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The Mediterranean during the Early Modern Age: A Confrontation of Two Worlds — The Hispanic Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire

Guadalupe Carrasco González
(Universidad de Cádiz, Spain)

Abstract: The *Mare Nostrum* was the frontier between the two great monotheistic religions and with the passage of time was similarly the frontier between two empires: the Turkish Empire and the Kingdom of Spain. We shall see through the course of this article how the Northern political structures grew and how other European states gradually came to intervene in the Mediterranean.

Key words: Mediterranean Sea, Islamic world, confrontation, *Morisco*, Ottoman Empire, Hispanic Monarchy, 16-18th centuries.

1. Introduction: The Mediterranean on the Verge of Modernity

In a still narrow world on the brink of rapid expansion, the Mediterranean Sea was a global center. It was the connection between the East and the West and as such, was the space where the expansionist policies of the states situated on its shores met. If we cast ourselves back to the centuries of the medieval era in the Mediterranean, it was above all an environment of open commerce progressively more dominated by the burgeoning European mercantile power of the West. By means of the emerging states of Western Europe and the commencement of Ottoman expansion in the Levant and North Africa, politics and ideology became intertwined. As the medium of commerce coveted by all of Europe, the Mediterranean would likewise become the means by which to gain political and ideological prestige.

The *Mare Nostrum* was also the frontier between the two great monotheistic religions and with the passage of time was similarly the frontier between two empires: the Turkish Empire and the Kingdom of Spain. We shall see through the course of this article how the Northern political structures grew and how other European states gradually came to intervene in the Mediterranean. Concurrently, we shall see how North Africa came to be the setting for the key features of the confrontation between two worlds from the moment that Spain completed the reconquest of Iberia and became a presence at sea. North Africa served as the setting for the struggle between Spain and the Turkish Empire and provided the fundamental scene for the rivalry between religions. Wars and grand battles would give way to simmering conflict represented by the intense activity of corsairs that perpetuated political, economic and ideological conflict in the Mediterranean until well into the 19th century.

Before discussing these events, however, one must bear in mind that the concepts and categories of our modern society are distinct from, and occasionally invalid for, the historic period we are to discuss. For example,

Guadalupe Carrasco Gonzalez, Ph.D. in Early Modern History, University of Cádiz; research areas/interests: foreign relations, trade, Carrera de Indias. E-mail: guadalupe.carrasco@uca.es.

the Battle of Lepanto, a battle in which the Christian Sainted League under the leadership of the Spanish Monarchy defeated the Turkish at sea, has been termed indecisive due to the failure to capitalize on the victory by ensuing operations and because the Turks were able to reconstruct their Navy within a year. This judgment, however, ignores the fact that the results of this victory were other than purely military. The Victory at Lepanto produced prestige for Phillip II of Spain and ensured that the reputation of his monarchy was one of ascendance. The modern observer tends to discredit these aspects of such events as extraneous, but in fact at the time they were the essential features and consequences of the battle. Another example is the importance accorded religion as a unique and separate subject; but it is important to remember that from the late Middle Ages into the Early Modern Era, religion was largely indistinguishable from politics and, what is more, can frequently be viewed as an extension of the policy of the monarch. This reality generated an environment in which religion would be repeatedly used by European monarchs for their own interests or in the defense of their dynasties.

In the mentality of the era, then, religion and politics were not separate spheres at all. By the same token, the mentality of the time even confused the dynasty with its territory; that is to say, one referred to the dynasty rather than the place to discuss the interaction of power. In other words, it was an era during which the prestige of the monarchy was *all important*, more important still than having healthy coffers to sustain it economically. Thus, it is paramount to grasp this mentality, a mentality so opposed to our contemporary consciousness. For Charles V or Phillip II and to a lesser extent for Phillip V, the most fundamental objective was perpetuating the hegemony of their rule. This goal implied much, from maintaining prestige to the attempt to impose, by force if necessary, a social, cultural, ideological and religious model of society.

2. The Origins of Conflict between Islam and Christianity in the Mediterranean

In order to comprehend the antagonism between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean basin after the stabilization of Arab expansion, one must begin at least as early as the 11th Century. The most important economic and political centers of Europe at that time were Italian because it was in Italy that city-state traditions survived from Roman times complete with economic contacts around the distinct parts of the Italian peninsula and as far away as the Eastern Empire in Constantinople. Venice, for example, maintained close contact with Genoa, Pisa and Alexandria. The Italian cities therefore, were the points of contact between Europe and the Muslim world, though their activity pushed Muslims and Muslim trade Southward. The stability of Fatimid Egypt and the weakness of the Abassid Caliphate at Baghdad diverted commerce from India and the Far East towards Egypt and the Red Sea. As a result, commerce with Egypt was of enormous value as much for Muslims as for Christians and neither group had the slightest interest in disturbing that commerce. For this reason, the Crusades initiated in the 11th and 12th centuries by other Europeans were not viewed positively by the Italian city-states. Nonetheless, in the course of the 11th century, Italians obtained commercial colonies along the coasts of the Mediterranean from the Muslim Kingdoms of the Southern Iberian Peninsula to North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean (Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria).

