

# Naval Strategy and Policy in the Mediterranean

*Past, Present and Future*



Edited by

**John B. Hattendorf**

With a Foreword by Paul Kennedy

NAVAL POLICY AND STRATEGY  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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John B. Hattendorf

*US Naval War College*



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## Foreword

When the government of a neutral Mediterranean country considers the subject of security and stability in this region, the question that springs to mind is whose stability and security. That the Mediterranean Sea has historically always been relevant to the security interests of the leading powers and empires at any time is a well-known fact. Few, if any, Mediterranean countries have had their history so directly dictated by the exigencies of powerful empires concerned with hegemony in the Mediterranean as much as the Maltese islands. Whether as a frontier outpost for the Christian West in its perennial contest with the Muslim East during the period of early modern history – or as the hub of British naval activity in the Mediterranean from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (roughly at the time, 1845, when the building now used as the Malta Maritime Museum was erected as a bakery to supply all the British Mediterranean fleet) – the relevance of Malta to the outside world has been defined by the Mediterranean strategies of others, and the very livelihood of its people accordingly dictated by that fact.

The relevance of the Mediterranean to European security has equally been recognized during the past half-century, for the most part shadowed by the global confrontation between East and West. The sea came to be regarded, perhaps more than ever before in history, as a single geo-strategic region. From here, the two protagonists of world affairs, neither of them a riparian Mediterranean state, pursued their national interests as well as the interests of the blocs they headed.

The unity and coherence of the Mediterranean region – to borrow the term from Braudel – was as obvious to the strategists of the superpowers as it was ill-recognized by even many riparian countries themselves. The East–West contest was not the only outstanding development of world proportions during the last half-century; equally important was the end of the old-world empires, with the developed imperial powers of the North releasing their hold over their colonial territories in the South.

The emergent cleavage between North and South thus coincided with

the contemporary East–West division of the world. Nowhere did the two divides intersect more clearly than in the Mediterranean. The reality of two navies, the US 6th Fleet and the Soviet Fifth Eskadra, chasing each other across the Mediterranean and beneath its surface – showing the flag in the region’s many flash points – represented a balance of forces which, whatever advantages to stability in superpower relations it was imagined to achieve, turned the Mediterranean into a theatre of the Cold War second only to central Europe.

While the Mediterranean Sea and region were thus cast as a function of European security, Malta was among the first to put it to Europe that the indivisibility of the European and the Mediterranean region should be interpreted in a much more comprehensive and less one-sided manner. In the CSCE (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe) process, the institutional manifestation of *détente* in Europe, Malta insisted, against heavy odds, that European security through co-operation cannot and should not be striven after to the exclusion, much less at the expense of, the Mediterranean. It was not enough that Europe should regard its Mediterranean neighbourhood as relevant to its own security. Rather, Europe ought to seek to foster its security relationship with the Mediterranean through co-operation in the same manner as it was striving to achieve it between the two halves of itself. That position has been amply vindicated in the years following the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, as it awoke to the urgency of doing something about stability in the Mediterranean, the West adopted two parallel approaches. One, in which there was little that was novel, was to regroup its defences and channel them towards a new perceived threat coming from the Mediterranean, as opposed to that coming from the Soviet Union through the Mediterranean. As Europe’s security structures hurried to adapt and address themselves to the new security scenarios that presented themselves in eastern Europe after the retreat of the eastern superpower, Western security strategists were quick to identify in the Mediterranean a second so-called ‘arc of crises’. Yet, unlike the central and eastern European crisis zone, the Mediterranean was not, in this perception, an internal European security concern. Both NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the Western European Union (WEU), even as they applied themselves to redefining their roles in European security *vis-à-vis* each other, signalled their interest in protecting Europe from the potential threat of the South. In particular, longstanding advocates for including ‘out-of-area’ operations in NATO’s brief found their hand strengthened by the new perception of Mediterranean security threats, one such perceived threat being singled out by a former Secretary-General.

The Alliance followed this up by an initiative in 1995 to contribute to security and stability in the Mediterranean as a whole. A similar initiative was launched by the WEU, also in 1995, when the WEU Mediterranean

## FOREWORD (I)

Group (Spain, Portugal, France and Italy) launched land and naval rapid-reaction forces. While such initiatives have been accompanied by offers of co-operation on security matters with non-European Mediterranean states, the objective remains the time-honoured conception of the defence of Europe's 'southern flank'. In the light of the strategists' protestations of good intentions in this matter, it comes across as all the more surprising that many members of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) remain opposed to the extension of membership to non-European Mediterranean states, especially considering the intentions expressed in the Mediterranean Chapter of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Following the 1994 Budapest initiative to grant observer status to five Mediterranean states, little progress has been registered. This seems to suggest that leading OSCE members are far from ready to give up their freedom to act unilaterally in the Mediterranean. In parallel with essentially military strategies – which, however defensible from the Western and European point of view, are prone to suspicion from several non-member Mediterranean countries – there has, nevertheless, emerged a more civilian initiative that promises to deal with the security problems of the Mediterranean by tackling the economic, social and political roots of instability. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative, which began in Barcelona in 1995, a follow-up to which was held in Malta in April 1996, recognizes the essentially North–South nature of the Mediterranean's problems. It adopts the rationale of the OSCE itself that the best defence from security threats is multilevel co-operation with the whole region.

One could argue that it is too early to judge whether these two approaches are complementary or conflicting. Parallel lines never meet. But should they cease to be parallel and begin to converge, as they must do, it is difficult to imagine that they could complement each other without a manifestly credible readiness in Europe to regard the Mediterranean as an integrated and equal part of the Euro-Mediterranean area. Mediterranean naval history is a fascinating field for academic study. In the past navies and naval contests played a great part in defining the character of this sea. We should know, because in our case here in Malta, great navies have defined our very history and importance to the outside world. When that era of our history ended, we chose the way of positive neutrality. After centuries when our livelihood was so tightly bound up with the capricious economics of war, we achieved prosperity and stability by pursuing good neighbourliness with the rest of our region.

ALFRED SANT  
*Prime Minister of Malta, 1996–98*

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## Foreword

Among the most exciting scholarly developments within the discipline of history in recent times has been the return of interest in maritime affairs, in navies and in seapower. One hundred years ago, during the 'golden age' of Mahan-ism and European imperialism, such an interest in naval matters would have been axiomatic – indeed, the fate of some governments occasionally hung upon how well or poorly they were judged to be carrying out a national maritime policy. Generations later, during a period in which Western navies (apart from the formidable US Navy) were much reduced in size and no longer possessed overseas bases, with the fate of the world apparently depending upon whether Washington and Moscow might one day decide to use intercontinental ballistic missiles, and with the focus of shipbuilding, merchant fleets and maritime trade having moved to the east, naval affairs – and therefore teaching about the history and present utility of navies – occupied a diminished importance.

Yet even in that era of relative neglect, prescient observers could appreciate that sea power had not declined so much as become transformed. Dependence upon transport at sea never really diminished, although the 'containerization' revolution made such goods much less visible to the ordinary citizen. The safe carrying of fuel oils, especially petroleum, remained vital to the economic prospects of the world, and in particular to modern industrialized societies. The Cold War may have focused public attention upon nuclear missiles, but it was also accompanied by a serious naval race and a sustained effort by the Red Navy to challenge the West's maritime predominance. Control of sea-routes was still deemed critical.

At the same time, and for very different reasons, scholarly writings upon navies and seapower began to enjoy a quiet renaissance. The disposition of fleets was no longer studied as a discrete matter, understood only by admirals and naval strategists, but rather as a part of a larger whole, of the so-called 'grand strategy' of a nation in both peacetime and wartime. Navies were important, but it made more sense to see them as

functioning in the context of the national economy, national finances, contacts with the other armed services, alliance relationships and the rest. Early-modern historians in particular were trail-blazing in their reconstruction of past maritime societies, wherein the role of navies was properly connected to society, economics, politics, ideas and geography.<sup>1</sup>

The result of these twin developments has been to place the study of naval strategy and power *in context*, or, perhaps, in *contexts*, as this present volume well illustrates. No better way of capturing both the scholarly renaissance and the continuing role and significance of maritime matters could be advanced than a multi-part and multi-disciplinary look at the Mediterranean. Since earliest times, this stretch of water has both symbolized and realized the full panoply of maritime and naval activities. A large part of the classic curriculum on 'the influence of sea power upon history' is set in this sea. But this is not merely significant historically; many of the trends that affect global politics, international strategy and the relations of states as we enter the twenty-first century are encapsulated in today's 'Mediterranean World', just as they were reflected four centuries ago in that world so beautifully analyzed by Braudel.<sup>2</sup>

The essays which follow capture both the historical *and* the contemporary/future-oriented nature of sea power in the 'Midland Sea', as the noted historian Julian Corbett used to call it. A full ten essays explore the historical aspects of the employment of maritime force in those water, from the time of the Spanish ascendancy to the tense situations generated by the Cold War. All of these studies highlight aspects of 'Naval Policy and Strategy in the Mediterranean' that, while not unknown to experts in this field, have rarely if ever been synthesized in such a way. They alone would merit a collection like this one, and be particularly appropriate to the Cass series on Naval Policy and History.

But the special character of Professor Hattendorf's work is that these ten historical studies are married to a further nine essays upon 'Contemporary Issues in Mediterranean Policy and Strategy'. To a considerable degree this reflects the fact that these conference papers were presented in Malta and that the two Maltese institutional sponsors of our conference – the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies and the International Maritime Law Institute – have such a focus. But it also reflects the reality that now, as previously, the social movements that pulsate throughout this region have a maritime dimension, and that they in turn are affected by the geographical conditions of the region itself. For better or for worse, the Mediterranean constitutes not only an historic stretch of water but also a critical, socio-technological 'fault line' between the fast-growing populations of the Arab world and the slower-growing (and, in some cases, declining) inhabitants of southern Europe.<sup>3</sup> This is why issues such as migration, the environment, international law and cultural perceptions are so strongly represented in a collection whose chief

## FOREWORD (II)

purpose is to situate our understanding of naval policy within a larger framework.

