the king on September 22, the Convoy Office reported that there were rumors coming in from several ports in the Mediterranean that Tripoli had captured more Swedish ships, but since no reports from Tripoli had come it was not known if there had been a declaration of war or not. The Convoy Office thought that if Widell was not already dead he probably was too ill to fulfill his duties. Therefore they suggested that the Captain of the Admiralty, Anders Cöster, would be sent to take over, or at least to investigate what had happened.\textsuperscript{148}

The king decided on September 27 that Cöster would be chosen to accompany the ship carrying the presents. It would also be better, the king thought, if a frigate would deliver the presents rather than the ship which was currently loaded since, if Tripoli and Sweden were at war, a merchantman would risk being captured on arrival. Cöster could help both Widell and the commander of the frigate with the negotiations.\textsuperscript{149} Two days later the king decided that since it would apparently be too expensive to cancel the mission for \textit{Speculation}, the merchantman that had been hired to carry the presents to Tripoli, and since the frigate could not carry the presents without being rendered useless as a warship, the frigate would instead protect the \textit{Speculation} on its journey to Tripoli. The frigate could then be used to assist the ships that were to deliver presents to Morocco in 1798.\textsuperscript{150}

The Convoy Office tried to communicate with Widell but he was slow to inform the Swedish government about what was happening. On September 22, 1797, they wrote Widell that the \textit{Speculation} was going to Tripoli with presents, but as it was rumored that three Swedish ships had

\textsuperscript{145} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1797, No. 14.
\textsuperscript{146} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1797, No. 32.
\textsuperscript{147} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1797, No. 33.
\textsuperscript{148} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1797, No. 4.
\textsuperscript{149} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1797, No. 23.
\textsuperscript{150} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1797, No. 24.
been taken by the Tripolitans, the *Speculation* would first go to Tunis to receive information about
the situation from the Swedish consul there.\(^{151}\) And on October 10, the Convoy Office informed
Widell that the king had decided to send a frigate to protect the *Speculation*. They told Widell that
he together with the commander of the frigate, Major Blessingh, was supposed to negotiate a
new peace treaty. Widell should make clear to the Pasha that the frigate came with peaceful
intentions. It was problematic that Widell had not informed the Convoy Office or the Lord High
Chancellor about the situation and that he did not answer the letters from the Convoy Office.
They were worried, they informed him, that he was not well.\(^{152}\)

During this first year of the conflict, then, the information sent between the Convoy Office
and Tripoli was based on rumors and was completely concerned with reestablishing the broken
peace treaty, though the Swedish government was not even entirely sure if it had been broken or
not. The reestablishing of an acceptable peace treaty was of course something which continued to
be of major importance to the Swedish representatives, but, as we will see, when new
representatives arrived and Widell finally began reporting at least from time to time, much of
what we saw in the previous two cases becomes visible in the material again.

That Widell did not report regularly clearly made it hard for the Swedish government to know
what was happening. The other Swedish representatives in the region could only report what they
had heard, but as long as Widell did not write no one could be sure about what was happening.
That the Convoy Office informed Widell that the *Speculation* would first go to Tunis was probably
because they wanted to give him a chance to report to the Swedish consul there, Carl Tulin, in
case it was not possible for him to send letters to Europe.

*Major Blessingh’s Expedition*

Major Blessingh was the first of the three naval officers who would be sent to negotiate during
the conflict with Tripoli. Blessingh’s instructions were to be careful so that he would not be
surprised by the Pasha. He should make sure to inform the Pasha that if he did not accept a
peace treaty under reasonable conditions, Sweden would send more frigates like the one already
in the Mediterranean. It was also very important that he would make sure that all Swedish sailors
and ships the Pasha had taken would be set free and that the Pasha would compensate the
Swedes for the stolen cargoes. He was also instructed to bribe important persons but not more
than usual. He was supposed to investigate how much the Danes had paid for their last peace

\(^{151}\) RA, Konvöjkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1797, No. 88.
\(^{152}\) RA, Konvöjkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1797, No. 89.
treaty. If necessary he should also propose that Captain Cöster would take over responsibility for the Swedish affairs.

Together with the formal instructions, Blessingh had also received orders from Baron Rosenhane that he should seek support from Tunis, which was a more powerful power than Tripoli. Rosenhane also maintained that it was the greed of the Barbary States, supported by Christian powers, that made the Barbary States break the peace treaties.\textsuperscript{153} That foreign Christian powers played their part in making it difficult for small neutral powers to maintain the peace treaties with the Barbary powers seems to have been a common view in Sweden.

As we can see in Blessingh’s instructions, when the conflict began, the Swedes decided to threaten the Pasha with military retaliation and to seek the support of other North African powers. The Dey of Algiers and Ottoman Sultan had already helped and the Tunisian Bey would now be asked to help as well. The Swedes chose an offensive strategy but also took defensive measures. For example they wanted to know what the Danes had paid so that they would know roughly how much they would have to pay themselves. That is, they would try to negotiate in a similar manner as the great powers, but were prepared to pay if necessary.

Late in 1797 Major Blessingh left Sweden aboard the 40-gun frigate \textit{Thetis}. Under his command was also the 20-gun brig of war \textit{Husaren}, commanded by Captain Peterson, and these two vessels were to protect the \textit{Speculation} from being captured on her way to Tripoli. During this period both France and Britain had intensified their naval warfare and especially the privateering had become increasingly problematic for the vessels of small neutral powers.\textsuperscript{154} Therefore, it is likely that it was not just to protect against Tripolitan corsairs that the Swedes decided to send both a frigate and a brig to protect the merchantman, but to protect against European privateers as well. The journey was slow due to bad weather but eventually the ships reached the Mediterranean. On June 21, 1798, after a few days on Malta, Blessingh could report that he had met with a Turkish envoy who had been sent to help negotiate a peace treaty between Sweden and Tripoli. The envoy had been stranded on Malta since the captain of the ship that was supposed to take him to Tripoli had changed his mind about going there, but now the envoy could travel aboard the Swedish frigate instead.

Blessingh had arrived at Malta just a couple of days after General Bonaparte had taken the island on his way to Egypt. The Swedish consul on the island was also the British consul and had therefore been arrested. Blessingh had to communicate with him through letters but got the information that Tripoli had fitted out four frigates and two smaller vessels with which to attack the \textit{Thetis} and \textit{Speculation} and capture the latter. Because of this, Blessingh decided it was best to

\textsuperscript{153} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1797, No. 52.
\textsuperscript{154} Feldbaek 1980, pp. 27–28.
leave the *Speculation* behind and just take *Thetis* and *Husaren* to Tripoli until a peace treaty could be agreed upon. Blessingh had been allowed by Bonaparte to buy supplies and hire pilots for Tripoli from the French forces.\(^{155}\)

On July 26, Blessingh was in Livorno and could write his report of the peace talks.\(^{156}\) He had arrived in Tripoli on June 25. The first thing he did was to send Cöster to find Widell, but Cöster was not allowed to go ashore and Widell was said to be ill and unable to leave his home. Therefore, Blessingh contacted the French consul instead and asked him to inform the Pasha that he wanted to speak with him. Blessingh was then allowed ashore but not to meet the Pasha. He could, however, visit Widell and found that he had a broken leg and was very ill.

After contacting the Pasha through the French consul again, Blessingh informed him that if they did not meet the next day, he would consider that another act of war and begin hostile actions. This helped, and Blessingh could then begin the peace talks. He presented letters of recommendation he had received from the Ottoman Sultan and the Tunisian Bey and Tunisian prime minister as well as a list of the presents aboard the *Speculation*. For these presents he wanted all Swedish ships and cargoes or, in case they had been sold, the value of them to be handed back to the Swedes. The Pasha said that this was unreasonable and that the ships had already been declared legal prizes and were seen as compensation for twenty years of unpaid presents, together at a value of 50,000 Hungarian ducats. In addition, he wanted 100,000 Spanish dollars and the presents aboard the *Speculation*. This would be a price equal to that which the Danes had paid for their last peace. The prisoners he could release without any additional payment. Here we can see that the Pasha, just like the Dey of Algiers, viewed the Swedes and Danes as equally strong powers.