But Italian commercial operations were not the only contact between Western Europeans and the Eastern Mediterranean and Islam. The practice of pilgrimage to Jerusalem grew markedly from the 10th century as a result of the opening of new maritime routes. Muslim governments in Palestine in that century did not view population movements for pilgrimage as entirely negative because the pilgrimages brought with them notable economic benefits. From the beginning of the 11th century, however, Turkish actions and incursions interfered with the

pilgrims and forced the Christians to initiate offensive wars against territory in the hands of Muslims in order to defend the pilgrimage routes. At the same time, the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba in 1031 in the Iberian Peninsula resulted in a series of individually weak separate Muslim states at a moment when new Christian kingdoms were rapidly expanding there. Even though basically an interior matter within the Iberian Peninsula, it was in this way that the Reconquest began and persons from other areas of Europe, particularly French, occasionally participated in it. In the Western Mediterranean, the Muslim world was viewed as a major adversary.

In contrast to the Western Europeans, the Muslim world did not assume a position of commercial competitor, but rather systematically impeded international commerce across the Mediterranean. During the course of the 13th and 14th centuries, westward Turkish expansion began to strangle the routes and centers of trade, especially in the Aegean, for Constantinople and the Black Sea such that Italian and Aragonese merchants were left with only Alexandria as a point of access for Asian market goods and precious commodities.

Another factor to take into account to understand Mediterranean relations at that time is the scarcity of metals for the coining of currency in contemporary Europe. European gold and silver mines were practically exhausted for the methods of the day, but the demand for these metals increased the importance of trade with Africa. By the end of the 14th and 15th centuries, North Africa provided an important source for such metals because European consumer goods were traded, all or in part, for gold. Therefore, to control the trade in gold and access the source of that gold would be one of the objectives of Christian merchants.

A large part of maritime activity close to Africa was caused by corsairs, who became one of the characteristic features of commercial relations in the area. The term “corsairs” is used loosely in reference to the activity of the day; corsair normally refers to an officially-sponsored privateer, but in the case of the Turkish corsairs, it was more a matter of tacit approval and support rather than outright sponsorship. The activity thus hovered somewhere between independent piracy and sponsored Naval activity. This near-piracy, however, in contrast to what one might think, did not block the normal relations between states even though it rendered it impossible for merchants to penetrate further into Africa, leaving them confined to their coastal factory sites.

Towards 1385, Portugal had finished its Reconquest and its adversarial relations with Castile were such that they guaranteed an independent policy. The new Portuguese dynasty (the House of Avis), helped by the mercantile classes, intended to conserve the loyalty of the old nobility that had been displaced from power and ruined by unfavorable agricultural conditions during the period. The simplest means by which to accomplish this conservation of the nobility was via a crusade against the closest Islamic city on the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar: Ceuta.

The interests of Portugal in this enterprise were not solely political, but also economic, especially if one considers that the geographic position of Ceuta was of great strategic as well as commercial value. Not in vain was Ceuta one of the terminus’ of the Saharan caravans supporting European markets with gold. The city was conquered finally in the year 1415, making Portugal as a result the new frontier with Islam in North Africa. After Ceuta, proceeded the conquests of Tangier in 1458, followed by Arcila and Larache further along the African coast of the Strait of Gibraltar (Marcel Bataillon, 1950).

From the 15th century, the Portuguese continued their African expansion along the Atlantic coast (*Salé, Agadir, Safí, Azamor, Mazagán*). The conquest of Ceuta, however, did not produce the desired result. Continuous confrontations with Muslims in the outskirts of the city provoked a diversion of the gold trade towards less conflicted regions. Together with the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the closure of other

commercial routes to the Orient, these circumstances resulted in as change of direction in the foreign policy of Portugal towards the Atlantic. On the Atlantic coast of Africa, the Portuguese searched for a potential terminus and built trading factories that would enable linking their trade with the gold caravans which travelled across the Southern Sahara with Sudanese gold. But the ultimate objective was to reach the Orient itself and the markets in specie that it contained, circumnavigating Africa in order to do so. In any event, the principal goal was to search out sources of gold and specie that would enable the evasion of Turkish and Muslim intermediaries and to some extent also Italian intermediaries, in trade with the Orient.