All in all, *Naval Policy and Strategy in the Mediterranean* is a double delight: it testifies to the vibrancy of scholarship in the field of maritime studies and reminds us all, politicians and public alike, of the importance of knowing better about 'those who go down to the sea'.

PAUL KENNEDY  
*Yale University, June 1999*

## NOTES

- 1 For a couple of examples, see J. Glete, *Nations and Navies: Warships, Navies and State-Building in Europe and America, 1500–1800*, 2 vols (Stockholm, 1993); N. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986).
- 2 F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols (New York, 1972).
- 3 For further reflections upon such 'fault lines', see P. Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, 1993), pp. 41–6.

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## Series Editor's Preface

In June 1997 Professors Paul M. Kennedy of Yale University and John B. Hattendorf of the US Naval War College convened a conference on the island of Malta to tackle the broad issue of 'Sea Power in the Mediterranean: Past, Present, and Future'. The purpose of the conference was to look at a traditional subject with new eyes, and to be as inclusive as possible. The participants ranged from internationally renowned naval scholars (Paul Halpern, John Hattendorf, Gerhard Schreiber, Geoffrey Till), to contemporary political leaders (Maltese Prime Minister Alfred Sant, President Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Foreign Minister George Vella), and finally to eminent historians of ecology (J. R. McNeill), Law of the Sea (David Attard, Dominic Fenech), and migration (Michael S. Teitelbaum). A secondary theme was to test the hypothesis that ecological realities molded geopolitical realities. Throughout the conference, the participants stressed that the Mediterranean was not (and is not) an isolated region, but rather one that was (and remains) tied to global considerations. Professor Hattendorf has edited the papers with great erudition and loving attention; the rich selection of illustrations is especially welcome. A family tragedy prevented Professor Kennedy from taking his destined place as co-editor.

'Mediterranean – the sea among lands' is the red thread that runs through this volume. The contributors have worked hard to offer a re-evaluation of the multiple contexts of sea power in a region that is, in the words of Foreign Minister Vella, 'made up of mixed interests and deep divisions, of points of conversion and points of divergence, of friendships and enmities, common destinies and disparate illusions'. They have effectively demonstrated sea power as applied in the Mediterranean over the past 400 years in a variety of contexts, both past and present as well as future. They have eschewed the more traditional and more narrow approach to sea power associated with naval battles and sea control or denial, and have instead interpreted its history with reference to domestic politics, industrial capacity, financial resources, migration, ecology,

#### SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

ethnicity, and law. And they have sought to identify past constructs such as geographical considerations, political will, and technological opportunities and limitations as indicators of present and future policy considerations. In short, they have used history as a bridge to future security policy for the region.

Without hubris, I would suggest that this collection of essays deserves to take its place alongside Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1972–73), as both complement and supplement to that magisterial undertaking.

HOLGER H. HERWIG  
*Series Editor*

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## Acknowledgments

This volume is the result of a conference held on the Mediterranean island of Malta from 18 to 20 June 1997. This conference was jointly sponsored by Professor David J. Attard, Director, the IMO International Maritime Law Institute; Professor Fred Tanner, Director, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta; Professor Paul M. Kennedy, Director, International Security Studies, Yale University and Professor John B. Hattendorf, US Naval War College. All the participants at the conference acknowledge with great appreciation the co-operative support of the institutions involved. In addition, we thank the government of Malta for their warm welcome to our academic enterprise and for the generous participation of Prime Minister Alfred Sant and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Environment George Vella, contributions from whom are included in this volume. H. E. Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, President of Malta, graciously hosted a special commemorative session in his formal office at the Palace of the President, Valletta, on the 'Consolato del Mare' and these contributions on this special topic have been published separately.

In particular, all the participants in the conference and the contributors to this volume warmly acknowledge the leadership of Professor Paul Kennedy in this project. He conceived the idea for the conference while on a Yale Alumni cruise in the Mediterranean with his late wife Cath, and was the catalyst who brought it to fruition. At Yale, Dr Will Hitchcock and Ann Carter-Drier were the co-ordinators of the project, while the Smith Richardson Foundation's generous support was the key contribution that made it possible.

---

## Abbreviations

AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
ASM	air-to-surface missile
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
BSECZ	Black Sea Economic Co-operation Zone
CBM	confidence-building measures
CFE	conventional forces in Europe
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMP	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
EUROMARFOR	European Maritime Force
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GCC	Gulf Co-operation Council
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFOR	Implementation Force
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INCSEA	Incidents at Sea Agreement
INF	intermediate nuclear forces
IRBM	intermediate-range ballistic missile
LPD	landing platform, dock
LST	landing ship, tank
MDAP	Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MFO	Multilateral Force and Observers
MLF	Multilateral Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

NAVSOUTH	Allied Naval Forces, Southern Europe (NATO)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PFP	Partnership for Peace
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PSO	peace-support operations
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SFOR	Stabilization Force
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SSM	surface-to-surface missile
STANAVFORMED	Standing Naval Force, Mediterranean
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
WEU	Western European Union

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## Introduction

*John B. Hattendorf*

'Mare Nostrum', the Romans called it and, with that phrase, they created a metaphor for the unity of their Empire. The reference was not only to the geography of the Roman Empire but also to its commerce, its political and military strength gathered along the shores of the Mediterranean, as well as the role of that sea as a medium for transportation and communication in the transmission of ideas, religion and culture. In this, it was the security of travel on the Mediterranean that provided a central element. Above all, it was central in translating political and military power into the economic, social, institutional and linguistic order that survived both the shift of political power from Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century and the Germanic invasions that followed.

More than 60 years ago the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne argued that the end of Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages could be traced to the period in which the Mediterranean ceased to be a Roman's 'Mare Nostrum'. That period came with the rise of two distant cultures on the fringes of the Empire, the Arab oriented and the Germanic oriented. The change took place over a century and a half, from the mid-seventh century to the end of the eighth, and was completed by the year 800. The result was 'the final separation of East from West'. As Pirenne described it, 'A complete break was made, which was to continue to our own day. Henceforth, two different and hostile civilizations existed on the shores of *Mare Nostrum* ... The sea which had hitherto been the centre of Christianity became its frontier. The Mediterranean unity was shattered.'<sup>1</sup>

As this occurred, Arab seamen were continuing the extension of their maritime world outwards to the East, crossing the Indian Ocean and bringing China and East Africa into its horizons by the ninth and the tenth century.<sup>2</sup> Three and four centuries later, Mediterranean peoples – particularly those from Genoa, Aragon and, later, Portugal – pushed out of their traditional geographic bounds and extended the Atlantic world, exploring and colonizing in the Atlantic. They sailed, first, along the

African coast and among the islands of the eastern Atlantic – the Canary islands, the Madeira archipelago, the Azores and the Cape Verde islands – and then, moving out to the wider world, across the oceans.<sup>3</sup>

Each separate Mediterranean culture grew in its own direction and at its own pace, so that long before the end of the sixteenth century there were two clearly discernible maritime worlds in the Mediterranean. Each culture tended to organize itself into an autonomous and closed system, despite some links, alliances and contacts with one another. It is too simple to suggest that this was an expression of some simple kind of geographical determinism; it was far more complex than that. As Fernand Braudel described it, 'The two halves of the Sea, in spite of trading links and cultural exchanges maintained their autonomy and their own spheres of influence. Genuine intermingling of populations was only to be found inside each region, and within these limits it defined all barriers of race, culture or religion. All human links between different ends of the Mediterranean, by contrast, remained an adventure or at least a gamble.'<sup>4</sup>

Thus the issues of concern in this volume lie both within and across the Mediterranean. One scholar has recently argued that one must consider the Mediterranean 'as both the unique centripetal force bonding together the various peoples of all its shores and also as the principal centrifugal element separating them and lying at the heart of their distinct historical developments'.<sup>5</sup> Yet there is another aspect to consider about the Mediterranean. We find in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century the beginning of another situation that still exists. In this period one finds countries outside the Mediterranean beginning to intervene regularly in the region with naval forces. British, Dutch and Russian naval squadrons were followed in later centuries by Germans, Americans and others. Writing nearly a century ago, the British naval historian Julian Corbett explained the attraction to outsiders: 'The Midland Sea remains still, perhaps more than ever, the keyboard of Europe.'<sup>6</sup> This has been true in ways that Corbett might not have fully imagined, since a Mediterranean naval presence remained a central aspect of British policy through the Second World War and was succeeded by NATO's maritime concerns.

The fundamental issues of maritime strategy and naval power in the Mediterranean, when considered over the broad spectrum – past, present and future – clearly touch on the 'clash of civilizations', as Professor Huntington has called it.<sup>7</sup> But one must focus on other factors as well: on geography, technology, economic power and the rivalries in those fields, on trade patterns, on the structure and interplay of international politics and on international law, in addition to naval and military strength, diplomatic calculation and maneuver.