Blessingh answered that these demands were unreasonable and that the Swedish king would, despite desiring a lasting peace, rather send more frigates to deal with the corsairs than to give in to the demands. The Pasha answered that the king could do whatever he wanted, but that the Pasha could not simply refrain from his reasonable claims. But for the sake of friendship he could lower the demand to 85,000 Spanish dollars instead, which would be a little cheaper than the Danish peace. Blessingh tried to get better terms but it did not work. As nothing else worked he had to agree to them. The Danes had paid 97,000 Spanish dollars as peace present, 7–8,000 Spanish dollars in precious objects and had agreed to let the Pasha keep the four ships he had captured. Therefore, the Pasha’s demand of 85,000 Spanish dollars was as far as Blessingh could go. In one last attempt to lower the demands, he asked the Pasha to accept 75,000 Spanish dollars. The Pasha answered that he would accept 77,000 Spanish dollars together with the

\(^{155}\) RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1798, No. 59.

\(^{156}\) RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1798, No. 60.
presents aboard the *Speculation* if his most important officials, as well as the person who had acted as mediator, would receive presents. The mediator during the Danish peace talks had also received a present for his help.

Since Swedish consuls around the Mediterranean had informed Blessingh about the importance of negotiating a peace treaty quickly so that the Swedish flag would be safe in the Mediterranean again and since the Swedish captives were in a desperate situation, Blessingh thought himself forced to agree to the terms, especially since he managed to get terms that were better than the Danish treaty. He maintained that the Danes, by agreeing to everything the Pasha wanted, had made the situation even harder for the Swedes. He also noted that Widell thought the Danes had tried to make sure the Swedes would get the same terms as the Danes and not better. After this the terms were written down in Arabic and Italian and preparations for the delivery of the presents and the release of the captives were made. Some captives were allowed to leave Tripoli at once but the rest would not be allowed to leave until the *Speculation* arrived. The Pasha was not happy with Widell and therefore Cöster was presented. He would assist Widell until a new consul could arrive.

So, after threatening to send for more frigates and after some haggling, a new peace treaty had been agreed upon. The costs were probably lower than the costs of sending more frigates and were therefore accepted. This was how it usually worked. It is unlikely that the Danes would simply have agreed to everything the Pasha had demanded, but arguing that this was the case would provide Blessingh with a way to explain why the costs were necessary. However, that the Danes would have tried to make sure that the Swedes would not be offered better terms than them is more likely. The Swedes always wanted to do at least as well as the Danes and it is probable that the Danes would likewise try to do at least as well as the Swedes. Making the Pasha agree to treat the two powers equally would help them do just that.

Widell had sent a couple of reports to the Convoy Office during the conflict. In one from November 20, 1797, he reported about the 7,000 ducats the Pasha claimed that Sweden should have paid every third year for the last twenty years but had failed to do. Apparently he had made the same claim to Denmark and they had been forced to accept. Widell wanted to know what to do.157

On July 5, 1798, Widell reported that a new peace treaty had been negotiated. It had been expensive but less so than for the Danes who, through their peace treaty, had not only hurt themselves but also made it nearly impossible for the Swedes to negotiate a reasonable peace.

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157 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1798, No. 113.
treaty.\textsuperscript{158} Both Blessingh and Widell blamed the Danes for the expensive peace treaty and they considered themselves better negotiators than their Danish counterparts. But at the same time, they considered the Danish and Swedish affairs to be tightly connected. The Pasha made the same demands to both countries and when the Danes agreed to pay, this was seen as having consequences for the Swedes as well. When they were negotiating they did clearly not see the negotiations as only concerning the two powers directly involved, but the negotiations were seen as taking place within a larger system.

\textit{An Unskilled Consular Agent Takes Over}

After Blessingh had sailed Cöster became the Swedish representative in Tripoli. He was not officially consul, but since Widell was ill and no new consul had been chosen, vice-consul Cöster took over responsibility for the Swedish affairs. His reports from 1798, 1799 and early 1800 are much more confusing than those of the other consuls. He did, however, play a central part in the conflict between Sweden and Tripoli.

The peace present of 77,000 Spanish dollars was not to be delivered all at once and when the first 35,000 arrived the Pasha was suddenly angry and said he had been deceived. It is not entirely clear why from the report Cöster wrote on October 14, 1798, but it does seem like the Pasha was angry because the first delivery had taken longer than expected. He threatened that it would cost the Swedes if the remaining 42,000 Spanish dollars did not come when they were supposed to. Cöster told the Pasha that the frigate was being repaired in Livorno and could not come with the remaining money until late December. This was a lie but necessary to make the Pasha agree to wait.

Cöster had apparently also told the Pasha that the Swedish navy fought as well as those of the British and the French which were the only ones the Pasha had said he feared. How this was supposed to be helpful in Cöster’s discussions with the Pasha might be confusing, but as we will see a couple of more examples of, Cöster was very sure that the best way to deal with the Barbary States was by using the navy and that only a couple of frigates would be needed to scare the Pasha into accepting whatever terms the Swedes found reasonable. This example is also another example of how the Swedish representatives lied when they thought it was necessary. The Pasha had simply answered that Spain always gave what he wanted and that he would teach the other nations to pay. Cöster wanted to go to Livorno to see what the problem was, but the Pasha did not allow it as he considered Cöster to be his slave for the moment. Cöster then talked to the British consul and asked for help, which he agreed to provide. The Pasha was apparently treating

\textsuperscript{158} RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1798, No. 115.
all consuls badly, except for the British and Cöster, who were close friends to the Tripolitan prime minister.

The American consul had been forced to pay 6,000 Spanish dollars in bribes because the American presents were late. The Danish presents were also late and the Pasha had sent out cruisers to find Danish ships. The Pasha had told the Danish consul to go to hell. The Tripolitan corsairs had taken six Austrian ships from Trieste and 35,000 Spanish dollars supposed to be handed over to the Ottoman Sultan, but the Pasha did not care to hand them over. The news that Napoleon had taken Cairo had reached Tripoli and made the Pasha decide to strengthen his defenses.159

This was one of Cöster’s first reports and in many ways it was similar to those of the other consuls. He wrote about the Swedish affairs, what the Pasha did, what the other consuls did and about news from the region. But it also differed from other consuls’ reports by being very confusing. He managed to mention, in the same report, that he was one of two consuls who were treated well by the Pasha but also that the Pasha considered him to be a slave. These statements seem contradictory, but Cöster did not comment on it and it is hard to know what he meant. This is true for most of his reports and one of the reasons that he was replaced after a couple of years.

On December 12, Cöster reported that the Husaren had arrived with the remaining 42,000 Spanish dollars and that the Pasha was now happy. Cöster told the Pasha that Sweden had never wanted war and that Widell, by not reporting of the increased demands, was alone responsible for the war. When the Husaren had arrived the Pasha had saluted the brig with a flag atop the castle, something which he usually only did when his cruisers came back with prizes. This had caused a lot of interest among the consuls and people of Tripoli.160 Once again, a Swedish representative reported about a situation when Sweden was set apart from the other powers.

In a report from Cöster written on February 20, 1799, he informed the Convoy Office that he had information that the Pasha was planning to make peace with Portugal to be able to send his cruisers west towards France to be able to capture Russian, Prussian, Dutch and Hamburgian ships. If no such ships could be found he would resume capturing Swedish and Danish ships because he could not be at peace with everyone or he would not be able to pay for the upkeep of his corsair fleet of twelve large and small vessels. He also had one shipwright, 24 carpenters and a smith which had been sent to him from the Spanish king. The plan had been discussed by the Pasha, a British renegade—the most influential of the corsair captains—and a Catholic British doctor who long had tried to replace the British consul. The doctor was dangerous, thought

159 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1799, Letter on page 679.
160 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1799, Letter on page 695.
Cöster, and it would be good if the Convoy Office could ask the Swedish minister in London to see if it would be possible to make the British government recall the doctor. He did not stay out of anyone’s affairs and he told the Pasha everything. Cöster also requested that future presents to the Pasha would be sent in a light frigate, since a merchantman would likely only be captured and robbed by the Pasha.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1799, Letter on page 764.}