In Spain, the frontier with Islam stood at *Granada*. *Granada* was effectively the last redoubt of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula. The Kingdom of *Granada* was conquered and annexed to the crown of Castile in 1492. After the conquest, Castilian authorities facilitated the departure of Muslims from the city, but guaranteed to those who chose to stay respect for their language and culture. Hernando de Talavera, named Archbishop of *Granada*, sought to achieve the conversion of the Muslims of *Granada* by means of persuasion and conviction without obliging anyone to change religion against their will. In 1499, however, Hernando de Talavera was replaced by the Archbishop of Toledo, Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, whose possessed a completely distinct vision of what ought to be done with the *Moriscos*[1]. Cisneros engaged a policy of forced conversion for all of the Muslim population of *Granada*, possibly as part of a crown initiative to consolidate some form of unifying power in the Iberian Peninsula after the impetus of a common enemy, the Moors, had been removed. The immediate consequence was the first Rebellion of *Alpujarras* between the years 1499 and 1501.[2] The uprising provoked in the Christian population of the peninsula as well as in their governors a new spirit of religious militancy and a sense of the need to continue the fight against the unbelievers beyond Gibraltar. The fear and insecurity, linked to the sensation that the *Moriscos* were a "fifth column" from the Islamic world of North Africa and the Turk, provided a more than sufficient motive to set about establishing the frontier with Islam on the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar.

Furthermore, the uprising of the *Moriscos* population induced an important clandestine exodus towards the Maghreb (an Arabic-derived term for the North of Africa meaning "place of sunset" or "the west" based on its position relative to Mecca). These emigrants became a group that was to be exceptionally belligerent towards the Christian inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. The knowledge that these émigrés possessed of the coasts and language made them a very real danger. Likewise, the cities in which the émigrés from *Granada* and *Andalucia* settled, such as Tétouan and Tunisia, became important economic centers due to innovations in technology, agriculture, industry and navigation brought by the new arrivals. What is more, these deported persons contributed especially to an escalation of the virulence in corsair activity against the Spanish coasts.

Thus, the necessity for an effective defense of the coast together with political and ideological factors took precedence over whatever other economic or commercial factors existed in the Spanish expansion towards North Africa. The exiles on the other side of the Straits keenly sensed the vulnerability of the Southern Coasts of the Iberian Peninsula to militants from North African Islam. Naturally, we cannot discount commercial motives (control of routes to the interior, fishing, cereals, in addition to metals…) but it seems clear that Spanish interest in

[1] The word *morisco* identifies a Muslim obligated to convert to Christianity and resident within the Kingdom of the Spanish Monarchy. A majority continued to practice Islam in secret.

[2] The rebellion of the *moriscos* as a rejection of the methods used by Cisneros to seek their conversion would provide the ideal excuse for revoking the dispensation of protection provided in the surrender of 1491. Thenceforth, all Muslims would be considered rebels and even the converted *moriscos* would be viewed with suspicion.

the other shore of the Mediterranean contained a certain religious fanaticism that sought to keep the frontier with Islam at the farthest possible distance. The empire's diplomacy would seek to legalize, from a religious viewpoint, the conquest of the Maghreb. This conquest could be legitimized by use of the term "Crusade" for the first years of the Spanish conquests in the region of the far side of the Straits of Gibraltar during the years 1497 to 1516 (Diego Téllez Alarcia, 2000).

At this stage, the Spanish church took particular interest in the fight in Africa. Cardenal Cisneros personally accompanied expeditions to Mazalquivir and Orán.[3] The expedition to Orán was the most important given that it held "the messianic hope of a prophesied end of Islam and conversion to Christianity of all of humanity" (Mercedes García Arenal & Miguel Angel Bunes, 1992, p. 59). The 16th century in this way initiated a clear religious militance on the part of the Spanish monarchy which would cause even more ambitious political plans whose objective would be the halt of the expansion of Turkey. The Spanish Monarchy, therefore, would pass from the confrontation with Portugal over dominion of the Atlantic to the confrontation with the Turkish Empire.

3. Imperial Policy: The Spanish Monarchy and the Turkish Empire in the 16th Century

The Ottoman Empire and the Hapsburg Empire were, in the 16th century, the two largest political units or structures of the Mare Nostrum. These two giant polities depended principally on the Mediterranean and through the course of a considerable period considered it essential to their respective imperial policies. During the progress of the century, however, both empires began to accumulate important interests elsewhere: the Ottomans in the Near East, the Balkans and Persia; and the Hapsburg in the low countries, Germany, the Americas and the annexed Portuguese Empire.