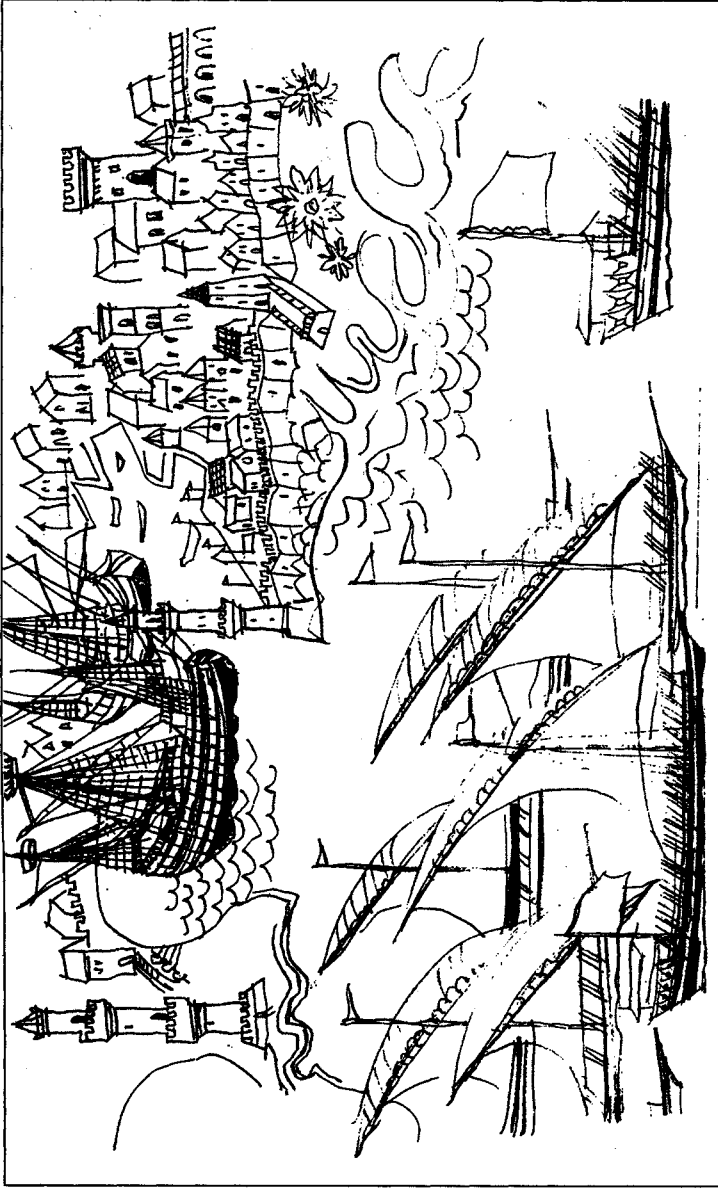
It is such broad and fundamental themes that we seek to explore in this volume, the product of the third Naval War College–Yale conference on maritime and naval history. Our topic is nearly a classic one, but what

## INTRODUCTION

we seek in treating it is not a repetition of old ideas; rather, we seek to nudge our field ahead. In our first two conferences, which brought the books *Ubi Sumus* and *Doing Naval History*, we concentrated on historiography and on method. This time we turn to the substance of a major historical topic in the world history of our sub-discipline; by concentrating on it we hope to match some of our new methods and ideas with the practice of historical writing. It is our hope that publication of the proceedings of this conference may open the way toward a higher understanding of the Mediterranean world by drawing together the connections between its past, its present and its future, setting Mediterranean naval and maritime history in the context of new and wider approaches, interpretations and insights.

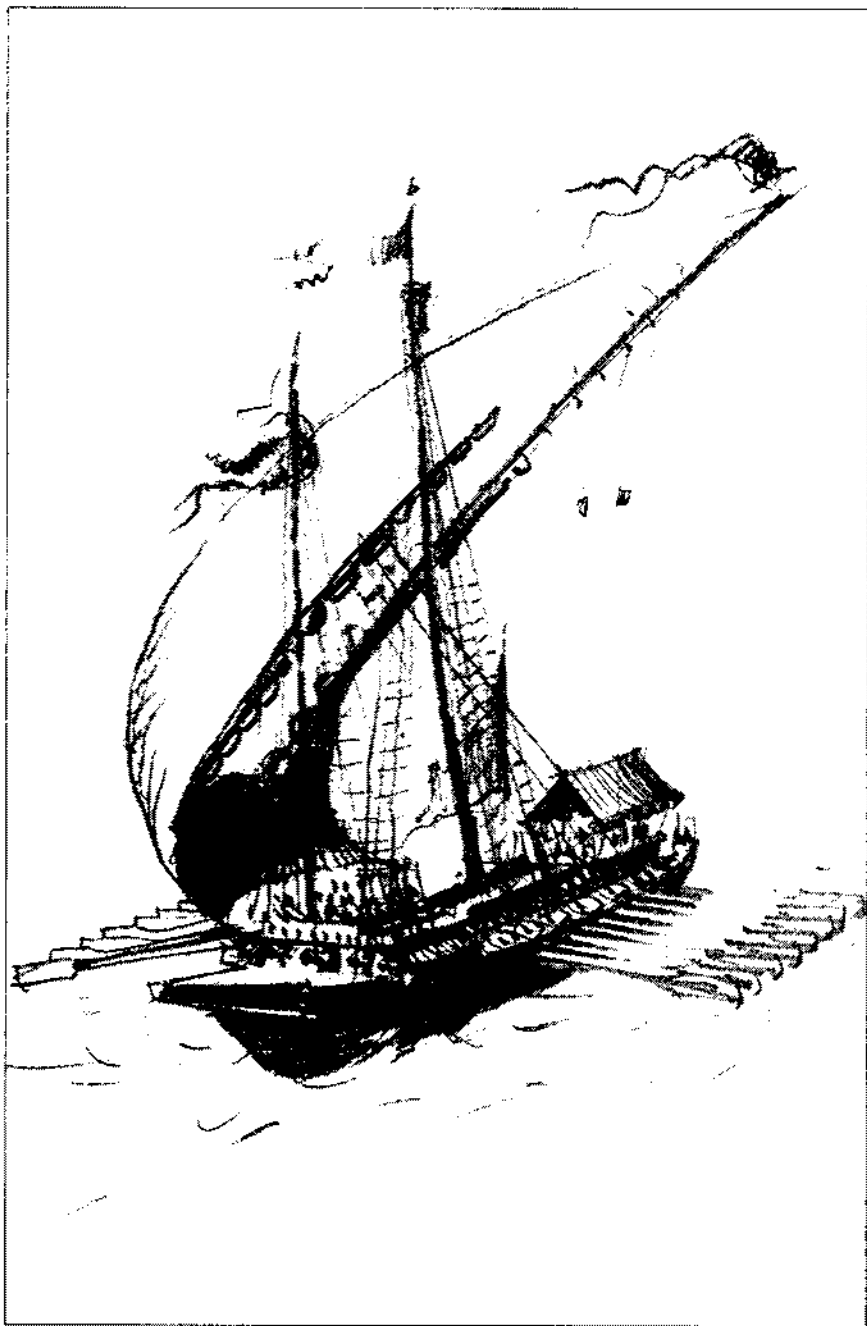
## NOTES

- 1 Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 152–3.
- 2 George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, expanded edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- 3 Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229–1492* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 169.
- 4 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), Vol. I, p. 135.
- 5 John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. xiii.
- 6 Julian Corbett, *England in the Mediterranean: A Study of the Rise and Influence of British Power within the Straits, 1603–1713* (London: Longmans, Green, 1904), Vol. II, p. 315.
- 7 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).



1. Ottoman galleys before the Port of Genoa, c. 1545, showing oar-powered rams challenging broadside gunships.  
Drawing adapted from: 'View of Genoa', ink and colors on paper, c. 1545. (Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayı Müzesi, H1608, fols 32b-33a) (Reproduced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a poster for 'The Age of Suleiman the Magnificent' exhibition in 1987.)

PART I  
THE PAST AS PROLOGUE



2. A Venetian galleass of the sixteenth century. A hybrid, which lacked the best characteristics of oar or sail power, the galleass had a relatively brief existence as a warship type.

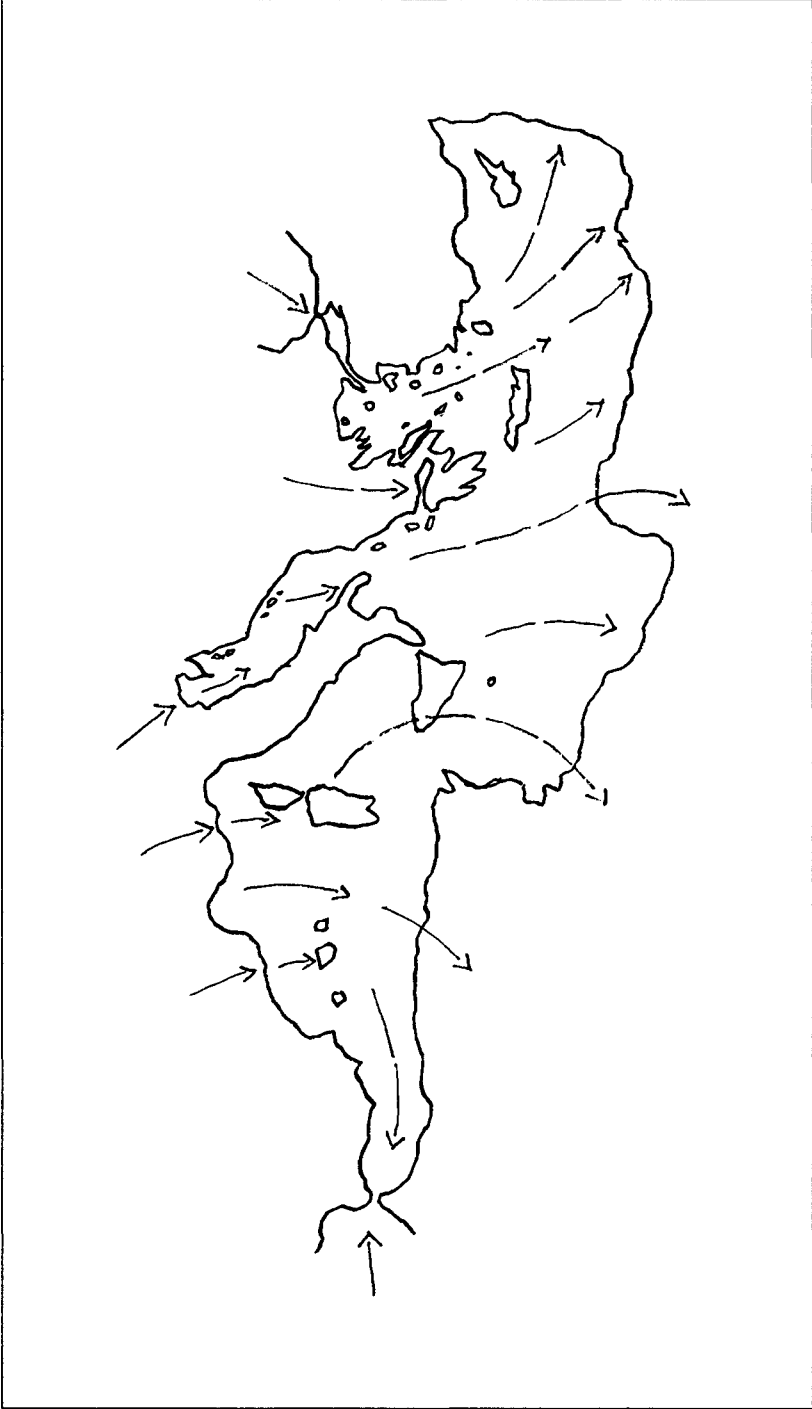
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## Navies and the Mediterranean in the Early Modern Period