The *Speculation* had been captured by the Portuguese when she was headed back to Tripoli from Malta with goods belonging to Tripolitans. The Portuguese were still at war with the Tripolitans and could not let the Swedish ship continue. This had made the Pasha furious. On March 5, Cöster reported that the Pasha had given orders to take two Swedish ships as compensation despite the fact that he had given six months to the Swedes to solve the problem with the *Speculation*. Cöster asked for instructions on what to do. He said that two frigates with skilled commanders could blow the Pasha to hell. The Pasha had no friends in Constantinople or in Algiers or Tunis. The risk was that a new Pasha would soon rule Tripoli and Cöster wanted instructions so he would know how to deal with the new demands this would likely mean. He had written Consul Tulin in Tunis several times but had not received any answers. He was as bad as Widell, thought Cöster.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1799, Letter on page 774.}

On July 11, Cöster reported that the Portuguese had negotiated a peace treaty with the Pasha, and this had been done in an honorable way. A Portuguese ship had attacked the fortress which had resulted in a white flag being raised by the Tripolitans. The ship had also managed to hunt down and capture two of the Pasha’s cruisers and two Swedish ships the cruisers had previously captured. Cöster used this as an example of what cannonballs and powder could achieve that peaceful negotiations could not. The British doctor, who was taking care of the British affairs since the British consul had left, became the new Portuguese consul. The Swedish ships were given to the Pasha and the cargo of one of them was given as a present. Cöster could not do anything to protest against this. He tried, but the Pasha simply wondered if he wanted war. How it was honorable to give the ships of a friendly country as presents to Tripoli is something Cöster did not explain.

Cöster once again requested a frigate and instructions. He had been in Tripoli for more than a year without any instructions. He had done everything he could to maintain the peaceful relations and he was convinced he had both the British renegade and the British doctor, who were both competing for the Pasha’s favor, on his side. Two Danish ships had been taken by the Pasha’s cruisers and the Danish consul had been forced to pay 16,000 Spanish dollars for their return.
Cöster had sent messages to different consuls in the Mediterranean to inform them that the Swedish flag was neutral and safe. 

Cöster was, apparently, sure that he had managed to keep the Pasha from declaring war on Sweden. It is clear from his reports that he had trouble cooperating with other Swedish consuls and that he was sure that the Swedish navy could solve the problems forever if the king would only send a couple of frigates.

Late in 1799 Cöster asked the Pasha about the ships he had gotten from the Portuguese but the Pasha would not compensate the Swedes. Cöster hoped that the Portuguese would. Cöster was forced to guarantee that the Swedes would no longer demand any compensation from Tripoli for these ships. The Pasha still wanted consul presents, even though no new consul had yet been chosen, and Cöster therefore had to agree to give a present worth 4,000 rix-dollars. Then the Pasha suddenly demanded 30,000 Spanish dollars for three Swedish boys he had given back to the Swedes after the last peace treaty had been negotiated in 1798. If he did not receive compensation he would begin capturing Swedish ships again.

The British consul Lucas, a British captain, the Portuguese consul and a Turkish merchant Mohamed Dgheis who were also present were all shocked by the Pasha’s cruelty towards the Swedes. Lucas and the British captain left, but the others tried to make the Pasha change his mind since the Swedish consul could never agree to the demands. In the end, Cöster had to accept that the Swedes would pay 15,000 Spanish dollars for the boys and another 15,000 for the goods that were lost with the Speculation. Cöster would be kept as hostage in Tripoli until the Swedes had paid.

The report continued. Cöster had also received a letter informing him that if he had to leave Tripoli or if he was prevented from taking care of the Swedish affairs, he should hand over responsibility for the Swedish affairs to the Danish consul. The Danish consul was not allowed to meet the Pasha and could therefore not even take care of his own country’s affairs. Therefore Cöster had decided that he would hand over the affairs to the British consulate secretary who was also the Portuguese consul and Cöster’s and Sweden’s friend. This strikes me as a bit odd. Not only did Cöster refuse to follow orders, but he also wanted to hand over the Swedish affairs to the same country that had given Swedish ships to the Pasha and taken the Speculation. They had caused nothing but trouble for Sweden and still Cöster thought it better to trust the Portuguese rather than the Danes. Now, if the Danish consul was in no position to do anything it is understandable that Cöster would choose not to do as he was ordered, but why trust the Portuguese consul? An answer to this question, I do not have.

163 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1799, Letter on page 792.
Cöster continued his report by reporting that three Danish ships had come into Tripoli with two of the Pasha’s cruisers. Cöster did not dare to declare war on the Pasha and would continue to work for getting the 15,000 Spanish dollars to pay the Pasha with. This he did because he wanted to protect Swedish shipping. Still, he thought it would be better if the Nordic powers attacked instead so that the Pasha would have to give up forever.\textsuperscript{164} Cöster was here the first of the Swedish representatives to suggest that Sweden and Denmark join forces and attack. In the following years more people would suggest this.

On January 13, 1800, Cöster reported that he had not received any money to pay the Pasha with and that it was now up to the king if he wanted peace or war. The Pasha wanted war because his corsairs needed something to do. It was not Cöster’s fault if a war broke out.\textsuperscript{165} On June 12, he had received a letter from the Convoy Office that ordered him to go home, but he was not allowed to. Apparently he thought that there were rumors in Sweden that he was in a conspiracy with the Pasha and this made him upset. He also reported that a new Danish consul had arrived, Nissen, and that his consul presents had been worth 6 or 7,000 Spanish dollars.\textsuperscript{166} And on July 28, he could report that the Pasha had declared war on Sweden on the day before. Three cruisers had been sent out to find and capture Swedish ships. He was afraid that he would not be allowed to leave Tripoli since the Pasha had refused to give him his passport. He had protested through the Danish consulate.\textsuperscript{167}

On August 17 Cöster also reported that he had been arrested on August 4 and was now a prisoner of war. He wanted instructions on how to act if Swedish ships would be captured. The Pasha had stopped two ships from leaving between July 28 and August 17 to make sure that Cöster’s letters did not leave Tripoli too soon so that the Tripolitan declaration of war would remain secret longer.\textsuperscript{168} On October 7, Cöster could report that 11 Swedish ships had been taken by the Tripolitans. The American consul had been informed by the Pasha that if he negotiated a peace treaty with the Swedes, he would declare war on the Americans instead.\textsuperscript{169}

Late in 1800, Cöster was replaced by the new Swedish Consul Burström, and we will soon turn our attention to him and Lieutenant Colonel Tornqvist who were the ones that negotiated the peace treaty of 1801. But first, we will try to put Cöster’s reports in a broader context. Cöster was not a very skilled consul, and it is obvious that he quickly made enemies of the other Swedish consuls in the region. He was convinced he was doing a better job than any of them but the

\textsuperscript{164} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 124.
\textsuperscript{165} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 125.
\textsuperscript{166} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 126.
\textsuperscript{167} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 127.
\textsuperscript{168} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 128.
\textsuperscript{169} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 154.
Convoy Office was clearly annoyed by what he did. On January 23, 1800, in a letter that it appears Cöster never received, they stated that since they thought he was going home they had not written to him since May 1799 and that they were surprised he had agreed to the most unreasonable demands any leader of the Barbary States had ever made and done this without any orders from the king to do so. The 15,000 Spanish dollars for the boys, Cöster would be responsible for himself since he had acted only on his own initiative. And that he had agreed to pay consul presents was entirely against his orders. On March 11, they wrote him another letter which he did receive in which they informed him that the king was annoyed with him and that he should follow his previous orders and return home immediately.

The communication between Cöster and the Convoy Office did not work very well since the European war prevented letters from travelling quickly between Tripoli and Stockholm. Cöster did what he could, but it was clearly not enough. As a naval officer he seems to have believed far too much in the ability of the Swedish navy to scare the Pasha into behaving more like the Swedes wanted. He also trusted the British and Portuguese consuls far more than any other Swedish consul seems to have done. But it is not clear what he thought. The British doctor, for example, he reported to be dangerous just like the British renegade, but in later reports these were suddenly and without any explanation his closest friends. Cöster was not very careful when he wrote home. He often reported about rumors but did not report on them later to explain if they had turned out to be true or not. All in all, it is hard to tell from his reports if the Swedes were at peace with Tripoli or not and it is not at all surprising that the Swedish government decided to recall Cöster. As we saw in Skjöldebrand’s reports, it was vital that the information that was sent home was clear and carefully written so that it would not lead to any misunderstanding between the government and the consuls. However, that Cöster often asked for instructions is a sign that it was not only Cöster’s fault that the communication between him and the government did not work very well.

