

Spanish naval power, 1589–1665

Reconstruction and defeat

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INTRODUCTION

The rise and fall of Spanish naval power

FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE ATLANTIC

Spain's dramatic rise to a formidable naval power in the later sixteenth century was triggered by a series of political developments which, for decades to come, would continue to affect the whole of Western Europe and beyond. In 1559 the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis finally brought to an end half a century of warfare between the Habsburgs and the Valois, the ruling dynasties of Spain and France, the two most powerful monarchies in Europe. The Treaty would prove to be enduring and the power of the French crown soon collapsed with the enthronement, in quick succession, of a series of sickly youths. Philip II, in these first years of his reign, was therefore freed from engagements with the French, hitherto Spain's main military commitment. He was soon persuaded to turn his attention elsewhere, to the Mediterranean. After decades of warfare on land, on the borders of France and in Italy, Spain was about to focus on the sea.

Since the 1520s the dominant naval power in the Mediterranean had been the expansionist forces of Islam: the Ottoman Turks and their allies, the corsairs of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. The unpredictable sailings of the Turkish fleet generated terror in the coastal populations of Spain and its Mediterranean possessions: Sicily, Naples, Sardinia and the African fortresses. The Turks might seize the Balearics or even invade the peninsula itself, supported by an uprising of the Moriscos, Spain's unassimilated Muslims. The North African corsairs frequently launched attacks on the peninsula, and constantly endangered the sea lanes that connected it to the Italian possessions, including the granary of Sicily. Until Philip II's accession, Spain had done little to prevent these naval attacks of the infidel. Although Philip's predecessor, Charles V, saw himself as the champion of Christendom against Islam, his Spanish subjects had criticized his neglect of the enemy across the Straits. But now Philip was moving in that direction. In June 1559, just two months after the peace with France, Philip was goaded by his new viceroy in Sicily, the duke of Medinaceli, to launch an attack on Tunis.¹ In

¹ M. Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire. Charles V, Philip II and Habsburg Authority, 1551-1559* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 298-305.

Introduction

May 1560 it ended in disaster. Some fifty galleys, mostly of the Monarchy's Italian squadrons, captured the isle of Djerba that guarded the approaches to Tunis. But they were soon overwhelmed by the arrival of a Turkish relief fleet.

It was the fiasco at Djerba that persuaded Philip that a more powerful fleet was essential for the protection of Spain's Mediterranean possessions. An intensive programme of galley building was soon under way in Barcelona, Naples and Messina. One consequence was the capture in 1564 of Peñón de los Vélez, a corsair base situated between Tangier and Melilla. It had been achieved by a force of some ninety galleys, predominantly Spanish. Seven years later the Turkish galley fleet was destroyed at Lepanto by the combined forces of the Holy League of Venice, the papacy, and Spain – its substantial contribution of galleys, chiefly its Italian squadrons, proved decisive. Spain had become one of the principal naval powers in the Mediterranean. By 1574 Philip II had built up a fleet of some 150 galleys.² But Lepanto was not the end of the Turkish menace. Just three years later a revived Turkish fleet of over 200 galleys recaptured the Spanish fortress of La Goleta, off Tunis.

Spain's confrontation with the Ottoman Turks began to recede in the late 1570s, culminating in the formal treaties of the 80s. Both sides were turning to enemies elsewhere, enemies who were not infidel. The Turks withdrew eastwards to face the Persians. The Spanish withdrew from the Mediterranean (though never completely – some galley squadrons had to be retained for the defence of the Italian possessions) to concentrate on the rising Protestant threat from the north. Philip II in the 1570s was already turning to the Atlantic.

The naval campaigns in the Mediterranean had been a war of galleys. Spain's switch to the Atlantic would require a very different type of ship. Galleys in the Mediterranean were highly effective assault craft for close inshore fighting and amphibious operations.³ But on Atlantic coasts, the velocity of tidal currents made control of oared galleys difficult. And on the high sea, galleys with narrow hulls lying low in the water could not cope with the gales and towering waves of the Atlantic. For those conditions only roundships would do: galleons or other large vessels with decks well above the water-line. In the 1580s Spain's north coast therefore became a centre for building galleons. At the same time La Coruña was established as a new strategic naval station on the north-west tip of the peninsula. Spain's shift to large sailing ships for Atlantic warfare would generate unprecedented demands for cannon, gunners and seamen. It would also call for a much

² I. A. A. Thompson, *War and Society in Habsburg Spain* (Aldershot and Brookfield, 1992), Essay 1, pp. 13–21.