*Carla Rahn Phillips*

Historians of the Mediterranean have paid considerable attention to the period 1450–1700, and for good reason. During the early modern centuries seafarers adopted new ships and sailing techniques that changed the character of trade and naval warfare. Equally important were changes in the rivalries that marked Mediterranean seafaring. After centuries in which Latin and Orthodox Christian powers had dominated the Mediterranean, the rise of the Ottomans led to a titanic clash between Christian and Muslim civilizations. In that struggle, which involved political, religious, commercial and cultural antagonisms, the diverse peoples of the Mediterranean were the major players at first. None the less, a much larger theater of rivalry extended from the Mediterranean northward to central Europe and the Black Sea and southeastward into western Asia and the Indian Ocean. During the sixteenth century, in the aftermath of the Age of Discoveries, the European center of economic and political activity shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and beyond.<sup>1</sup> However, in the broader context of world trade and international rivalries, the Mediterranean retained its strategic importance. During the seventeenth century European states that were primarily linked to the Atlantic world – England, Holland and France – established themselves in the Mediterranean as well.

The overview presented here will trace these developments, relying on the wealth of historical scholarship that has focused on the Mediterranean in the early modern period. Although major powers will dominate the narrative, minor powers will also appear from time to time.<sup>2</sup> Every state in the strategic game of the Mediterranean had different perceptions, goals and method, some of which pertained only to the age of oar and sail and others of which continue to the present day. In so far as possible, the narrative that follows will try to retain those varying perceptions of reality.



3. The Mediterranean Sea: prevailing winds in summer

It is worthwhile to sketch some of the enduring physical realities that shaped the Mediterranean as a stage for historical drama. Ecological conditions – soil and rainfall, winds and currents, ports and hinterlands, climate and seasons – had always posed a daunting challenge for inhabitants of the Mediterranean littoral. The region is rich in natural beauty but generally poor in natural resources. Some favored areas can grow nearly anything with ease, but there are vast areas that can barely be farmed at all owing to unfavorable conditions of soil, climate, topography and rainfall. Seafarers also faced difficult conditions. The prevailing winds blow from the northwest to northeast quadrant and the currents generally run counterclockwise. Winds may fail altogether in some seasons and blow at gale force in others. At choke-points, such as the Strait of Messina, strong currents, riptides and whirlpools gave rise to ancient legends of monsters beneath the boiling seas.

Rivers provide only about 25 per cent of the water lost through evaporation in the main body of the sea, plus another 4 per cent from the rivers that flow first into the Black Sea. The other 71 per cent of the Mediterranean's water comes from the Atlantic Ocean, flowing in as a surface current. Until the development of the sternpost-mounted rudder and the full-rigged sail plan, from the late thirteenth to the fifteenth century, sailing ships had great difficulty making headway against contrary winds and currents. Oared ships such as galleys could concentrate enough human power to battle the elements, but they were highly vulnerable to bad weather and dangerous coastlines. None the less, what the galleys did they did very well, within the confines of the sea. Without the need regularly to confront the open ocean, Mediterranean trade and warfare continued to rely on the galley from ancient times through the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

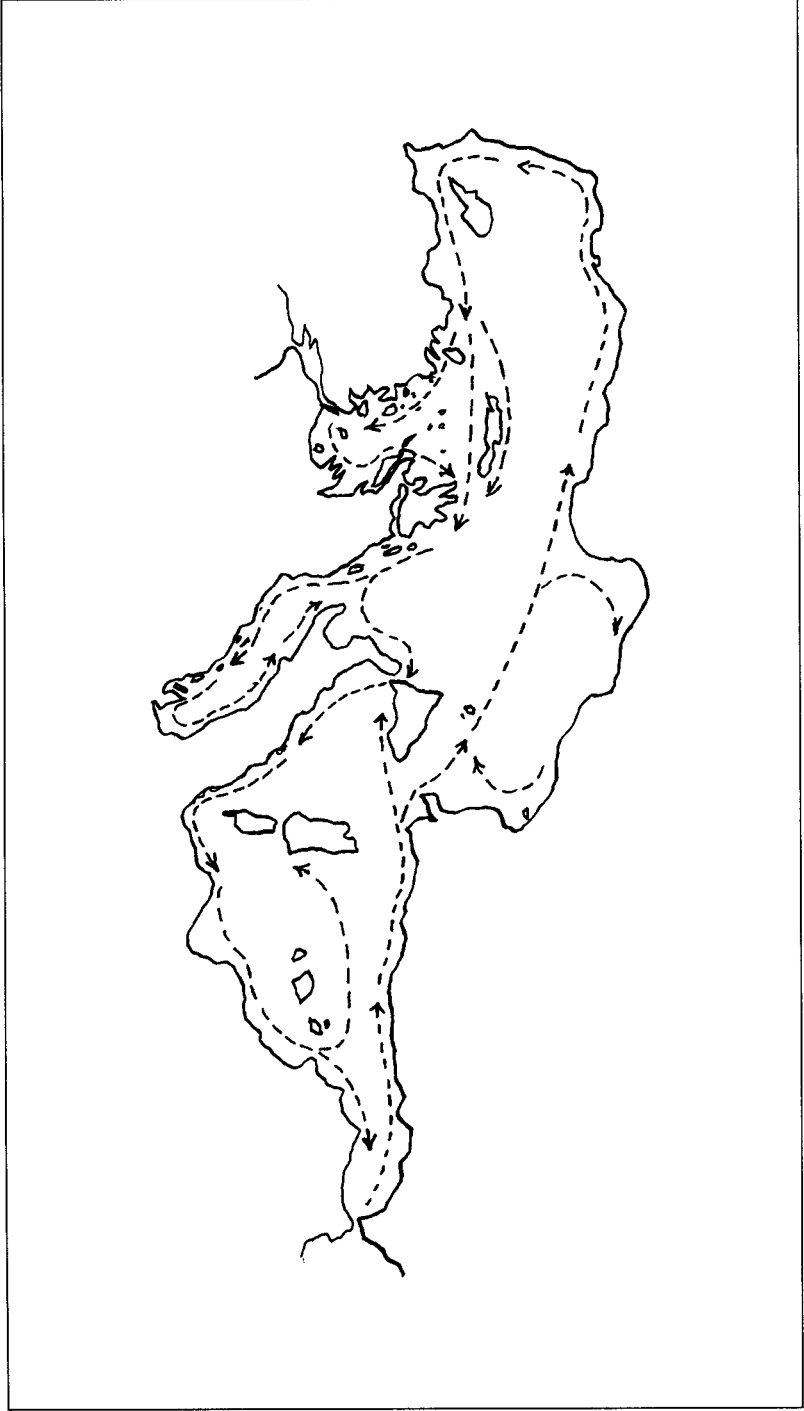
Historians of the Mediterranean often divide their discussion between the eastern and the western halves of the sea. In its physical characteristics, however, the true distinction is between north and south. In general, the southern coastline is dangerous, even without taking the winds and currents into consideration. Moreover, the best ports often suffer from insufficient supplies of fresh water, food or both, a pattern of scarcity that posed great problems for galley fleets that had to be resupplied regularly. Though long stretches of the Mediterranean coastline are inhospitable for both people and ships, nature bestowed extraordinary favors on a few sites. The northern half of the Mediterranean is relatively benign, marked by abundant natural ports on the mainland and on selected islands. Given these characteristics, it is no wonder that seafarers tended to favor 'trunk routes' in the northern half of the sea, where they could move easily from island to island and from port to port. On both the eastbound and the westbound trajectory, ships preferred to follow these trunk routes, where natural conditions presented fewer risks and supported abundant ports and markets.

## POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

For thousands of years, political and military rivalries focused on a number of key points along the trunk routes in the northern Mediterranean. Whoever controlled enough of those points could determine the terms and conditions of access to the trunk routes, even if they could not monopolize their use. However, if they could keep their lines of communication and supply open, well-entrenched forces could maintain a presence in the heart of alien territory. Nearly all the major battles and sieges in the early modern period were fought over one or another key point along the northern trunk routes.<sup>4</sup> Only certain areas of the Mediterranean were appropriate for large sea battles during the age of oar and sail. Nearly all the ideal battle sites are in the northern half of the Mediterranean, and most of them are clustered from Sardinia and Corsica eastward.<sup>5</sup> It is no coincidence that the Battle of Actium in 31 BC and the Battle of Preveza in 1538 occurred at virtually the same place in the Ionian Sea. In general, however, major battles were less important in themselves than in their implications for the control of key points along the northern trunk routes.

The physical characteristics of wind, currents, coastlines and ports influenced trade as well as military confrontations. Moreover, in war or peace, the concentrated flow of goods along the trunk routes naturally attracted marauders. Trade and piracy have much in common, and it was not unusual in the early modern period to find the same individuals involved in both seaborne trade and in corsairing, commonly called piracy. Pirates might come from anywhere in the Mediterranean region, and newcomers from northern Europe in the seventeenth century would join in as well. Their attacks might be sanctioned by political authorities or not; they might be carried out by Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Latin Christians or groups with mixed religious affiliations. It is no exaggeration to say that every great trading people engaged in piracy at some stage in its development, and many of them honed their skills in the Mediterranean.