In the third quarter of the 16th century, the role of these two giants of the political and economic life of the Mediterranean world reached its peak; but in the last quarter both began to stagnate politically, fixing their attentions away from the Mediterranean. The conquest of Constantinople by the Turks (1453) demonstrated the effectiveness of the Turkish army and navy. But more importantly, the Turks capitalized on this victory from the ideological point of view by transforming themselves more decisively into the champions of Islam.

The Ottoman frontier progressed along the Southern coast of Europe and across the North of Africa. In Europe, it was the territory of the Hapsburg Empire that suffered directly from the Turkish threat (in 1529 and 1632, the Turks laid siege to Vienna and conquered the kingdom of Hungary, one of the feudal empires). Along the African coast the Turks achieved the support of various religious leaders who recognized them as the current leaders of Islam. This recognition of Islamic leadership caused a change in the conditions under which various enclaves of North Africa made fiscal payments to the Spanish.[4]

The appearance of the Ottomans complicated the problem of Berber "pirates" in the Mediterranean (later to be termed "Barbary Pirates" in English, but the name was based on their ethnic Berber origin) once the pockets of Corsairs were able to count on Turkish assistance. Corsairs such as the Barbarroja brothers (Red Beard) exploited for their own personal benefit the military and political superiority afforded them by a strongly centralized state organized to do away with the weak post-Almoravid states and impose over the divided maghrebian society an

[3] The ultimate objective of the Crusade of Cisneros was to reach the Holy Land and conquer Jerusalem, liberating along the way both the Balkans and Egypt.

[4] During the reign of the Catholic Kings, the expansion in the North of Africa consisted not only of the conquest of specific coasytal enclaves, but also of the creation of a network of protectorates all along the coast of the Maghreb. This policy would be followed by their successors, Charles V and Phillip II.

integrated government with a foreign ruling class. The Turks intended to impose direct control on conquered places and populations by eliminating their remaining ruling dynasties. The danger for the Spanish Monarchy emanated from the will of the Turks to drag down the sovereignty of the Moroccan Kingdom of Fez; as a result, Spanish policy revolved around avoiding an alliance between the Ottoman Empire and Morocco. The Sultan, however, based his imperial legitimacy in his capacity to defend the territory of Islam in whatever location. From 1525 onwards, Algiers became the center of Ottoman authority in the Maghreb and would be the principal base from which the Turks sustained their war against the Spanish Monarchy. The Bey of Algiers furthermore held sovereignty over the Pashas of Tunisia and of Tripoli and as a result was the supreme Ottoman authority in the Western Mediterranean. The prestige of the regency of Algiers was to depend as much on the success of the actions of the corsairs as on the war against Spain.

Far from being the struggle through a religious lens, France at this stage sought to make the declared war between two empires profitable. Contact between the French and the Ottomans commenced in 1525 and produced a Franco-Turkish alliance that added a new feature to the warlike tension in the Mediterranean. The reasons for this novel relationship between a European state and the Turk must be found in the disputes and confrontations that for a number of years simmered between the Hapsburgs and the Valois, between the ruling dynasties of Spain and France respectively, for dominion of Italy and the Mediterranean. News of the disastrous attack by Spain on Algiers in 1541 spread through Europe like wildfire. The damage to Spanish prestige that resulted from the defeat could be exploited by the French and Turkish: the Ottoman fleet even wintered in Toulon after its devastating campaign of 1543 and 1544. In the Iberian Peninsula, the evidence of the failed campaign to take Algiers coupled with the joint French and Turkish movements near the Balearic Islands and the evidence of the alliance was received with great worry. It appeared that these joint maneuvers indicated that the true objective was the invasion of the peninsula itself. This great pressure disappeared, however, with the Peace of Chambray in 1559, the change of the Spanish monarchy and the decisive repulse of the Turks in their siege of Malta in 1565.

During the 16th century, the policy of the Spanish monarchy with respect to the problems arising from the expansion of the Turkish Empire and the resulting issues in the North of Africa was neither decisive nor coherent. Issues associated with African holdings were considered secondary compared with issues within Europe. Spain never seems to have considered seriously the possibility of important territorial acquisitions in the Maghreb. The Spanish monarchy always maintained a policy of limited occupation at determined points of the litoral which for their strategic position and proximity to Corsair ports could neutralize Corsair activity.