But in some ways his reports also resembled those of other consuls. He often reported on what the Danes and Americans did and he seems to have considered Denmark and Sweden to be similar powers, just like the other consuls. He did not want to hand over the Swedish affairs to the Danish consul when he was ordered to, not because the Danish consul could not be trusted, but because he was not allowed to talk to the Pasha and therefore could not even take care of his own country’s affairs. When a new consul arrived, Nissen, Cöster approached the Danish consulate when he needed help. And the Convoy Office sent Nissen a letter in October 1800 and asked him to make sure that the Swedish captives, in case any Swedish ships were captured now

170 RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, B, 1800, No. 80.
171 RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, B, 1800, No. 81.
that the Pasha had declared war, would have clothes and everything else they needed to survive. They contacted him because they suspected that Cöster was no longer allowed by the Pasha to take care of the Swedish affairs. They hoped that the frigate *Thetis*, which was once again on its way to Tripoli, would already have taken care of everything, but in case it had not, they asked Nissen to help them.\textsuperscript{172}

**Lieutenant Colonel Tornqvist's Expedition**

Lieutenant Colonel Carl Gustaf Tornqvist was, just like von Rosenstein, a veteran of the American War for Independence and the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–1790. He was also a historical writer.\textsuperscript{173} As the commander on *Thetis* he was supposed to pass Algiers and Tunis before going to Tripoli. When he arrived in Tunis on October 23, 1800, he tried to find out more about the situation in Tripoli. The Swedish consul Tulin had, despite sending several letters, not received much information that could be trusted from Cöster so it was decided that they would contact the British consul as well. The Tripolitan cruisers had withdrawn back to Tripoli as soon as they heard about the *Thetis*'s arrival in the Mediterranean but from the Dutch consul in Tunis he received information that eleven Swedish ships had been taken. From the Tunisian Bey’s consul, who had just been in Tripoli, Tornqvist received information that the Pasha wanted 150,000 Spanish dollars, ransom for the Swedish crews and to keep the cargoes of the captured ships. This would be better than the Danish peace treaty. The British had just agreed to a “humiliating” peace treaty with Algiers and this had led the other Barbary States to increase their demands as well, according to Tornqvist. He wrote that he would not agree to such terms but rather point out to the Pasha that a Swedish squadron would cruise the Mediterranean and that Sweden would rather keep the squadron there than pay him.\textsuperscript{174} Once again, the Swedes wanted to try to threaten the Pasha. The “humiliating” British treaty is another example of how the Swedes saw the negotiations between other European states and the Barbary States as having an effect on the Swedish negotiations.

The information from Tornqvist reached Stockholm in December and the Convoy Office quickly wrote a memorandum to the king suggesting that instructions should be sent to Tornqvist so that he would know how he should negotiate. Since the Convoy Office’s resources were limited and since the Pasha had proven several times that he did not keep his word, they suggested that Tornqvist should be allowed to accept to pay no more than 120,000 Spanish

\textsuperscript{172} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1800, No. 83.
\textsuperscript{173} Hofberg 1906, pp. 629–630.
\textsuperscript{174} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 75.
dollars for the peace. It would probably be necessary to send more ships to Tripoli to show the Swedish naval ensign in Tripolitan waters. If peace at reasonable terms turned out not to be possible, the Thetis should be ordered to begin convoying Swedish ships instead to prevent a salt-shortage in Sweden in case Swedish merchantmen were afraid to leave Mediterranean ports.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1800, No. 8.}

That the Convoy Office lacked funds was nothing new. In fact, throughout its history, it was constantly criticized for being too expensive and several times the state had to step in and pay when its funds could not cover the expenses.\footnote{Müller 2004, pp. 67–68.} The Convoy Office was concerned that the funds would be thrown away for nothing if the Pasha did not keep his word. But keeping frigates in the Mediterranean was also expensive so they still wanted to try negotiating.

On January 28, 1801, Tornqvist reported that he had negotiated a peace treaty with the Pasha of Tripoli. He had arrived in Tripoli on December 24, 1800, not knowing much about the situation there. From Cöster, he received information that 13 Swedish ships had been taken and that 131 men including 14 masters were held captive. About Cöster, Tornqvist said that he was easily made angry and that this could explain why he wrote such obscure and vague reports.

There was a lot of haggling between Tornqvist and the Pasha and his minister. Some of it concerned the Speculation. The Pasha was no longer interested in the cargo but would let the Swedes pay 5,000 Spanish dollars as consul presents, just as the Danes had. Since the Swedes had already paid consul presents for Cöster despite the fact that he was no consul, Tornqvist could not agree to pay again. The minister said that in the Tripolitans’ view the man taking care of a country’s affairs was the consul, no matter what title he was given. The minister also made clear that the Pasha was not interested in a treaty that was 60 years old and he himself had not ratified. Tornqvist said this was odd since the Pasha in 1798 had accepted a treaty which stated that the terms of the old treaty from 1741 would still be used.

After this there were some further discussions about the Swedish demands, which among other things included that all captives and ships still in the port should be released and 140,000 Spanish dollars paid as compensation for the sold cargoes and the three ships that had been sold. The minister had brought these demands to the Pasha but during the meeting, at which Tornqvist had not been present, the Portuguese consul had come to talk the Pasha into making unreasonable demands against Sweden. This was the British doctor, the same man Cöster had considered a friend. The Pasha wanted 700,000 Spanish dollars in silver for releasing the captives and ships and one million sequins in gold for his patience and other demands. Tornqvist meant that these demands surprised him less than they would have done if they had been reasonable. He said that since the Pasha clearly did not want peace he would take the measures an armed
The Portuguese consul had plotted against the Danish and American consuls as well and had said that Sweden should pay at least two million sequins and that the Pasha had been too lenient towards the Danes. From this it seems like the Portuguese consul wanted to get rid of the minor neutral powers. The Americans had before often trusted the Portuguese to help them when the Barbary States troubled them, but in Tripoli this does not seem to have worked. If this was because the Portuguese consul had been ordered by the Portuguese government to do so or if it was on his own initiative is hard to know.

Tornqvist had a spy close to the Pasha who contacted Tornqvist and informed him that the Pasha wanted a peace treaty quickly and as much money as possible since he wanted to declare war on the Americans. He also informed Tornqvist that the Pasha thought the Thetis had a considerable amount of money aboard, and if the truth could not be found out through cunning he would use threats instead. The minister had, however, informed the Pasha that threatening a European envoy under a parliamentary flag would make all nations hostile towards him.

The first time Tornqvist could meet the Pasha in person was on January 2, 1801. Tornqvist had asked all European consuls to attend the meeting in case the Pasha would do something unreasonable towards him. Only the Danish and American consuls did attend. Burström, the new Swedish consul, and Cöster also attended the meeting. The Pasha wondered what the Danish and American consuls were doing there and looked menacing towards the American and said that he always meddled in other peoples’ business. Tornqvist said that it was simply tradition that an envoy should not arrive alone at a first meeting. It was hardly a coincidence that it was the American and the Danish consuls who attended the meeting. With a Pasha who threatened the neutral powers as often as he did, they all had an incentive to safeguard the interests of all neutral powers. If the Pasha would fight Sweden he could fight the other two. Of course, the American consul was probably concerned that a peace treaty between Sweden and Tripoli would lead to a war against the Americans. The Pasha had made that clear. Therefore, it was very much in the American consul’s interest to find out as much as he could about the Pasha’s negotiations with the Swedes. That the consuls of the three powers would all attend the meeting would also show the Pasha that they were supporting each other, which could make the Pasha afraid that he would have to fight all three powers. This could be said to be a kind of minor power balance-of-power logic. Three powers would be harder for the Pasha to fight than one. And all of them were uncomfortably close to a war with Tripoli and had to do whatever they could to safeguard their own interests.
After Tornqvist had presented the Swedish demands the Pasha said that since the last treaty, when he had much fewer captives, had cost 77,000 Spanish dollars, he could not accept less than 400,000 Spanish dollars plus another 20,000 each year. Just like the Danes, the Swedes should pay these 20,000 Spanish dollars instead of all other presents. After this, Tornqvist negotiated with the minister in another room. He said that 100,000 Spanish dollars was as much as he could agree to. To this the minister proposed 350,000 Spanish dollars. After some discussion Tornqvist finally said that he could go as far as 245,000 Spanish dollars. The Pasha would not agree to give up on the yearly present of 20,000 Spanish dollars, but Tornqvist thought that the French would soon attack and destroy Tripoli and that the Swedes therefore would not be subject to the yearly payments for long anyway. But he did not want to simply accept it like the Danes had done. He asked if the Swedes could not receive 20 loads of salt each year as a present from the Pasha. The Pasha said he could accept 10. Finally they agreed on 15. This is another example of how the Swedes constantly tried to do at least a little better than the Danes. The total price was close to 270,000 Spanish dollars. There was no flagpole at the Swedish consulate since it had been cut down when the Pasha declared war. Therefore the Pasha allowed the Swedes to use the one of their “allies”, the Danes, until a new one had been raised.