All these considerations provide the framework for strategic developments in early modern times. The rise of the Ottoman Turks on the western edge of the Muslim world in the fifteenth century set the stage for what would follow, but their advent was part of a much longer process. From the eleventh to the fifteenth century Christian forces dominated both the western and the eastern Mediterranean. Their presence was spawned by the Crusades and maintained by control of key ports and islands such as Zante and Rhodes that linked Crusader enclaves to Christian states in the west. The several Christian powers were rivals as well as natural allies, however, and they often warred against one another as vigorously as they warred against the Muslims. This was particularly true of the rivalry between the Orthodox Christians in the eastern Mediterranean and the Latin Christians in the west.



4. The Mediterranean Sea: sea currents

Gradually, several Muslim polities began to squeeze out the crusader states, but not in a concerted fashion. The Seljuk Turks consolidated their authority in Anatolia in the thirteenth century and ended Christian dominance in the eastern Mediterranean. In its turn, the Seljuk state was reduced by the Mongols to a collection of emirates on the Aegean Sea. By the late thirteenth century pirates from these *ghazi* emirates of western Asia Minor were attacking shipping in the eastern Mediterranean, and their power grew in the fourteenth century. Rather than acting together to protect Muslim shipping, the emirates took a narrower view, aiming for short-term gains and relying on outsiders to maintain trade. Christian pirates also preyed on shipping in the area: raiding, collecting tribute and capturing slaves. To lessen the threat of Muslim piracy, Christian merchants from the western Mediterranean made deals with individual emirates and thus diverted the pirates' attention to the trade of their rivals. A similar pattern of behavior would characterize the seventeenth century as well.

The Ottoman Turks began to unite all of the *ghazi* emirates in the 1390s, but Tamerlane shattered the Ottoman sultanate into its component parts again in 1402, and it was not until 1426 that the Ottomans under Murad II reconsolidated the emirates into a single state. The Ottomans were willing to make deals with Christian merchants for peaceful trade, but they never abandoned the notion of *jihad* (holy war) against Christians, which included official raids on Christian possessions (*ghawz*) and the sponsorship of corsairing against Christian shipping. Before 1453 Ottoman naval actions were generally brief raids rather than concerted campaigns. The Ottomans were fairly new to Mediterranean warfare, but they learned quickly that an amphibious strategy was the best way to achieve control of shipping lanes. They also learned, like others before them, that strategic ports and islands could be used as bases for galley raids on shipping and to control choke-points and collect tribute.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars have found no documentation for the strategic concerns of the Ottoman sultanate. We learn how they approached naval warfare largely through their actions. Traditional Western scholarship once emphasized the military prowess of the Ottomans and tended to see the sultanate largely as a fighting machine intent on fulfilling medieval prophecies of world conquest in the name of Islam. Relying on ambassadorial reports from Venice and elsewhere, scholars argued that the sultans cared little for commerce, except in so far as it generated tribute payments and restricted commercial activities within their realms. Such arguments portray the Ottoman Empire as the quintessential 'other' against which western Europe and its nascent capitalism defined itself.

Modern scholarship paints a different picture.<sup>7</sup> We now know that economic, and especially commercial, concerns were an important part of Ottoman strategy. The sultans used their formidable military machine on land and sea to control trade in their sphere of influence, which

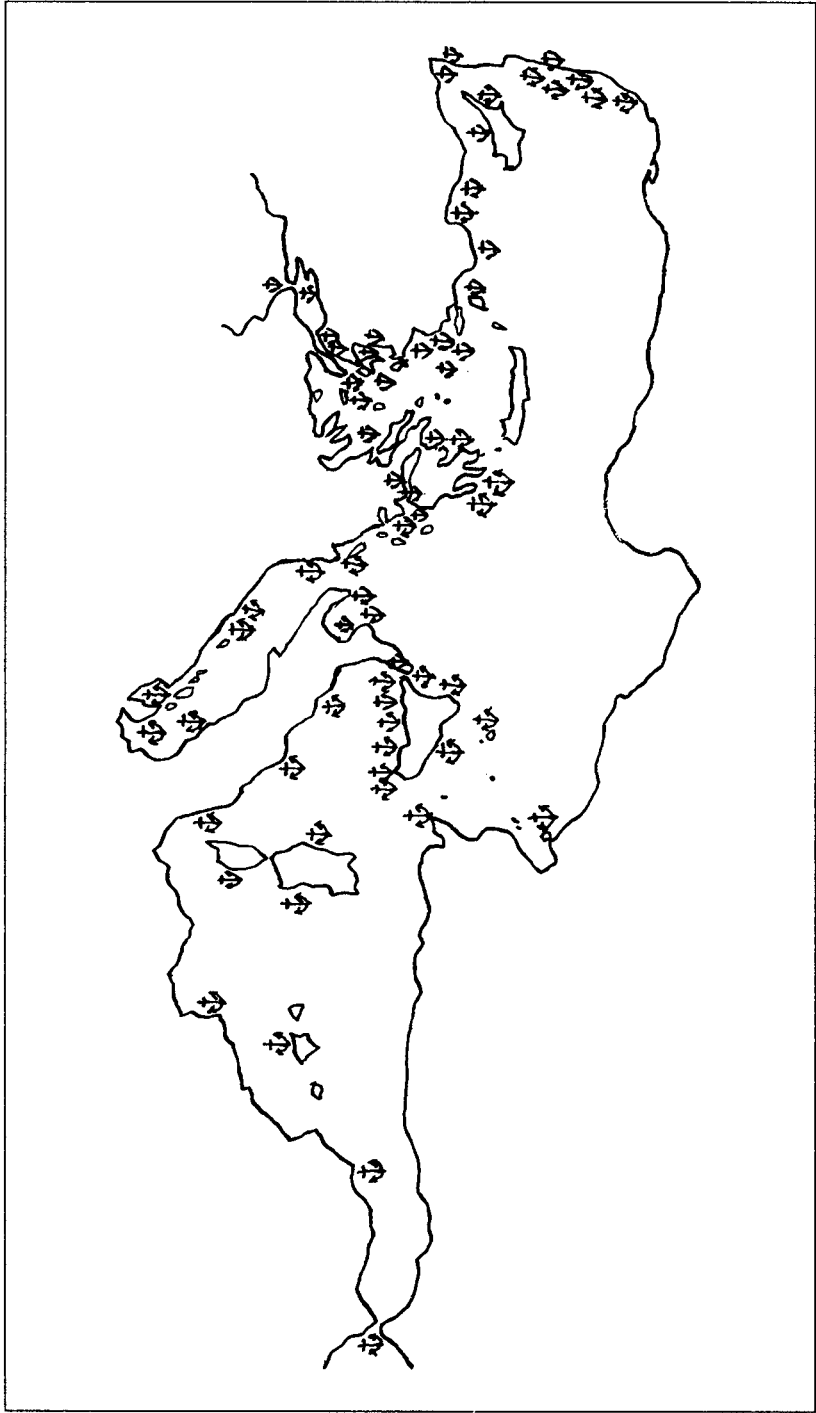
extended from central Europe to the Indian Ocean, with the eastern Mediterranean as its hub. This strategy evolved in the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, as the Ottoman state consolidated its authority. Medieval prophesies of world domination may have inspired the effort, but it was firmly based on existing realities.

Sultan Mahomet II (1451–81) conquered Constantinople in 1453, after several decades of smaller gains. The conquest sent shock waves throughout Christendom, but the Sultan wisely tried to mollify the Orthodox Christians who came under his rule, capitalizing on their fear and distrust of Latin Christendom, which dated from the Crusades. After Constantinople fell, Venice and the Knights Hospitaller of St John, with their stronghold on the island of Rhodes, reinforced and extended their control over a chain of islands in the Aegean. This temporarily blocked the naval expansion of the Ottomans, despite their enormous resources and manpower.

As John H. Pryor has argued, the key to understanding warfare in the eastern Mediterranean in this period is that it was always amphibious, with hit-and-run battles at sea, as attacking fleets aimed for strategic points. 'When fleet engagements did occur, they did so invariably in the context of amphibious assaults by the forces of one of the two faiths against strategic bases or islands held by the other.'<sup>8</sup> For effective defense, the defenders had to prevent the land and sea forces of the attackers from meeting.

The Ottomans captured the island of Lesbos in the Aegean in 1462 and moved westward from Serbia to Bosnia. In response, Venice declared war on Turkey, initiating the first Turco-Venetian War (1463–79). Venice had aimed in earlier times to control the sea, protecting its merchant fleets against depredations and attacking rivals to deny them the use of the favored trunk routes. The Venetians had not aimed at a monopoly of seaborne trade, however. Instead, they captured and held a string of fortified places along the Adriatic, plus Zante, Crete and Cyprus, to use as strategic bases to protect their trade and harass that of their rivals. In the late fifteenth century the Ottomans learned how to defeat the Venetians at their own game. As a result, the Ottomans captured the Negropont (Evvoia) and several trading posts in Morea (Peloponnese).

In what would be his last major campaign, Mahomet II planned simultaneously to drive the Knights Hospitaller of St John from Rhodes and conquer southern Italy. Although the Turks reportedly landed an army of 70,000 on Rhodes (probably an exaggeration), supported by a large galley fleet, they could not dislodge the defending force of 600 knights and 2,000 soldiers, plus the local inhabitants. Formidable fortifications, and the determination of the defenders, thwarted the assault, and the Ottomans withdrew from Italy as well.<sup>9</sup> Though the defense of Rhodes was hailed throughout Christendom, and Mahomet II died the



5. The Mediterranean Sea, showing location of naval battles, 431 BC to AD 1538

following year, the Ottoman advance was merely deferred, not defeated. In between wars, trade by Christian merchants continued in the eastern Mediterranean, protected and taxed by the Ottomans.