Spanish policy was reflected in the situation of the Spanish bases in North Africa. These locations were difficult to maintain and could not supply and support themselves. The hostility of the adjacent Berber tribes and the mounted raids that the Spanish used to secure prizes from the surrounding countryside impeded their long-term maintenance. The life of the soldiers obliged to defend these posts was poor, not only because of the difficulty in obtaining supplies and potable water, but also because of the precariousness of the fortifications. The garrisons lived isolated within the walls of their forts, their connection to the outside world depending on the political will of successive Spanish governments to maintain a Spanish military presence in the Maghreb. Nonetheless, one must take into account the strategic, economic and psychological value of these garrisons in the wider world and as a result, the enhancement to the reputation of the Spanish monarchy that their maintenance implied even in the worst of moments.

In spite of a continuous presence in these North African enclaves, Spain did not have the slightest cultural, linguistic, economic or religious impact on the surrounding territories even though the spirit of the crusades had

motivated the mission and the actions of the garrisons. In their relations with the local populations, the Spanish celebrated their complete lack of knowledge of the local language, of the mentality, of the religion and of the political systems of the region, orienting themselves strictly through their inherited prejudices to put to the sword the "enemy", who centuries earlier had lived intertwined with Spaniards (Mercedes García Arenal & Miguel Angel Bunes, 1992, p. 87). If the North of Africa at that time demonstrated a certain mixture of cultures and civilizations, this fact was due to the exiles, *Andalucians* and *Moriscos*, and the renegades and captives, but never was a direct consequence of the Spanish policy or occupation.

A new rebellion of the *Moriscos* in the *Alpujarras* (Granada, 1568–1570) would not change the perspective of the Spanish monarchy on its Mediterranean and African problems. The causes of the rebellion of the *Moriscos* were strictly internal (crisis in the silk industry, prohibition of the use of their language, style of clothing, manner of bathing, etc.), but the coincidence of the rebellion with the taking of Tunisia by the Turks in 1569 and Cyprus in 1570 revived the sensation of fear and general danger associated with Islam in Spanish society and monarchy. It is this period when the *Moriscos* began to be conceptually viewed as a "Fifth Column", as a group that could facilitate from within a new Muslim invasion of the peninsula. A.C. Hess has asserted that the Morisco rebellion was precisely planned by the Turkish with the object of distracting the attention of Spain from the taking of Cyprus and Tunisia and Malta, though the latter expedition failed (Andrew C. Hess, 1968). It was precisely this Turkish threat to Cyprus, principal Venetian commercial port in the Eastern Mediterranean, which enabled an alliance between Spain and Venice to confront *a priori* the Ottoman Empire. Even the name of the pact enables the understanding of Phillip II's chief goals: it was called the Sainted League (*Liga Santa*) or the "Perpetual League against the Turk and their Tributary Kingdoms of Algiers, Tunisia and Tripoli" demonstrating the importance to the king of the Turkish danger on the far side of the Mediterranean, understandable given the proximity of North Africa to the coast of Spain. The final result of the alliance was the triumph against the Turkish at the Battle of Lepanto (7th of October, 1571). The rapid recovery of the Turkish Imperial navy after Lepanto and the empire's successive expansion in the 1570s, however, consolidating its dominion over the Maghreb, would demonstrate to Phillip II the impossibility of maintaining open two fronts at the same time: the Low Countries (Flanders) and the Mediterranean.

During these same years, Morocco would defeat the Portuguese close to *Alcazarquivir* (1578). The Portuguese Monarch, Don Sebastian, would die in the battle without leaving a descendant. The succession of the Portuguese thrown fell to his uncle, Phillip II, who inherited Portugal and its maritime empire. This new territorial configuration for the Spanish monarchy and the multiplication of battle fronts now definitively transformed the Mediterranean and African issues into secondary matters. Thereafter, only in response to the measure in which Islam posed a threat to the coasts or the Indies fleets would Spain intervene. Flanders and the Indies, from 1580 onwards, would be the political objective of Spain. This is the "turn to the North" of Spain's foreign policy, according to Braudel's definition, and the stabilization of the Turko-Spanish frontier to which M. Bunes refers.

The 1580s thus signaled the temporary close of hostilities between the Spanish monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. The delicate political and economic situation that ensued both for the Spanish and Ottoman Empires actually produced a warming of political relations on both sides. Nonetheless, when the Turkish Empire extracted itself from its wars in Persia, it became once again the key threat to the Western Mediterranean. At this stage and in the succeeding decades, the Ottomans would show the great utility of the conspiracies of their network of secret

agents left in the West.[5]

For the Spanish, the survival of the Spanish interest in the Maghreb would still produce fruit during the reign of Phillip III (1598-1621), which began with an uncommon interest in Africa, in the search for rapid and prestigious economic campaigns. This era produced the Spanish attacks on Algiers (1601) and Tunisia (1609 and 1612), the cession of Larache (1610) and the conquest of Mehdya (1614). That is to say, Spanish interest in Africa would outlive its treaties with the Turkish Empire.