³ J. F. Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1974).

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more elaborate system of naval administration to organize the greater volume of supply requirements.⁴

One compelling reason for Philip II's change to Atlantic priorities was the growing need to defend Spain's American empire. Communications with the Indies had to be maintained, the trading monopoly preserved, and foreign settlers kept out of a vast region exclusively reserved for Castile. All of this was increasingly threatened by the incursions of northern Europeans, arriving in the Caribbean in large, heavily armed sailing ships. Already in the 1520s and 30s French corsairs had attacked Santo Domingo and Havana. From the 1560s English marauders inflicted widespread destruction. Hawkins plundered the Caribbean and Drake roamed freely, raiding the Caribbean and passing through the Magellan Straits to attack the coasts of Chile and Peru. Spain was forced to develop a defensive strategy. The valuable cargoes crossing the Atlantic in both directions must be protected, above all the precious shipments of silver produced in the mines of Mexico and Peru that had become an increasingly important part of the crown's revenues. Spain needed ships that could confront the armed ocean-going vessels of the northern interlopers. In 1521 armed merchantmen were first introduced to convoy merchant shipping sailing from Seville to the Caribbean. By 1564 an elaborate convoy system had developed into a form that would persist throughout the seventeenth century. Every year two fleets were scheduled to sail from Spain for the Indies. In April shipping sailed from Andalusia to New Spain and Honduras, accompanied by an escort of two heavily armed galleons, the Armada of New Spain. Later, in August, a second fleet of merchantmen sailed from the river of Seville for the Panamanian isthmus, escorted by a variable number of galleons, the Armada of Tierra Firme. But the main protection was provided by the galleons of what from 1576 came to be called the *Armada de la Guardia de la Carrera de las Indias* (armada for the protection of the Indies route). It normally sailed for the Panamanian isthmus, to collect the silver produce of the great Peruvian mine of Potosí. These were Spain's largest galleons, carrying heavy artillery and the silver itself. They were funded by Seville's merchants who paid the *avería*, a percentage of the value of the merchandise they shipped. The typical size of this main Indies escort fleet was eight galleons and three auxiliary *pataches* (small support craft for communications) with a specified complement of 1,100 seamen and 908 soldiers.⁵ After wintering, the galleons sailed for Havana to rendezvous with the fleet returning from New Spain with cargoes of cochineal, hides, and silver from the Zacatecas mines. The plan was for a joint sailing of all ships through the Bahamas channel before the onset of the hurricane season. Under armed escort, the combined fleet would arrive in Spain in

⁴ I. A. A. Thompson, 'The Spanish Armada: Naval Warfare between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic', *England, Spain and the Gran Armada 1585-1604*, ed. M. Rodríguez-Salgado and S. Adams (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 70-94.

⁵ Archivo General de Simancas, *sección Varios: Galeras, legajo 8, Asiento . . . que los señores . . . del Consejo Real de las Indias tomaron con Adriano de Legaso* (Madrid, 1627).

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the autumn. This system proved so effective that Spain's bullion shipments would be captured only twice in 130 years.

From 1580 further naval protection for Potosí's silver was introduced in response to Drake's raids on the coasts of Chile and Peru. The *Armada del Mar del Sur* was established to patrol the entire Pacific coast from Tierra del Fuego to the isthmus. Based at Callao, the port of Lima, its principal task was to secure the shipment of silver from Potosí's coastal outlet at Arica to Panama, the first stage of the long transport to Spain. This small armada, consisting of two large galleons and up to four smaller roundships, would operate continuously into the eighteenth century.