Tornqvist wanted six months to deliver the presents, but the Pasha only wanted to give him two. Tornqvist said that six months was needed since a lot of unforeseen things could happen. The Pasha wondered if something was planned between him and the Danish and American consuls since they had had a secret meeting and if it was therefore he needed six months. In the end the Pasha agreed to four months and the minister guaranteed that he would make sure there would be a fifth. No Swedish captives would be forced to work without pay until Tornqvist came back.177 From the comment about the secret meeting, it seems evident the Pasha indeed considered the Swedes, Americans and the Danes to be potential allies in a conflict with Tripoli.

The price that Tornqvist agreed to was much too high and would not be ratified. Due to the problematic relations with Britain over the neutrality principles in early 1801 the king informed the Convoy Office on March 18 that no Swedish ship was currently allowed to carry any presents to Tripoli. Burström and Tornqvist needed to be informed that they should try to make the Pasha wait and not take to hostilities again.178 And in July, he informed them of the new instruction Tornqvist would receive. He would among other things be ordered to convoy Swedish ships, but it was important that it did not look like he was convoying. He had to remember that he was convoying against Barbary cruisers and he should not do anything defiant towards European men-o-war unless they did something to damage the honor of the Swedish

177 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 72.
178 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 4.
flag. The Swedish authorities had decided to send a squadron to the Mediterranean to make the Pasha agree to a more reasonable peace treaty. That Tornqvist was ordered to treat other European men-o-war carefully shows how the failure of the armed neutrality of 1800–1801 had caused the Swedes to be more careful and not stubbornly defend the neutrality principles.

On May 4, 1801, Tornqvist reported that he had received a letter ordering him to stop all gathering of the money for the peace present. He had already done so two months earlier as soon as news of the problematic relations between the neutral Baltic powers and Britain had arrived in Livorno, where he was. He was going to see if the Pasha would agree to accept the 70,000 Spanish dollars he already had since it was better than nothing. But the only solution, he thought, was if political circumstances would make it possible to combine forces with the Danish Mediterranean squadron. Even though the Danes had recently fought the British outside Copenhagen, they had to continue patrolling the Mediterranean. Another solution was to combine forces with the Americans since the Pasha had recently declared war on them.

In another letter from the same day he reported that since foreign consuls incited the Barbary States against the distant Northern powers he thought it better to show military might than pay in cash. Three frigates could not cost more than what was paid in presents but could make the Pasha act with more reason. The Danes had not been very successful but they had spent too much time in ports and too little cruising. On July 13, he reported that the Americans were sending eight frigates against Tripoli. The American consul had informed him that the Swedish captives were working for the Pasha for very little pay. The Danish consul in Livorno had also informed him that Nissen had sent information that the Pasha was starting to doubt that the Thetis would come back with the money. Sweden had no navigation in the Mediterranean at the moment.

In the end, then, Tornqvist thought it better to fight than to pay and he thought that an alliance between Sweden and Denmark or the USA was possible. We can see how in the conflict with Tripoli, the Swedish, Danish and American affairs were seen as even more tightly connected than in the previous two cases. And this connection was acknowledged both by the Swedish and the Tripolitan negotiators. Tornqvist had negotiated peace at terms which were not accepted by the Swedish government and it was of course important for him to show how the failure to get a more favorable treaty was not because of his own shortcomings. Therefore it is not surprising

179 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 10.
180 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 81.
181 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 82.
182 Where Tornqvist had received the information that as many as eight American frigates were coming is not known. In reality this first squadron consisted of three frigates and one sloop. Tinniswood 2011, p. 281.
183 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 87.
that the plotting Portuguese consul who made the Pasha treat the neutral powers unreasonably harsh played an important part in his reports.

**Consul Burström**

Before we move on to the Swedish squadron’s arrival in the Mediterranean and the following peace talks, we will take a look at Burström’s reports from Tripoli. Burström’s background was in the artillery. He was named consul already in 1799 and would stay as consul until 1822 when the Pasha asked that he be replaced. I have not been able to find Burström’s instructions but there is an interesting letter from the king to the Convoy Office from May 5, 1800, in which the king commented on the instructions that the Convoy Office had proposed. He wanted two changes to be made and one of these was that Burström should be instructed to keep good relations with the other consuls as long as it was possible and not give them any valid reasons to mistrust him. That is, Burström should stay out of other consuls’ business unless he had to get involved for the sake of protecting the Swedish affairs. He should focus on doing his own job and not plot against the other consuls.

The first report from Burström was written on May 13, 1801. In this he reported that the Pasha had declared war on the United States. He explained the reasons for the war. The American consul had not been careful and had spoken ill of the Pasha. Returning cruisers had reported that there were many American ships in the Mediterranean and that they enjoyed an undisturbed navigation like no other nation. The Pasha had never liked the American consul and new prizes were needed which is why the Pasha decided that he would stop the negotiations with the Americans. The consul had tried to make the Pasha wait ten months but failed.

About the Swedish affairs, Burström said that he was liked by the Pasha who was not as awful as Cöster had described him. About Cöster, he said that the vice-consul had blindly trusted two plotting foreign consuls. This letter is a clear example of how the foreign policy of the Barbary States worked. Even though the European consuls often described the leaders of Barbary as being mad and arbitrarily declaring war on whomever they happened upon or of being influenced by other European states that wanted enemy powers to fail, it is evident that when they declared war they carefully calculated what they would gain from it. This is an important reminder that the Barbary States were no mere “pirate strongholds” but states that had their own foreign policies.

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184 Almquist 1912, p. 479.
185 RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1800, No. 17.
186 RA, Konvojkommissariats arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 161.
The Pasha argued for the war in much the same way as the Dey of Algiers had argued for his war against the Swedes in 1791.

On June 11, 1801, Burström had begun questioning that the king would ratify the peace Tornqvist had negotiated. He asked for instructions. He wanted to know if the peace treaty should be maintained or if he was only supposed to buy time. If the peace would not be ratified he would focus on making sure the Swedish captives would be treated well by the Pasha.187 And on June 20, he reported that he had now received orders to do as he was told by Tornqvist. The Pasha had asked about the Thetis and why it had not arrived yet. Burström had asked him what he would do if the Swedish king chose not to ratify the treaty. He said that the flag would be taken down, which was equal to a declaration of war. He would also force the captives to turn renegade and he would never again trust a Swedish frigate commander to be negotiator. The Pasha feared that the Swedes and the Danes would join forces with the Americans and together fight a war against him. Burström was obviously aware that the Thetis would not arrive with the agreed amount of money and that a squadron would probably arrive instead. He reported that the largest ship the Pasha had had no more than 28 guns and that none of the corsair captains were any heroes.188

On July 20, Burström tried to suggest to the Pasha that married captives be allowed to leave Tripoli and said that relatives wanted to pay for their release. He also suggested that if the Pasha did not want to agree to that he could perhaps agree to let the captives leave if the Swedes would pay 60,000 Spanish dollars to the Pasha. This had made the Pasha very angry and he had threatened to put Burström in a cannon and shoot him to Livorno to see if there was really a blockade preventing the Thetis from coming to Tripoli. He had demanded 60,000 Spanish dollars for the delay or else he would declare war. Later, however, he calmed down and took back what he had said.