4. Corsairs in the Mediterranean as Residual Conflict: An Assymetric Struggle

Produced as a result of the Turkish danger, the African garrisons would henceforth be considered bases from which to control the threat of privateers. The treaties signed with Istanbul left the Mediterranean at the mercy of the corsairs. The *Mare Nostrum* now was not the setting for grand battles; instead the danger to Spanish and Italian coasts would come from growing corsair activity in the Western Mediterranean. From both shores and both empires such activity sprang up permitting the specialization of particular cities in its practice. From the Spanish side came famous corsairs from Cartagena, Valencia and the Balearic Islands, while from the Turkish side they emerged in Algiers, Tunisia, and Tripoli. The latter would recreate themselves as autonomous states of the Ottoman Empire even though politically still integrated within it. These were the so-called *Regencies*, whose fundamental activity was precisely that of the corsair. In the final years of the 16th and during the first half of the 17th centuries, the Mediterranean would support French, English, and Dutch corsairs as well who would travel from their home waters in order to practice their trade. It is possible to encounter instances of Dutch corsairs participating with the Turks in actions against territories of the Spanish monarchy. It is likewise possible to assert the existence of a limited collaboration between Algiers and English corsairs who now not only attacked the American interests of the Spanish monarchy, but also began to interfere with and impede the communications between Spain and her African garrisons (Beatriz Alonso Acero, 2005, pp. 21–22).

From this stage, the policy of Spanish monarchs in the Mediterranean had for its object the fight against corsairs. The monarchy maintained a certain stability in its Southern frontier without searching for any added benefit besides the free flow of maritime commerce. And the principal objective was Algiers, because it was there from which proceeded the greatest danger, at least in accordance with the Spanish appreciation of the situation. The *Morisco* population exiled after the expulsions of 1609–1614 settled particularly in Algiers, Tunisia and Morocco. The *Moriscos* were received without undue problems in these places as much out of compassion as for Islamic solidarity, and because they required soldiers. *Moriscos* were not always so well received, depending on the level of religious fervor of the area of North Africa to which they fled, and there are widely varied estimates of the fate of the various waves of refugees from Spain, some of whom were treated as apostates. As with the prior exodus, however, the *Moriscos* in the refugee wave of the early 17th century contributed greatly to the

[5] In the Turko-Spanish confrontation it is important to note the extra-official diplomacy that took place, that is to say the espionage involving spies and secret agents, recruited from the renegades, ex-captives, mercenaries and adventurers in the corsair privateers bases and in Istanbul. These elements were charged with organizing plots, schemes and sabotages of infrastructure of the enemy, or with providing information about the next target of the corsairs or bribing senior officials… This espionage service eventually became quite effective, especially in the 1560s and 1570s (sabotage at a munitions dump in Istanbul in 1574, notification of the movements of the Sultan's fleet, an attempt to assassinate Eulji Ali, bey of Algiers). For information on the Intelligence Service created by Phillip II, see: Carlos J. Carnicer García, y Javier Marcos Rivas, *Sebastián de Arbizu. Espía de Felipe II*. (Madrid, 1998) y David Garcia Hernan, "Algunas notas sobre el servicio de información de la Monarquía Católica en tiempos de Felipe II", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie IV, Historia Moderna*, 7, 1994, pp. 245–257.

modernization of the societies which received them. This was evident from the changes in agriculture, commerce and industry; but above all, it was as privateers that they showed their knowledge of new armaments and forms of warfare. The corsairs organized in these cities would be specifically anti-Spanish. Evidence of this may be found in the city of Salé, on the Moroccan coast, which was converted into the archetype of the corsair city thanks to the surprising capacity for organization of the *Moriscos* who established themselves there, exiles from the city of Hornachos in Extremadura, Western Spain.

In the 17th century, the Mediterranean would suffer also through a demographic crisis derived from poor harvests and successive plagues. The decay of industry would be felt especially in Italy, which lost successive markets to Flemish industry and the English "New Draperies". Bankers ruined by their excessive dependence on the Spanish Monarchy were supplanted by the Dutch and the English. The Mediterranean receded economically compared with the European cities of the North Atlantic coast. Amsterdam and London would come to occupy the place of Venice and Genoa. Nonetheless, the emerging economic powers of Holland and England did not lose sight of the Mediterranean. The *Mare Nostrum* continued to be an attractive market and fleets of English and Dutch ships would ply its waters to redistribute the riches of India and the Americas.