Under Bayazit II (1481–1512), the Ottomans developed a large navy at enormous cost and waged an inconclusive ten-year war with the Mamelukes of Egypt (1481–91). Ottoman galleys also won a major naval engagement against the Venetians in 1499, the first time that the latter had lost a battle since rising to power. For the rest of his reign, Bayazit continued to build the Ottoman Navy. His forces inexorably extended their control of territory and strong points, forcing Venice to recognize that its vulnerability to Ottoman attack had become a fact of life.<sup>10</sup> In 1500 Venice had the ‘oldest and largest’ permanent navy in Europe (25–30 galleys), with a small strike force afloat and a reserve force of 50–100 that could be mobilized rapidly.<sup>11</sup> None the less, its status among the Christian powers was being eroded by the rising power of Spain in the western Mediterranean and by the expansion of Iberian trade into the Atlantic Ocean and beyond.

In 1415 combined sea and land forces from Portugal captured Ceuta in Morocco, the second Pillar of Hercules (Abyla) in classical mythology. This began a remarkable century in which Iberian mariners and merchants explored and traded along the West African coast and into the eastern Atlantic. In 1486 Bartolomeu Dias of Portugal reached the Cape of Good Hope and in 1498 Vasco da Gama sailed from Lisbon to Calcutta, pioneering a sea route to India.

Meanwhile, in Spain, the so-called ‘Catholic Monarchs’, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, ousted the Muslim king of Granada in 1492 after a ten-year war, nearly 800 years after the peninsula had been largely conquered by the Muslims. Thereafter, in addition to sponsoring the voyages of Christopher Columbus and dozens of other explorers across the Atlantic, Spanish monarchs began a series of campaigns in North Africa. The Ottomans’ conquest of Constantinople and their continuing drive to the north and the southeast provided ample incentive for the Spaniards to secure the western Mediterranean. Given the ecology of the region and because their naval forces were limited, they maintained cordial relations with some North African states but also captured and secured a line of strong points from Melilla to Tripoli between 1497 and 1510. Both Ferdinand and Isabella were also inspired by dreams of reconquering Jerusalem from the Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

As Iberian exploration and colonization proceeded, the Ottomans felt threatened by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean and by the Spaniards in the western Mediterranean. In 1513 Sultan Selim I sent supplies and men to build a fleet at Suez to help the Mamelukes against the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. Overstaying his welcome, the sultan decided to conquer the Mamelukes, using his navy to supply and guard the rear of

the invading force. By 1517 he had succeeded, taking over Syria, Palestine and Egypt. By the early sixteenth century the eastern Mediterranean was largely under Ottoman control.<sup>13</sup> The few remaining Christian strongholds were helpless to protect their shipping against attack and found themselves forced to co-operate with the Ottomans. Not for the first time nor the last, self-interest overrode loyalties based on cultural or religious identity. In the west, Muslim corsairs established themselves in Algiers in 1516 and asked for the protection of the sultan two years later. The corsairs of Algiers became the first of a series of client states in North Africa that would serve the Ottomans as forward bases against Spain.

From the 1520s to the early 1570s Mediterranean affairs revolved around the titanic struggle between two powerful civilizations and their champions: in the west, Christianity, represented by the Spanish Habsburgs, and in the east, the world of western Islam, represented by the Ottoman Empire. All the other players in the Mediterranean game would define their strategies with relation to the Habsburg–Ottoman rivalry, but not consistently nor predictably.

Under the leadership of Suleyman I (1520–66), the Ottomans extended their presence from central Europe to the west coast of India. In this larger struggle the Mediterranean was a crucial focal point, but by no means the only one. Likewise, naval strategy was part of the larger picture, sometimes co-ordinated with land strategies, sometimes working at cross-purposes, fighting for the sultan's attention and resources. Similar observations may be made about Spain. The Habsburg dynasty inherited Spain and the lands under Spanish rule in Europe and abroad in 1516. Consequently, successive monarchs had to craft an overall strategy that concerned areas from the Mediterranean to central and northern Europe, plus an overseas empire that circled the globe.

In the early sixteenth century the Ottomans effectively commanded three navies. The official navy at Constantinople could be formed into large battle fleets and co-ordinated with land forces for major assaults, but it was not maintained at full strength the rest of the time. Smaller galley fleets were kept in Greece, the Levantine coast, Egypt and the Red Sea, financed locally in Ottoman territories and used primarily for sea control. In addition, the client states of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli were subject to the sultans but had their own rulers, called *bey*s. They lived largely from corsairing or piracy on Christian shipping, acting as a proxy force for the Ottomans. The Spanish Habsburgs had a small permanent navy, but relied on their ability to embargo and rent private vessels when needed. In addition to galleys for use in the Mediterranean, Spanish mariners adapted and developed ships for use in the Atlantic and the Pacific, especially the galleon, the caravel and merchant ships of various sizes and designs. In the Mediterranean region both Spaniards and Ottomans understood the importance of holding strategic bases. With

rare exceptions, their long engagement did not involve large naval battles, even though they could each create massive battle fleets when the need arose.<sup>14</sup>

Suleyman simultaneously used land and sea forces in the early 1520s, as part of a co-ordinated strategy that took advantage of the disarray in Christendom related to the Protestant Reformation. In 1521 the Ottomans captured Belgrade, and in June 1522 Suleyman invaded the island of Rhodes, home base to the international body of Knights of St John, also known as the Knights Hospitaller, whose mission since the Crusades had been to wage an unending crusade against the Muslims, under the sponsorship of the papacy. The knights had carried out their mission with skill and dedication, largely by launching corsairing raids against Muslim shipping and strongholds all over the eastern Mediterranean. With the Ottomans already in control of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, Suleyman was determined to oust the Hospitallers from Rhodes, making up for the failed siege of 1480. He committed massive land and sea forces to the effort and sustained heavy losses during a six-month siege, but he prevailed, driving the last of the Christian crusaders from the eastern Mediterranean. The Grand Master of the knights, the 70-year-old Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam, was allowed to leave with his men on the promise that they would relinquish their struggle. With their ousting from Rhodes the knights had no base. The pope asked all the Christian powers to help to resettle them, but that took several years to arrange.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1520s Ottoman interests spanned an area extending from a core in the eastern Mediterranean northward to central Europe and the Black Sea and southeastward to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Despite strong arguments that Suleyman should commit more resources to fighting the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, he decided on a land assault in eastern Europe. Circumstances favored his plans, because the growing Protestant movement had shattered the unity of Latin Christendom. Charles V, the Habsburg king of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor, had alienated many of his subjects in the Germanies by his staunch defense of the Catholic faith. In his role as king of Spain Charles was also fighting a series of wars with France over the control of Italy. The French king Francis I, hemmed in by the lands of Charles's inheritance, had no more reason than the German princes to co-operate with the Habsburgs, even in the interests of Christian unity. In 1525 an army of Charles V captured Francis I at Pavia. Humiliated but hardly cowed, the king of France allied with the Ottoman Turks and encouraged Ottoman attacks on eastern Europe, as well as on Habsburg lands in the west. The French also encouraged the German princes in their opposition to the emperor.<sup>16</sup> The real possibility of an Ottoman takeover of central Europe temporarily overrode other concerns, enabling Charles to patch together a Christian defensive coalition. In 1526, at the Battle of Mohács, King Luis I of Hungary lost

his life. Not only was he a brother monarch, but he was also Charles V's cousin and brother-in-law, which personalized his struggle against Ottoman expansion. In 1529 the Turks had advanced far enough to besiege Vienna, but the Christian coalition managed to hold them off. The sultan acknowledged this major setback by redirecting his efforts from central Europe back to the Mediterranean.

Charles considered a galley fleet essential to Spanish military power and defense in the Mediterranean. France also built a galley fleet and used it against the Habsburgs until the middle of the century. Both Spain and France also maintained armed sailing ships in the western Mediterranean in the early sixteenth century, but had phased them out by the 1540s, presumably because the galley was a better choice at the time. Meanwhile, Charles continued to pursue his goal of controlling Italy. He had inherited the Kingdom of Naples from his grandfather Ferdinand of Aragon. In the 1520s and the 1530s he extended his hold over the northern part of the peninsula, inducing local rulers to ally with him against France and the Ottoman threat. France had controlled Genoa since 1500, but Francis forfeited their loyalty by pushing the Genoese too hard in his ambitions in Italy. In 1528 Andrea Doria of Genoa rebelled against France and allied himself with Charles.<sup>17</sup> The Dorias brought a powerful naval presence to Habsburg forces in the Mediterranean and remained loyal to Spain through the early modern period. Florence, Milan and Savoy were also incorporated into the Habsburg effort. In all, the Habsburgs maintained four co-ordinated galley fleets in the sixteenth century, known by their bases of operations in Spain, Sicily and Naples, plus the galleys of Genoa on contract with the Doria family. Together, in Charles V's time, they normally numbered about 40 galleys, which could be increased for large battles.<sup>18</sup>

Only Venice and the papacy remained outside the Habsburg fold in Italy, each for its own reasons. Despite the best efforts of the Ottomans, the Portuguese had established a series of armed trading bases around the Indian Ocean, thus ending Venice's near-monopoly of the trade in Asian spices. To preserve what remained, Venice had to maintain a working relationship with the Ottomans. In the great struggle between Habsburgs and Ottomans, Venice had no choice but to remain in the middle, desperately trying to maintain its trade and freedom of action, respected by both sides but trusted by neither. The papacy had its own reasons for holding the Habsburgs at arm's length and often had openly hostile relations with Spain and the Habsburgs, despite their common religious interests.

To strengthen Spanish control over the western Mediterranean, Charles ceded Malta to the Knights of St John in 1530, in exchange for a yearly tribute of one falcon and a pledge to take over the defense of Tripoli, which had been a Spanish base since 1510. Fortifying Malta at great expense, the knights soon reneged on their pledge to Suleyman,

periodically launching fierce raids on Muslim territories and commerce, especially on the key route between Alexandria and Constantinople.