According to Burström, it was the Portuguese consul, who also took care of the British affairs in Tripoli, who had lied to the Pasha and told him that Sweden and Britain were at peace again and that Livorno was no longer under blockade. This was why the Pasha had been so angry.189

On August 8, Burström could report that an American frigate had been cruising outside Tripoli. It had gone very close to the harbor when it searched a ship which turned out to be Tunisian and therefore was allowed to proceed into Tripoli. The fortress had fired at the frigate but had not

187 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 164.
188 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 165.
189 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 170.
managed to get the shots far enough to hit it, despite it being so close. There was nothing to fear from the Tripolitan batteries.\textsuperscript{190}

From Burström’s first reports we can see that he too suspected the Portuguese consul of plotting against Sweden. He also carefully informed the Convoy Office about the strength of the Tripolitan navy and defenses and assured them that Tripoli’s ability to defend itself was limited. He had figured out that Sweden would fight rather than pay and thus chose to focus on providing the government with information which would be relevant when fighting Tripoli.

The plan to let the consul inform the Pasha that some of the captives’ relatives wanted to pay for the release of the captives had come from Tornqvist. He thought that the Danish consul could be asked to do this since the French consul had left Tripoli when the war between the French and the Tripolitans had broken out again. The king had on July 16, 1801, instructed the Convoy Office to write the Danish consul Nissen and ask him to take care of this. The king said that even though the Danes had paid a lot for their peace treaties and thereby had hoped to be the only Northern power able to trade in the Mediterranean, Nissen was known to be a good man and would surely help just like the Swedish consul in Tunis had recently helped the Danes during a conflict there.\textsuperscript{191}

The Convoy Office wrote Nissen on July 23 and asked him to take care of the Swedish captives in case Burström would be prevented from doing so.\textsuperscript{192} But in September, the Convoy Office had received Burström’s letter and knew that he had already tried asking the Pasha to let relatives pay for the release of the captives. Since he had failed the Convoy Office did not think the Danish consul would do better. Besides, Burström had written in private letters that he suspected the Danish consul of working against the Swedish interests.\textsuperscript{193} It is interesting to see that, in his letter to the Convoy Office in which he said that Nissen should be asked to help the Swedes, the king clearly understood that the Danes were competing with the Swedes but that the Danish consul would probably help anyway as the Swedes had helped the Danes earlier. Nissen was, after the French, the consul thought most likely to help. That Burström suspected the Danish consul of plotting against the Swedes is interesting since no other Swedish representative, not even Cöster, seems to have suspected the same. And it would later turn out that Burström was wrong in this.

On October 14, 1801, Burström reported again on how the American blockade was going. American frigates were seen from time to time but the corsairs could leave and enter Tripoli.

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\textsuperscript{190} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 171.
\textsuperscript{191} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 11.
\textsuperscript{192} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 11.
\textsuperscript{193} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1801, No. 113.
\end{flushright}
Despite their presence. The Pasha had sent gunboats towards one of the frigates which had answered the fire from them with so little intensity that it had strengthened the gunboats’ courage. A 14-gun corvette and a 12-gun polacca had left Tripoli to find prey, and when Burström had asked, the minister had said that they would not capture any Swedish ships as long as the Swedes did as they had promised. Burström, however, thought that if the cruisers were not captured by the Americans, the captains would probably seek safety in some British port. The British renegade Murat Reis, the same renegade Cöster had written about, had left the Pasha’s frigate and another ship at Gibraltar. This was because an American frigate had found them at Gibraltar and threatened to sink them as soon as they put to sea. The British renegade had chosen not to try to outrun the American ship.

Even in November the Swedes still had peace with Tripoli. Burström had received information from Tornqvist that the Swedish and American squadrons would join forces, and the Pasha had asked about it, but Burström had only said that he did not know. But in March 1802, the Swedish squadron arrived and Burström could stop buying time. Burström had received information that the American frigate Boston had met with the Swedish frigates on January 12 but he did not yet know what they had decided. The Dutch had negotiated a peace treaty with the Tripolitans and their flag had been raised in Tripoli on March 8. Three days later, Thetis was suddenly visible from Tripoli. Burström had gone onboard the frigate to speak quickly with Tornqvist but a sudden storm had forced them to put to sea. They had to stay away from Tripoli for ten days but when they got back Burström informed the Pasha that Rear-Admiral Cederström was on his way. The Pasha asked if the American frigates would come together with the Swedes and Burström answered that he was sure of it. The Pasha’s face had then apparently gone from red to white and then back to red.

Rear-Admiral Cederström’s Blockade

Thetis had signaled on March 25 that Tornqvist wished to talk to Burström but the Pasha had not allowed it and the frigate had then left. On March 29 three letters arrived from the French minister Talleyrand that instructed the French chargé d’affaires to support the Swedes, but it was agreed that the letters would not be used until Cederström arrived. Between April 5 and 11 a frigate was seen cruising outside Tripoli. On the 11 it hunted three xebecs that tried to enter the Tripolitan harbor. The frigate showed no flag, but Burström was asked by the Pasha if it was

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194 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 162.
196 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 163.
197 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 171.
Swedish. He could only say that he did not know. The day after the frigate was seen again and was said to show Swedish flag. It was hunting a xebec again and it soon turned out that two of the xebecs from the previous day had been taken. They were Tunisian. This was bound to cause trouble, Burström thought, but he managed to make the Tunisian minister in Tripoli agree not to report about the Swedish attacks on Tunisian property before Burström had had the chance to speak with the frigate’s commander.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 172.}

Rear-Admiral Rudolf Cederström had joined the navy in 1779 and was a skilled and experienced naval officer who was often trusted with important missions. He did have a tendency to make political enemies but his courage and determination would eventually make him supreme commander of the navy.\footnote{Hägg 1941, p. 256.}

Cederström had arrived with his squadron in the Mediterranean late in 1801.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 88.} His instructions were to protect Swedish shipping and to cause damage to the Tripolitans. He was to find the American commander and see if a deal could be made. American warships were already convoying Swedish ships as well and the Swedish frigates should help American merchantmen if needed. Cederström should tell the American commander that similar goals required similar action, but if the Americans were not interested the Swedish frigates would still protect American merchantmen if they needed it. If other powers’ ships had been taken by the Tripolitans they should be set free and returned to their owners. If other neutral ships wanted convoying they should be given it but only against Tripolitan cruisers. If European men-o-war would find any contraband on a neutral ship the Swedes should only ask where they were taking the contraband, not refuse any of the belligerent powers to search the convoy. The Swedish frigates were to be careful with other European men-o-war.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1801, No. 22 (The actual letter has wrongly been numbered as 23, but is listed as No. 22).} This was another sign that, because of the war the neutral powers of Northern Europe had fought with Britain over the neutrality principles just a few months earlier, the Swedes had chosen to be more careful with European ships.

Cederström had reported from Malaga on January 6 what the squadron would do. The\textit{sis} would be sent to take care of a problem which had arisen in Morocco, \textit{Camilla} of 40 guns and \textit{Sprengporten} of 24 would convoy merchantmen and Cederström himself would go to Toulon with his 40-gun frigate \textit{Fröja} to meet with the American Commodore Dale and thereafter continue to Tripoli to begin the blockade.\footnote{RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 89.} Cederström arrived outside of Tripoli on March 28 and cruised there until April 22 waiting for the rest of the squadron. But since no one arrived and since the
French *chargé d'affaires* had been instructed to assist the Swedes in their negotiations he had finally chosen to begin the negotiations. They had failed and war had been declared on May 1, and the flag had been taken down on the 5. The *Camilla* and *Sprengtparter* had finally arrived on May the 16 and 17, but Cederström had given them the order to continue the convoying instead. When *Thetis* arrived she would help Cederström with the blockade.\(^{203}\)

Burström reported on May 8 about the declaration of war a week before. The Pasha had gathered all consuls and declared war on Sweden. Burström was certain, but lacked evidence, that the Danish and Portuguese consuls were involved in the Pasha’s decision. All other consuls had answered hesitantly to the Pasha’s questions about whether or not he had reason to declare war on Sweden, but the Portuguese consul had loudly declared that it was the right thing to do. The Dane had acted as secretary and had smiled at the Swedes’ misfortune in a way Burström suspected was meant to be seen by the other consuls and the rest of the audience.