But the northern pirates appeared in growing numbers. In an effort to deter them, the Council of the Indies in 1595 advised the creation of a permanent unit in the Caribbean.⁶ The idea was revived from time to time. One of the functions of this *Armada de Barlovento* ('windward armada') was to keep heresy out of the Indies. If the English were allowed to settle in Virginia, their 'pernicious seed' would spread. Virginia would provide them with a base to attack Spain's shipping in the Bahamas channel, and access overland to Florida and New Spain. If Protestants expanded their settlements they would encounter Spaniards and interbreeding would result. That progressive 'cancer' could be checked only by naval force, the proposed armada.⁷ These galleons would eventually be built, but their operation was intermittent.

The Dutch Revolt was another cause of Spain's new preoccupation with Atlantic naval strategy. In April 1572 the Sea Beggars' capture of the ports of Brill and Flushing introduced a maritime dimension into Philip II's struggle to crush his rebellious subjects in the Netherlands. The sea lanes from northern Spain to the Low Countries were disrupted. Philip II's response was the Armada of Flanders, whose mission was to attack rebel Dutch fishing fleets and merchantmen in the North Sea, and to transport infantry and subsidies to the Flanders battle zone. Based at Dunkirk and funded by Castile's tax-payers, its administrators and commanders were Spaniards, the captains and crews Flemings. Swift pursuit vessels were needed here, capable of operating in the shallow waters around the Flemish coast. A new design, the frigate, satisfied these requirements and, worked by skilled crews, supplied the Monarchy with a formidable naval attack unit.⁸ But the revolt dragged on and the Dutch quickly became the greatest threat to the Monarchy's Indies, East and West.

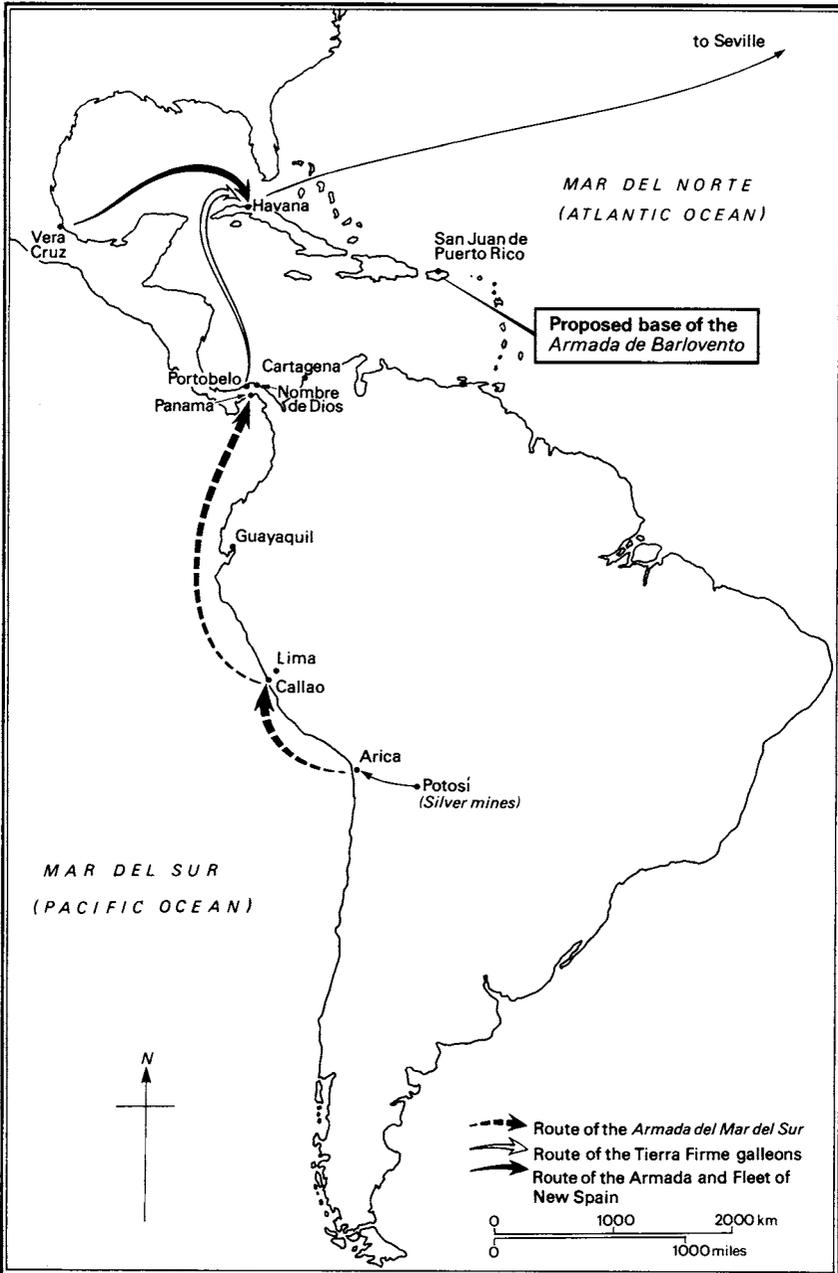
Philip II's conquest of Portugal, a land with a long tradition of shipbuilding and ocean voyages, was a further stimulus for the rise of Spanish naval power in the Atlantic. When Lisbon fell in 1580, Spain acquired a superb naval base on the