Now the residual conflict in the Mediterranean would become a serious problem for commerce. Some states, such as the France of Louis XIV, viewed stability as the only means by which to economically develop its Mediterranean coast. The necessity of maintaining a balance of powers to contribute to this stability was accepted. But together with this idea, France engaged in a series of actions to create areas of dominion in the Maghreb.

Ships of the various European commercial ventures ploughed the Mediterranean in severe competition. The benefits of Mediterranean trade were many. The English Levant Company grew consistently from founding in 1581 thanks precisely to this commerce, which in their case consisted of trade in raw materials for manufactured goods, coins, and footholds. The losses caused by corsairs to English trade were considerable, (in seven years, the number of English captives went from 450 to 1000, despite probably notable death rates) (Alfred C. Wood, 1958). Faced with this situation, English companies solicited protection of a squadron of the Royal Navy from parliament. The measure authorizing an English fleet to patrol the Mediterranean, in principal temporary, became habitual. The vast distance that separated England from the setting of trade of the Levant Company precipitated the need for advanced naval bases in the Mediterranean from which the squadron could draw water and supplies. Tangier, situated on the Strait of Gibraltar and obtained as part of the estate of the Portuguese Princess Catalina de Braganza, was a probable solution. However, despite strenuous efforts to improve its condition as a naval base, Tangier was finally abandoned in 1684. There were also a series of petitions to the Spanish monarchy to grant warehouses and provisioning zones in Gibraltar and Minorca. These petitions were rejected in the case of Gibraltar, but authorized in the case of Minorca. In any event, England had but to await the Treaty of Utrecht (1713–1714) in order to establish bases without the acquiescence of the Spanish crown.[6]

Even though the English maintained a fleet in the Mediterranean to defend their merchants from the depredations of the corsairs, the official English policy, as with the Dutch, would be to attempt to arrive at some agreement with the Muslim authorities. Dutch and English goods would, for a change, not be the corsair objective, but rather the privateers would seek naval arms and ammunition. The traffic in naval arms and ammunition became habitual between the North and South shores of the Mediterranean. This trade, however, would be

[6] The Treaty of Utrecht sanctioned the loss of Gibraltar and the Island of Minorca from Spain. Both territories were ceded to England.

constrained by the laws of European Mediterranean states, particularly the laws of Spain. It was a very difficult trade to eradicate, however, given the sheer number and dispersal of Dutch and English commercial representatives. In the Iberian Peninsula itself, the propensity for illegal commerce of all types through certain ports was converted into traffic in arms by the English and Dutch merchantmen visiting the ports of *Cádiz* and *Málaga* (Guadalupe Carrasco González, 1997).

5. The 18th Century, Reconquest and Political Pacts

From the start of the 18th century, the general tendency among the European states was to arrive at agreements that would protect their commercial interests. Corsairs, though greatly diminished by this period, still occasioned serious problems for maritime Europe. Europe would carry out isolated actions against the privateers states even though the results of such attacks were limited. Once these instances ended, the corsairs simply went back to looking for prisoners to capture and ransom. Various Spanish governments (that of the Marquis of Ensenada, for example) proposed to end the corsair problem by creating a unified European front against the corsair states. This was, however, difficult to accomplish given that Spain was by this point considered a secondary power. Moreover, the European policy was to depend on accords with those Muslim governments disposed to offer them. Portugal, Sweden, Holland and the United States signed treaties with Morocco and the Regencies throughout the 18th century and in the first years of the 19th. These nations, at least at first, preferred to pay a tax or shower with gifts the Algerian Deys in order that their merchantmen were respected.

In 18th century Spain, change of dynasty did not result in change of Mediterranean policy. Policy continued along the same lines as it had under the Hapsburgs. The territorial losses along the North African coast in the final years of the 17th century precipitated by the Wars of the Spanish Succession spelled practically the total disappearance of Spain from the Algerian coast. All that remained were the city-enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and a few minor garrisons along the Moroccan coast. Repetitive Muslim attacks on these garrisons demonstrated their manifest vulnerability. The Spanish government, however, did not revise its garrison strategy in order to make it more viable. On the contrary, it opted to return to the situation that had existed prior to the wars of succession and reconquer the lost citadels of *Orán* and *Mazalquivir.* It is only possible to regard such a desperate measure of reconquest as an operation of prestige before both the European and Muslim worlds. The Maghreb at this time had lost much of its commercial value due to the advent of successful and reliable high-seas trade routes that reduced time and cost for merchants, effectively removing the need for overland trade through the Islamic world. Simultaneously, centuries of focus on corsair and brigand activity may have contributed to the stunting of the development of other industries in North Africa. Spain reverted in this manner to its oldest tradition of Mediterranean policy: the spirit of the crusade. In 1732, Spain would recover *Orán* and *Mazalquivir* on the Algerian coast.