In 1532, Andrea Doria of Genoa, sailing for Spain with a hundred ships, captured the fort of Koron in the southwest Morea. According to Andrew Hess, this attack began a new naval phase of the struggle between Habsburgs and Ottomans. The Mediterranean was defined by both sides of the great cultural divide as the theater of confrontation for nearly five decades thereafter. This was not an absolute choice for either power, but simply an ordering of priorities. Each side continued to treat issues and lands far beyond the Mediterranean as vital concerns and was willing to shift resources away from the Mediterranean when necessary.

During the course of their naval rivalry, both empires developed a limited battle-fleet strategy. The idea was to form a large fleet in a key area, for defensive and offensive uses, forcing the enemy to concentrate its forces as well. The aim was to prevent the enemy's defensive use of convoys to protect trade and communications (often called sea control), and the offensive use of raids, often by sponsoring third parties to prey on the enemy's shipping (often called sea denial). Outside the piracy by proxy carried out by their clients, the two giant empires both discouraged free-booters in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean.

Even when Habsburgs and Ottomans formed large battle fleets they did not maintain them for long. In other words, they made no attempt to control the sea in a modern sense.<sup>19</sup> Few large sea battles took place in the sixteenth century; notable exceptions being Preveza in 1538, Djerba in 1560 and Lepanto in 1571. Moreover, even in those cases the large fleets gained their objective quickly and thereafter withdrew, or simply withdrew if their objective seemed unattainable. The limited battle-fleet strategy of the sixteenth century bowed to the realities of the Mediterranean ecology, focusing on the control of strategic bases.

Naval warfare between Spain and the Ottomans in 1532–38 served to strengthen Ottoman control of the eastern Mediterranean. One of the most interesting aspects of this success was in the recruiting of corsairs and putting them in charge of major naval efforts. This was one reason that the Ottoman Navy gained only slowly in prestige, despite frequent victories at sea.<sup>20</sup> In 1534 Suleyman appointed as his admiral the corsair Kheir-ed-Din (called Barbarossa by the Christians). He promptly conquered Tunis with a fleet of 74 ships and deposed Muley Hassan, an ally of Spain. In response, Charles V assembled a fleet of 300 ships, retook Tunis, restored Muley Hassan to power and freed 20,000 Christian captives. Then, in July 1537, Suleyman landed troops in Italy, supported by a fleet of over 200 ships, but was forced to withdraw in the face of a Habsburg coalition.

The only major naval battle of the war was fought near Preveza in the Ionian Sea, in late September 1538. The Turkish admiral Kheir-ed-Din

sailed his fleet into a narrow inlet when he received word of an approaching fleet under the command of Andrea Doria. From an ideal defensive position Kheir-ed-Din avoided general engagement with Doria's larger fleet and captured seven stray vessels. He lost one vessel when his fleet came upon the 'Great Galleon of Venice', a large heavily armed sailing ship. The commander of the galleon fired broadside at the approaching line of galleys and inflicted great damage. Many authors see this as a precursor of future battles, in which heavily-armed sailing ships would always heat galleys that relied on maneuverability, grappling and boarding. None the less, at Preveza the Ottoman fleet held the commanding position and the Christian fleet could not co-ordinate its galleys and sailing ships well enough to compensate, despite their superior numbers. Doria withdrew on 29 September 1538, leaving Kheir-ed-Din to gloat. Though Doria has been roundly condemned for the withdrawal, one could argue that in the circumstances he made the only rational choice.<sup>21</sup> Pushing beyond the Mediterranean, Suleyman sent the Muslim governor of Egypt to confront Portuguese forces in the Indian Ocean, but he returned in 1539 with no clear victory. Though Suleyman failed to extend the Ottoman sphere further west and southeast, he undoubtedly retained the commanding position in the eastern Mediterranean.

The 1540s saw a continuation of the duel, with thrust and parry at vital points around the Mediterranean. Habsburg and Ottoman forces also engaged on land in central Europe, and the Christian emperor and the Muslim sultan each confronted enemies on their flanks among their co-religionists. For Charles that meant the continuing hostility of France and his Protestant subjects in northern Europe, plus the changeable loyalties of Venice and England. Although Spanish forces dominated the western Mediterranean, clients of the sultan were no further away than the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar. Muslim corsairs from North Africa continually harassed Spanish shipping and coastal settlements. In the course of the sixteenth century several strong points became corsairing city-states allied to the Ottomans. Algiers was a port without a supporting hinterland, dependent for survival on corsairing raids and the proceeds from the ransoming of captives. Kheir-ed-Din also used it as a base. In 1541 Charles launched an expedition to capture Algiers, with distinguished soldiers such as Hernán Cortés, the conqueror of Mexico, and 400 knights of St John in his entourage. Owing to violent storms, they lost 150 ships in the failed attempt. It was the emperor's last campaign at sea.

In perhaps the most startling military action of the period, Francis I of France joined forces with the Ottomans, who helped him to capture Nice from the Duchy of Savoy. In gratitude, Francis allowed Kheir-ed-Din's fleet of galleys to winter over in Toulon in 1544, with captured Christian slaves in their crews. At the time it was the scandal of Christendom,

disgusting even the staunchly anti-Spanish citizenry of Toulon. Kheir-ed-Din died in 1546 and was succeeded by his protégé Dragut Reis. Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England died in 1547, marking the beginning of the end of an era.

The 1550s generally saw the Ottomans inching ahead in their struggle both with the Habsburgs and with the Persians to the east. From 1548 to 1566 Suleyman launched several campaigns against Persia, in a rivalry that was complicated by religious divisions: the Ottomans followed the Sunni version of Islam, whereas Persian Muslims were Shi'ites. In the Mediterranean the Ottomans sent raiding expeditions against Christian shipping and coastal settlements, aiming, as always, to capture strong-points in enemy territory. In 1551 a Turkish fleet under Dragut captured Tripoli from a contingent of the Knights of St John. The surrender of Tripoli, brokered by the French ambassador to the Ottomans, was fraught with political intrigue and Franco-Spanish rivalry among the knights. The most recent history of the knights notes that it 'had all the appearance of a politically inspired betrayal'.<sup>22</sup> In Muslim hands Tripoli would be used as a base from which to attack Spanish and Italian shipping. Whatever the role of the French in the Christian loss of Tripoli, in 1553 Turkish and French forces joined again to attack the island of Corsica. Clearly, in Mediterranean warfare of the sixteenth century, religious loyalties often bowed to political concerns.

Charles V retired from his various responsibilities in 1555–56, exhausted and dispirited by decades of warfare throughout Europe, much of it against his Christian co-religionists. His son Philip succeeded him in Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and the New World; his brother Ferdinand succeeded him as Holy Roman Emperor. Though the Habsburg lands were no longer joined under a single individual, they remained united in their opposition to the Ottomans in central Europe and the Mediterranean.

A period of renewed activity in the Mediterranean ensued in the 1560s, spurred by Piali Pasha's audacious attack on the Balearic Islands off the coast of Spain in 1558. That attack, with a fleet of more than 100 ships, seems to have alarmed even the French. Until about 1573 the Mediterranean headed the list of Spanish priorities under Philip II (1556–98); under his leadership the Habsburg galley fleet increased to about 100 ships, and more in wartime. Spain sent a major fleet against the Turks in 1560, aiming for the island of Djerba off the coast west of Tripoli. The Ottoman fleet won a resounding victory, killing 10,000 men and sinking many vessels. However, typical of the aftermath of Mediterranean battles, they did not follow up the victory. Spain was able to rebuild its fleet in the next two years and prepared a new offensive in 1563–64 with nearly 100 ships. In response, Suleyman, still sultan of the Ottomans after four decades in power, launched an all-out effort to take Malta from the Knights of St John.

In what became known as the 'Great Siege', a Turkish force of about 40,000 men and 180 galleys blockaded and attacked the fortified island in May 1565. About 540 knights and subordinates, plus 1,000 troops from Spanish Sicily in two contingents, held out for four months until the main relief force of 16,000 arrived in September. With enormous loss of life, the knights, under the iron-willed Jean de la Valette Parisot, prevailed.<sup>23</sup> In honor of the victory, and recognizing that they could never return to Rhodes, the victors styled themselves thereafter as the 'Knights of Malta'. The Ottomans blamed poor co-ordination between their sea and land forces, plus several tactical errors, for the failed siege, which also cost the life of Dragut Reis. With winter coming and rumblings against Spanish rule in the Netherlands, Philip II did not press the Ottomans after relieving the siege. Instead, he turned his attention to northern Europe until the summer of 1566, when a new Turkish offensive in the Mediterranean commanded his attention.

The death of Suleyman in the late summer of 1566 and the internal turmoil that ensued briefly neutralized the Ottomans, and Philip turned his attention increasingly toward the Netherlands.<sup>24</sup> None the less, the Habsburg-Ottoman struggle in the Mediterranean would continue until the late 1570s, punctuated by the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, but marked as well by a political war of nerves and the continuing tug-of-war over strategic bits of land. A major rebellion in Spain by Christians of Muslim ancestry (the Moriscos) in 1568-70 was supported by the Ottomans, fishing in troubled waters.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Tunis became a sought-after prize on both sides of the cultural frontier. In 1569 the Bey of Algiers took Tunis and in July 1570 besieged Cyprus, which was held by Venice as a tributary of the Ottomans. Cyprus was not simply a Christian enclave in the heart of the Ottoman world, however, but a hugely profitable enterprise for the Venetians, who let Christian pirates use it as a base and profited from the sale of their booty. Though the Ottomans resented these activities, they tolerated them for decades. Finally, their patience at an end, the Ottomans besieged Cyprus in 1570.

In May 1571 Pope Pius V formed a Holy League with Spain, Venice and allies of Spain such as Genoa and Ragusa, and during the summer they assembled a combined fleet to confront the Ottomans. Led by Don Juan de Austria, the natural son of Charles V (and half-brother of Philip II), the Christian fleet comprised 208 galleys and additional sailing ships. Some of the most famous military officers, soldiers and sailors in Spain had volunteered for the fleet, plus others such as Miguel de Cervantes, who would achieve fame in other spheres. The Ottoman fleet commanded by Piali Pasha numbered 230 galleys, with their complement of sailors and soldiers. In all, over 150,000 men purportedly took part on both sides. The fleets met on 8 October near Lepanto at the mouth of the Gulf of Patras. After a fierce battle, the Christian fleet won a resounding victory,

highlighted by the capture and execution of the Turkish admiral.<sup>26</sup> His battle flag and armor, along with the magnificent poop lantern from his flagship, are still on display in the Royal Armoury in Madrid.