When the flag had been taken down on May 5, three of the Pasha’s gunboats and two galleys headed out to open fire at the blockading Swedish frigate and American schooner. Neither side hit the other. The day after, the gunboats went out again and this time the frigate and schooner kept just out of their range. The French *chargé d'affaires* thought the Swedes had done badly. They could have gotten far better terms than Tornqvist had but instead they would choose to fight with a force which was too weak and had come too late. The Pasha had strengthened his defenses and the Swedes and Americans lacked ships-of-the-line which would be the only kind of ship that carried heavy enough guns to be able to threaten the city. Now the captives were forced to work without pay. Burström had been asked if he wanted to leave or stay but for the sake of the captives he had chosen to stay.\(^{204}\) It would turn out that Burström had been wrong about the Danish consul. He had had nothing to do with the Pasha’s declaration of war even though he was still guilty of smiling at the Swedes’ misfortune. The French *chargé d'affaires* Naudi, who had been ordered by the French government to assist the Swedes, had been the one who had secretly worked against the Swedish interests. This, however, Burström did not dare to report until the peace was negotiated. Naudi had, among other things, encouraged the Pasha to send his cruisers out, something which he had not dared to do before because of the blockade.\(^{205}\)

On June 9, Burström reported that he was not allowed to leave the consulate as he was thought to be the frigates’ spy. He had been shown a shirt of canvas which he was told would be dipped in tar and used to burn him alive if the frigates made any attempt to attack the city. However, the frigates had not been seen for several days. Some which were thought to have been

\(^{203}\) RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 91.

\(^{204}\) RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 175.

\(^{205}\) RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1803, No. 196.
American had been seen the day before. Despite the blockade small boats could pass in and out of the harbor and three galleys had sneaked out to find new prizes for the Pasha. Burström did not think the blockade was very effective. Ironically, the frigates were too large to prevent small vessels from entering and leaving Tripoli but also too small to be able to threaten the defenses. And Burström reported about this to make sure the government would have detailed information so that they would be able to determine how to proceed.

On July 10 he had been allowed to leave his home again thanks to Naudi. Of course, this was before he knew what Naudi had done against the Swedes. On July 19, the galleys came back with some American and Swedish captives while both American and Swedish frigates were within sight. It was strengthening the Pasha’s determination that galleys could leave and enter Tripoli despite the presence of the frigates. The day after, the frigates had come close enough for the fortress to fire at them, but neither side opened fire. And on the 31, nine gunboats headed out and began firing at the Swedish frigate. The frigate was far away from the American frigate but both tried to maneuver so that they would get the gunboats between them. The Pasha, however, realized this and recalled the boats.

On the same day three Danish frigates came to Tripoli and ignored the blockade. Five days later a new peace treaty had been signed between the Danes and the Pasha. Their relations had been troublesome since the year before, but the Danish consul, who knew about the Swedish plans to send a squadron, had managed to get the Pasha to wait with the war until the Danish court had been able to answer. This, Burström thought, was a nice way for the Danish consul to wait and see what the Swedish and American frigates would accomplish. If they had been successful the Danes could have joined them as a third player and if not they could do just as they had done. On August 10, when the Danish frigates headed back out to sea, the Swedish and American frigates sailed close to them without hailing them, to show that they were unhappy that the Danes had ignored the blockade. Thus, according to Burström the Danes had waited before they acted to be sure that what they did would have the best effect for their own affairs. Joining the blockade seems to have been an option, but when they saw how ineffective it was they chose to act on their own instead.

After this, the blockade and the convoying continued until October. And on October 20, 1802, Cederström could report that peace had been negotiated and restored on October 2. A French frigate and brig of war had arrived with an envoy from France, Colonel Sebastiani, who had the mission to mediate peace between the Swedes and the Tripolitans. The Dutch had

206 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 178.
207 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 179.
208 RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 180.
negotiated peace again in September and paid 80,000 Spanish dollars and would pay another 5,000 yearly in addition to some naval stores. The Danes had in addition to their yearly payment paid another 40,000 Spanish dollars for another five years of peace. Therefore, Cederström maintained, he could not have done more than make the Pasha lower his demands from 423,000 to 159,000 Spanish dollars. He also managed to make the Pasha agree to 8,000 Spanish dollars yearly rather than the 20,000 he had originally demanded. It was thanks to the French mediator these terms had been possible.\textsuperscript{209}

As mentioned before, it is hard to know why the Portuguese consul was plotting against the neutral powers but when it comes to Naudi it seems safe to assume that he was acting on his own initiative and against his orders. This is because when he failed to help the Swedes, the French sent Colonel Sebastiani to help instead, which he indeed did, according to Cederström. Had the French government wanted to get rid of Swedish navigation they would not have sent Sebastiani.

The Convoy Office thought the peace treaty should be ratified. They argued that 150,000 Spanish dollars was probably as cheap as it would get and that it was better than keeping a squadron in the Mediterranean at all times.\textsuperscript{210} On November 18 the king decided that the treaty would be ratified.\textsuperscript{211}

After the treaty had been ratified two frigates remained to deliver the money and carry the captives back home. On March 20, 1803, the \textit{Frija} arrived at Tripoli with 150,000 Spanish dollars and on March 25, the \textit{Camilla} arrived with the rest. Eight captains and 72 sailors went onboard the \textit{Frija} and eight captains and 70 sailors on the \textit{Camilla}. One man, the naval seaman Gillberg, had converted to Islam and chose to stay in Tripoli.\textsuperscript{212} The conflict with Tripoli was finally over.

What, then, can the Tripolitan conflict tell us? The consuls and naval officers involved sent a lot of information back home. They included what they thought the government needed to know. Several of them thought that the use of force would be necessary to end the conflict and when Tornqvist failed one last attempt to settle the matter peacefully a squadron was sent. When it became clear for Burström that the squadron would come he began informing the government about the Tripolitan defenses. This is a clear example of a consul sending the information he thought was the most important at the moment. At the same time, just as in the other cases, the Swedish representatives presented problems they could not produce a solution to as being outside of their control. Cöster was perhaps the one who did this the most, but he was replaced when it became clear that he was not fit for the task.

\textsuperscript{209} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 96.
\textsuperscript{210} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, B, 1802, No. 18.
\textsuperscript{211} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1802, No. 26.
\textsuperscript{212} RA, Konvojkommissariatets arkiv, E I, 1803, No. 102.
The Swedish consuls and naval officers in Tripoli clearly saw the Swedish affairs as being part of a larger system. What they could do was affected by what other states did and what they did affected others. They were viewing Sweden as a weak neutral power with limited resources and considered the Danes and Americans as states of equal power and with similar goals. In their conflict with the Tripolitans they tried to get whatever help they could. The great powers agreed to help when it suited them but the Swedish representatives often suspected them of secretly working against the Swedish interests. When they received help from the other neutrals it was more reciprocal. The Swedes expected help from the Danes since they had helped the Danes earlier and the Americans and Swedes could both benefit from mutual convoys.

At the same time they were viewing the neutral powers as competitors in the carrying trade. This meant that they only helped each other for as long as it was beneficial for both parties. As soon as Sweden could get peace with Tripoli on terms they found acceptable the cooperation ended. Maintaining the peaceful relations was the most important goal.

Cooperating with Competitors – Sweden in the International System

The first question I posed in this thesis was: What information about their work did the Swedish representatives in the Mediterranean send to the Convoy Office and why did they choose to send this specific information? What was its purpose? The Swedish representatives tried to provide the Swedish government with a picture of what was happening in the region where they were stationed in as complete a manner as possible. Of course, they could not report about everything that happened. Generally, they focused on providing information about what different actors in the region were doing and what effects the actions had on others. They described what they themselves were doing and why they were doing this. They described what the leaders of the Barbary States were doing and also what the other consuls were doing. The Swedish representatives also tried to explain why the leaders of Barbary and the other consuls were doing what they were doing. And they also provided their thoughts on what effects everything that happened had not only on the Swedish affairs but also on the affairs of other states.

The purpose of the reports was twofold. First, they provided the Swedish state with information the representatives thought the state needed to know about. It was important that the state would have plenty of fresh information to base decisions on. Without this information the government would have to guess, and it would likely often fail to make the right decisions. This was the official side of the reports’ purpose.
Second, they were written in a way that presented the consuls and negotiators in a favorable light. The representatives focused on showing how they were more skilled than other consuls and presented things which had negative consequences for the Swedish affairs as something which was outside of their control and would be outside of any man's control. In this way, they showed that they were the best men for the job. Therefore, when the situation required them to pay more than what they had expected, they blamed other states. For example, Wijk and von Rosenstein blamed the Portuguese, Skjöldebrand the Spanish and Blessing and Widell the Danes. There was a difference in how they blamed them, however. While the Portuguese and Spanish were said to pay too much for a poor state like Sweden, the Danes were thought to have given in to demands too easily. Both types of cases provided the Swedish representatives with the opportunity to show that they were not to blame for the high costs. Their orders, after all, were to keep the costs as low as possible and they did what they could to show that they did.