Having recovered its African citadels, Spain would apply a familiar policy to Morocco, Algiers, and the Corsair “republics”. Treaties of peace arrived rather late. In the case of Morocco, relations would pass through a series of accords assuring the sovereignty of Spanish garrisons while liberalizing trade in cereals. However, Spanish society was not prepared either to comprehend these pacts with the religious enemy or to understand the concessions that the agreements obligated Spanish authorities to make. The first negotiations with Morocco were initiated in 1765 with a treaty brought to completion and signed by 1767. Despite this fact, the conditions of peace would not be completely satisfactory. The Moroccan Sultan did concede on questions of commerce and navigation,

but would not renunciate his claim to unify his dominions and therefore refused to accept Spanish sovereignty over its garrisons in North Africa. New Moroccan aggression against these citadels delayed the signing of the treaty of peace, friendship, navigation and commerce until 1799.

Tension between Spain and Algiers was concurrently increasing and Spanish aggression against the Regency continued throughout the 18th century. It would not be until the 1780s that relations with Algiers would change due to the diplomatic accords signed with the Turkish Empire. In 1782, a treaty of peace was signed with Turkey which carried with it freedom of commerce with the Levant. But the corsairs refused to respect the truce signed with Istanbul because of what it meant for them and exercised their autonomy to ignore it. It would be necessary instead to add another effort along the same lines, but with other European states. With the help of merchants and the payment of some stringent indemnities, the authorities of Tunisia finally acquiesced and signed in 1791. With Algiers, however, the issue became more complicated because merchants from Marseille, established already in the city, saw peace with Spain as a danger to their commercial interests. Spanish Naval expeditions against Algiers finally obliged the Dey to sign a treaty of peace with Spain similar to that signed earlier with France. The intent of these Spanish confrontations with Algiers was the freedom of all Spanish captives (some 25,000). The conditions of the treaty demanded, however, that Spain abandon *Orán* and *Mazalquivir* as a means by which "to maintain perpetual peace". Both port cities promptly fell into the hands of the French who occupied them from 1831 until the independence of Algeria in 1963.

6. The Summation of the Confrontation between Spain and the Turkish Empire in the Mediterranean.

If we take stock of the Spanish policy and its consequences in the Mediterranean, we must immediately conclude that given that the territorial interests gained were minor, the balance would be negative; and this is exactly the opinion of Braudel. Having so stated, however, it is useful to recall that during the 16th and 17th centuries, and to a lesser extent the 18th century, the Mediterranean was the principal front of dispute between two great powers: the Spanish Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. This confrontation ought to be envisaged from a wide perspective because in the context of this conflict, it was not territorial aspirations that were paramount, but rather it was questions of religion, economics, politics and prestige intertwined. If the territorial balance for Spain may be considered to be negative due to the aggressive vitality of the Turkish imperial expansion in the Mediterranean, it is likewise possible to discover various positive consequences in the Mediterranean and African policies of Spain.

It was in part as a result of Spanish policy that the newly formed states of the Maghreb avoided falling directly under Turkish sovereignty in such a way that during a lengthy period some of them maintained a nominal autonomy, or in the case of Morocco, practically complete autonomy. The autonomy of the North African states protected Spain from the direct power of the Ottomans; thus, it was this policy enabling autonomy that in fact protected the Spanish coast.

Another positive consequence of Spanish imperial policy was that it permitted the financing of the policy of prestige and reputation through prolonged use of the concept of "Reconquest". Spain persisted in employing the concept of crusade, as much in pursuit of prestige as of finances (contributions of the church to the monarchy, ecclesiastical donations, etc.).

Furthermore, the value of the garrisons must not be left aside either. These garrisons in North Africa

maintained an undeniable strategic, economic, and even psychological interest. The improved reputation gained maintaining these bases was equally important. The fact that the crown maintained them, even at elevated levels of expense during the worst of moments, indicates the relevance that they continued to have.

Spanish Mediterranean policy fundamentally defined two aspects of the dominion: the Western Mediterranean where the Spaniards at least until the 17th century maintained superiority over the Turks and the Berber Corsairs, and the Eastern Mediterranean dominated by the Sublime Port (Ottoman Turkey).

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