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THE BLOG

225 Years After the Treaty of Marrakech

12:00 AM, JUL 17, 2012 • BY [FRED BARNES](#)

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Before the United States had a president or a constitution, it had the Treaty of Marrakech with Morocco. That diplomatic pact has the distinction of being the longest standing treaty between America and another country. Tomorrow, July 18, marks the 225th anniversary of its ratification.



The treaty is scarcely remembered today, but it was important in its time. When he became president in 1789, George Washington wrote the sultan of Morocco, a Muslim, to thank him for his “encouragement” and “the punctuality with which you have caused the Treaty with us to be observed.” Good will come of it, he said.

“Within our territories, there are no mines, wither of gold or silver, and this young nation just recovering from the waste and dissolution of a long war, have not, as yet, had time to acquire riches by agriculture and commerce,” Washington wrote. “But our soil is bountiful, and our

people industrious, and we have reason to flatter ourselves that we shall gradually become useful to our friends.”

The treaty came about when the commercial interests of the fledgling United States and Morocco came together – but largely due to friendly gestures by the sultan of Morocco, Mohamed Ben Abdullah. In 1777, just as Washington and his troops were setting up camp for the winter in Valley Forge, the sultan granted American ships safe passage through the Straits of Gibraltar, which Morocco controlled.

By including America in a maritime treaty, Morocco is considered the first country to recognize the newly independent country. The follow-up treaty of “friendship and amity” was urged in 1783 by American commissioners in Paris – Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay – signed in Morocco in 1786, and ratified by the new Congress a year later.

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The treaty will be discussed at an event sponsored by the George Washington Amity Series at 6:30 pm on July 18 at the grand ballroom of George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The historian of Mount Vernon, Mary Thompson, will speak on the history of the treaty and George Washington's role in it. The Amity Series was created "to bring together primarily Muslim and Christian communities to help them connect on a personal level."

Note: For more information about the George Washington Amity Series, contact Jack Rusenko at jack@amityseries.org.

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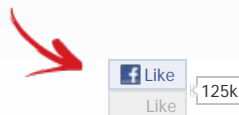


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