Depending on the situation the representatives focused on different things. Perhaps the clearest example of this is how Burström, when he realized that the Swedish government would not ratify Tornqvist’s treaty, began focusing on providing information about the Tripolitan defenses. But the way they changed focus is visible in other ways as well. As I mentioned in the theoretical section the representatives could focus on themselves as representatives on different levels. One was as representative of Sweden, another as representative of a minor neutral power and a third level was as representative of a European power. And they did use all of these.

When the consul faced problems caused by an internal crisis in the country he was stationed in, like the Moroccan civil war, his role as European became more important. Wijk and the other European consuls worked much more closely together during the civil war than they did after the war had ended. The consuls focused on their role as representatives of a minor neutral power when they thought they faced problems because of the great powers. The great powers could be a problem because they paid too much, but also because they, in the view of the Swedish representatives, tried to make the Barbary States declare war on the neutral powers so that these minor powers would have to abandon the Mediterranean. The neutral powers were seen as facing problems because of the competition between the great powers.

When they could, the representatives focused on Sweden’s unique position in the Mediterranean. They focused on how Sweden could provide the Barbary States with naval stores and they tried to convince the leaders in North Africa that Sweden was poor but paid as much as it could. The Algerian Dey was, however, not convinced that this was the case. They also focused on their position as friends of the Ottoman Empire. This was something that made Sweden
unique among the minor neutral powers and something the Swedish representatives tried, with limited success, to use to put them in a favorable position in North Africa.

These were the three levels I thought of when beginning to analyze the material. But it has become clear that the Swedish representatives also used a fourth, even narrower, level in their work. They also, when possible, focused on themselves as individuals. Wijk tried to make one of the candidates in the civil war remember that Wijk had given him presents earlier and Skjöldebrand used the fact that his father had been a respected consul in Algiers and that Skjöldebrand himself had been born in Algiers. They used these examples in their work as consuls, hoping that the leaders of North Africa would like them better and thereby treat their country well.

The second question was: How did the Swedish representatives in North Africa view Sweden’s role in the Mediterranean and what can the information they sent home tell us about Sweden’s position in the international system of the late eighteenth century? The Swedish representatives viewed Sweden as a minor power with limited resources, both military and economic. Their job was to keep the Mediterranean open for Swedish navigation by making sure the Barbary States respected the Swedish flag. But with such limited ability to threaten the North Africans with military might, paying them was the most usual way to make them remain peaceful. But it was very important that they did only pay what was absolutely necessary; the Swedish finances could not handle much more than they already paid. The consuls’ and negotiators’ task, therefore, was not an easy one.

The representatives viewed Sweden as part of a larger system, in which they represented a minor power. What they did and what other powers did had effects on the other powers in the system. They saw themselves as having much in common with Denmark and the United States, and to some degree the Dutch and the Venetians. This view was shared by the leaders of North Africa and the other consuls. The Swedes viewed the great powers and Spain and Portugal with skepticism and often suspected them of working against the interests of the neutral powers. How much truth there is behind their claims is often hard to say. For example, when Skjöldebrand accused the Spanish of secretly ordering a Spanish shipwright in the service of the Algerian Dey to declare the presents of other powers unworthy, it is hard to know if he did this because he actually thought this was the case or if he only needed a scapegoat.

However, even in these cases it is clear that the Swedes viewed themselves as a minor player in a large system. The Spanish were clearly the mightier part in Skjöldebrand’s story and the Swedes could do little about it, even though the consequences could potentially be catastrophic for the Swedish affairs. In this story the Dey was seen as a leader who let himself be influenced by the
treacherous Spanish. It was not unusual that the Swedish representatives viewed the North African leaders like this. After all, they often called them barbarians, and that these would be influenced by the representatives of European powers seemed logical to the Swedish consuls and negotiators. But there are also examples of how the leaders of the Barbary States were seen as making independent decisions based on what they thought they would gain from a war. One example is when the Pasha of Tripoli declared war on the United States. Burström described the war as being the Pasha’s own decision. This is important to remember. The Barbary States had their own foreign policies, even though their policies often worked differently than those of the Europeans.

When the Swedes were threatened with war they often tried to get help from the other European consuls. The consuls of the great powers helped when it suited them, but Sweden did not really have anything to give in return for the help. When they received help from the other minor neutral powers, the Danes and the Americans, it was much more reciprocal. The Swedish king argued that the Danish consul Nissen would help taking care of the Swedish captives in Tripoli because the Swedish consul in Tunis had recently helped the Danes when they were in a conflict with Tunis. And when the Americans were in a conflict with Tripoli at the same time as the Swedes, they blockaded the port together and offered merchantmen of both nations to join convoys. But at the same time, these minor neutral powers were seen as the powers the Swedes could most easily compete with. When any of them were in trouble, it was seen as having good effects on Swedish trade and navigation. The fewer neutral powers there were in the Mediterranean the more opportunities there would be for the remaining ones. Neutrality was the role the Swedes wanted in the Mediterranean.

In many ways Sweden, Denmark and the United States all had rather limited resources and faced the same kind of problems in the Mediterranean. They all had rather small navies and their governments had limited financial means to deal with the Barbary States. And they were all rather peripheral powers geographically. But there were differences between them. The Danes had the largest navy of the three and usually kept a squadron of warships on station in the Mediterranean. The United States lacked ships of the line but did not have to worry as much about protecting its coastline. The bulk of the Swedish and Danish navies were needed in the Baltic. The United States’ government was much more limited than the two Nordic powers were when making decisions on taxes. This meant that buying peace was much less an option for the Americans.

Furthermore, the idea of free trade was, as was mentioned in the introduction, more important in the United States than in Denmark and Sweden even though it was becoming more and more important in the Nordic countries as well. At first after independence, the Americans
had to accept that they would not be able to trade freely, but eventually they built a navy. When they had paid for this navy, they chose to use it until they had won. Sweden and Denmark, on the other hand, trusted their old system of paying for peace and only used the navy as a last resort. As soon as it was less expensive to buy peace than to keep a squadron in the Mediterranean, the Swedes made peace with Tripoli. The United States did not. Despite these differences, however, it is clear that the Swedish representatives viewed Sweden, Denmark and the United States as similar powers and it is reasonable to treat them as occupying the same position in the international system, at least when explaining their roles in the Mediterranean during the late eighteenth century.

One interesting thing to mention is the methods employed by the Swedes and the other minor powers. They did use the classic power politics method of balance-of-power. But it was done on a different level than the great powers. In the conflict with Tripoli the Americans, Swedes and Danes tried to show unity so that the Pasha would feel threatened. He did, but still chose war. The Danes waited to see how best to safeguard their interests and in the end chose not to fight. Only the Americans fought until the end. But the fighting was done without involving the great powers. It was a minor war fought during a major war but parallel to it rather than being a part of it. Much more often, though, the Swedes chose to bribe the leaders of the Barbary States. So, instead of using force or the threat of force they often reached their foreign political goals through bribes. This is something which is not focused on in classic realist theory but clearly a way open for the minor powers when their military power was too limited to help them.

The Swedish interest in the Mediterranean was purely economic and this provides a further difference to realist theory. The Swedes fought Tripoli and maintained peace with the Barbary States because they wanted to protect Swedish shipping, not because they had any further political goals in the Mediterranean. Just like the Americans’ wars against the Barbary States can be seen as a continuation of the War for Independence—the Americans wanted economic independence after they had reached political independence—the Swedish war with Tripoli can be seen in the same light, although Swedish political independence had been achieved much earlier. Only within the Baltic can Sweden be said to have been a major political player.

All in all, the Swedish representatives’ job was to keep the Mediterranean open for Swedish navigation at the lowest cost possible. When in trouble they looked to the representatives of other minor neutral powers who shared the same position in the Mediterranean and therefore faced the same problems. Under normal circumstances, these were their foremost competitors but under certain circumstances they became the ones the Swedes cooperated with. In this manner, the Swedes demonstrated a clear strategy to cooperate with their competitors.
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