All over Christian Europe the victory at Lepanto was celebrated with lavish celebrations and great outpourings of joy, and hailed as the Christian response to the loss of Constantinople over a century before. But those in charge were under no illusions that the battle had been definitive. They knew the realities of Mediterranean strategy too well. In the long run the Ottoman capture of Cyprus was likely to have more effect than a single naval battle, however spectacular.

Though historians often blame the Christian coalition for failing to capitalize on the victory, it was not for want of trying. The Holy League launched a campaign in the Morea in 1572, but met with little success. Venice effectively ended the Holy League in 1573 by making a separate peace with the Ottomans, to preserve what remained of its Levantine commerce in the face of pirate raids and skyrocketing insurance rates. None the less, Don Juan reconquered and refortified Tunis in 1573 to defend the furthest frontiers of Spain's North African colonies. The Ottoman response was immediate and overwhelming. With an extraordinary military and diplomatic effort, they retook Tunis in 1574, again signaling their resolve to drive all challengers from the eastern Mediterranean.

Both the Ottoman and the Spanish states had accumulated enormous debts as a result of the campaigns of the early 1570s. Both sides were also pressed by enemies far beyond the Mediterranean – the Ottomans by the Persians and the Spaniards by rebels in the Netherlands. In 1577 the weary combatants agreed to a one-year truce, formalized in 1580 and extended to ten years. The long battle for control of the Mediterranean was effectively over. The sieges of Malta, Cyprus and Tunis, and the Battle of Lepanto had not in and of themselves settled the rivalry, but their cumulative effect was exhausting and enormously expensive. Both sides seemed to recognize that continued, large-scale confrontations in the Mediterranean would not repay the effort and expense involved. They therefore accepted one another's sphere of influence and called it a day.

The withdrawal of the major players from active confrontation left a power vacuum in the Mediterranean. There was still some active Christian campaigning against the Turks until the early seventeenth century, but no one seemed to believe in a general crusade any more. Instead, a 'little war' of corsairing, shifting alliances and ephemeral loyalties replaced the great war of the past. Such activities were hardly new. When they became the dominant features of Mediterranean affairs, however, they exposed the naked reality of self-interest, stripped of its modest covering of religious principles and cultural confrontation. Seventeenth-century statesmen did not invent reasons of state as a motivation for

foreign policy; they merely recognized that it could sometimes stand alone, with no need for further justification.

Mediterranean corsairing flourished from the 1590s to the 1730s. Up to about 1580 one may argue that the raids of the Barbary corsairs and the Knights of Malta were part of the cosmic struggle between Christianity and Islam. Thereafter the situation resembled a free-for-all, characterized, in the words of Alberto Tenenti, by 'systematic plunder transcending religious barriers'.<sup>27</sup> Corsairing became more a business than an honorable quest, only slightly more risky than other forms of trade. The many fortified ports and islands around the Mediterranean provided ideal corporate headquarters for well-established companies of corsairs and brash new start-up operations as well.<sup>28</sup>

Among the established companies the Knights of Malta held first position. Dating from the Crusades and established on Malta since 1530, they enjoyed renewed power and prestige as the Ottomans retreated. The main harbors on the island were ideal for corsairing and nearly impossible to conquer, even with enormous assault forces, as the Great Siege of 1565 had demonstrated. The knights would grow astoundingly wealthy during the great age of corsairing, still pledged to their eternal war against the Muslims and profiting handsomely from it.

The Uskoks of the Dalmatian coast were also old hands at corsairing, having plied their trade at least as early as Roman times. In the late Middle Ages the Christian Uskoks were infuriated by Turkish conquests in Hungary. Protected by the papacy and the Habsburgs, they waged their own eternal war against non-Christians during the sixteenth century. After Lepanto the Ottomans agreed to stay out of the Adriatic and the Venetians agreed to protect Turkish trade there. The Uskoks, unimpressed, continued their attacks and regularly stopped ships to inspect them for Turkish or Jewish goods. Though Venice still controlled much of Dalmatia, the Uskoks easily found allies and trading partners. During the early seventeenth century a large part of the Venetian fleet was tied down fighting the Uskoks in the northern Adriatic.

On the Islamic side of the cultural frontier were the Barbary corsairs, established in the early sixteenth century and enjoying renewed vigor in the seventeenth. Local populations along the North African coast collaborated with the corsairs, providing them with havens, protective fortifications and facilities to aid in smuggling and selling stolen goods. Their main overseer, however, was the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans tried from time to time to curb the activities of the Barbary corsairs and tear down their forts. But successive sultans also found the corsairs useful from time to time and had no incentive to wipe them out completely.

In common usage, pirates were free-booters, working for no one but themselves and outside the bounds of law. Privateers were licensed and sponsored by a government and corsairs were an official arm of a state.

Whatever we call them, and whoever sponsored them, their methods – usually called corsairing here – were strikingly similar. Small fleets of light, rapid galleys launched attacks to seize ships, goods and crews to be sold or ransomed. Traditionally, galley fleets relied on slave labor, much of which was obtained through warfare or corsairing. Proceeds from the sale of booty and slaves went to government sponsors, financial backers, religious establishments and the officers and crews on the ships. The Uskoks tithed to their local Catholic parish and the Barbary corsairs gave alms to their local mosques.

In addition to traditional corsairing operations, several new ones were sponsored in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century by Christian states such as Spain, Tuscany, Sicily and Monaco. These states also licensed additional vessels to sail as temporary corsairs under their protection, usually as wartime auxiliaries, but sometimes independently. Among the permanent new enclaves, two were developed as the great period of the sixteenth-century war wound down. In northwest Italy the Grand Dukes of Tuscany operated a fleet against the Muslims in the sixteenth century, but they gave it up in 1574 and sold some of their galleys to the Knights of St Stephen, a crusading order founded by Cosimo II di Medici (1537–74). Though these knights never had the discipline or the prestige of the Knights of Malta, with whom they sometimes collaborated, they styled themselves Christian crusaders and were authorized ‘to seize the ships and goods of any states which were not Roman Catholic’.<sup>29</sup> With their base in Livorno (known as Leghorn to the English), they launched their first assault on Muslim trade and ports in 1564. The sales of booty in Livorno enriched the city and its ducal patrons, just as similar sales enriched the Knights of Malta and the *beys* of Barbary. Merchants and corsairs from northern Europe, especially England and Holland, streamed into Livorno in the late sixteenth century, swelling the population to about 5,000 by 1601.

Nearby Savoy had an official galley fleet that sailed against Muslim shipping. In addition, for a share of the loot, the Dukes of Savoy licensed pirates who settled in Villefranche. The port was very active in the early seventeenth century, because Spain had resumed attacks on the corsairing ports of Barbary and Morocco. With the activities of the Barbary corsairs restricted, the Christian pirates of Livorno and Villefranche sailed in to fill a niche in the market for stolen goods. Like Livorno, Villefranche attracted an international mix of adventurers, including many English pirates and merchants, who made enormous profits from the seizure and sale of booty. Marseilles was another favored port for northerners, where the notorious pirate Danziker held a commission from King Henry IV of France.<sup>30</sup>

Sizeable numbers of English pirates settled in North Africa as well as Italy after 1604, when an Anglo-Spanish peace treaty put privateers out

of work. In response, they simply changed venue and continued preying on Spanish shipping. English pirates had few ships in the Mediterranean at that point, but they were able to seize prizes with swift and heavily armed sailing ships. Once established in Barbary, English pirates could easily find ships and crews for corsairing expeditions. Northern European pirates tended to sail from fall to spring, Barbary pirates favored the summer; combined, they presented a year-round scourge to the shipping of Venice and Spain, in particular. In the summer of 1608 alone Algerian pirates captured 50 vessels off the Valencian coast. The reintroduction of the armed sailing ship to the Mediterranean was one of the most lasting developments of the seventeenth century. After a century of development in the Atlantic and beyond, the most agile of these vessels were well suited to Mediterranean piracy and cheaper to operate. The Grand Dukes of Tuscany bought sailing ships in 1602, and there are reports of numerous raids by sailing ships in the eastern Mediterranean in the early seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> Galleys were still in use, of course, but they faced increasing problems of maneuverability as artillery became heavier.

Despite the decline in wholesale crusading, religious differences still infused the relations between pirates and their prey in the seventeenth century. One interesting example concerned the Moriscos of Spain, converted former Muslims whom the government had long regarded with suspicion. In 1609, having abandoned hope of assimilating Moriscos into Christian society and alarmed by evidence of their collusion with the Ottomans, the government expelled upwards of 150,000 of them. Many ended up in corsairing communities in Morocco and the Barbary states, raiding Spanish shipping. Though Morocco borders the Atlantic rather than the Mediterranean, the pirates of Salé (the "Salley Rovers") were important additions to the world of seventeenth-century corsairing.

The balance sheet of corsairing in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century has only begun to be estimated. Peter Earle thinks it was substantial in the seventeenth century, with more than 100 armed ships a year sailing out solely to attack and take prizes. Trade continued despite their depredations and merchants were rarely held long if they were captured, because they were worth more as merchants than as hostages for ransom.<sup>32</sup> Yet the effects on profits overall cannot have been negligible.

The arrival of large numbers of northern European merchants and pirates changed the character of Mediterranean trade and warfare. Their main aim was to gain regular access to the goods on the Levantine trade routes, using any means from forced business exchanges to piracy. While northern pirates lived by force, legitimate merchants were successfully invading Mediterranean markets with bolts of cloth as their only weapons.<sup>33</sup> In the early seventeenth century, merchants from northern Europe negotiated with the Ottomans for trading privileges in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, using bombardment and other military