⁶ IG 743, *documento* 144, Juan de Ibarra, secretary, *Consejo de Indias*, to Philip II, 27 October 1595; *ibid.*, *documento* 214, *consulta*, *Junta de Hacienda de Indias*, 22 February 1596 indicates the king's acceptance of the proposal.

⁷ IG 1867, JGI, 7 September 1609.

⁸ R. A. Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders* (Cambridge, 1992).

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Map 2 Armadas in the Indies

Introduction

Atlantic seaboard of the Iberian peninsula. Naturally protected by the narrow approach at the mouth of the Tagus and capable of receiving the largest ships, Lisbon soon became a strategic centre for the Monarchy's naval operations. It was from Lisbon that the naval expedition under the command of the first marquis of Santa Cruz set out to conquer the Azores. There the fleet of the Portuguese pretender, Dom António, mostly consisting of French vessels, was defeated. The nucleus of Spain's war-fleet had been the eleven heavily armed Portuguese galleons captured in the annexation; Castile did not yet possess such heavy battleships. The same Portuguese galleons would soon provide the core of the Great Armada of 1588. But already in the early 1580s, the successful action in the Azores showed that Spain was a rising Atlantic naval power.

The annexation of Portugal had given Spain an extensive Atlantic coastline that made it more vulnerable to attack. There was now a greater need of warships for coastal defence. A changed perception of Spain was evident in the speech to the *Cortes*, Castile's parliament, by Jerónimo de Salamanca, the delegate of Burgos. He said Spain 'can be considered almost as an island. Except for the Pyrenean region, all the rest borders on the sea . . . It is more important to attend to the defence of the maritime part of these kingdoms.'⁹

More than anything else, it was the experience of war against England in the later 1580s that turned Spain into an established Atlantic naval power with a large and permanent war-fleet. As before in the Mediterranean, it was a naval disaster – the failure of the Great Armada sent against Elizabeth – that motivated Philip II to build up a powerful fleet. 1588 had a profound effect, and for years after the causes of defeat were still being analysed. Pedro López de Soto, shipbuilder and inspector of the fleet in Lisbon, warned Philip that a new type of armada was essential to catch up with English developments. The superiority of the enemy 'consists solely in the advantages of their ships, their swiftness and good design; also their fine artillery and gunners. These are the main things we have to correct in our armada.'¹⁰ For generations the events of 1588 would continue to haunt Spain's ministers and naval commanders. Whenever things were going badly on the sea, they complained that the lessons of 1588 had not been learned. In 1620, at the end of Philip III's reign, Diego Brochero, member of the Council of War and a former admiral, regretted that Spain was still failing 'to adapt to the practices of the English and the Dutch because, although they are men of much less valour than the Spanish, they have been victorious over Your Majesty's armadas'. The enemy's main goal in battle was to build ships 'so swift that they gain the weather-gage and therefore victory'. That was exactly what had happened in 1588 'when a squadron of small, swift ships with

⁹ *Actas*, xv, p. 66.

¹⁰ GA 405/142, Pedro López de Soto to Philip II, 23 September 1594, Lisbon. The record shows that one of his new smaller galleons, the *Espíritu Santo*, was brought into Philip II's high-seas fleet of 1597; C. Fernández Duro, *Armada española desde la unión de los reinos de Castilla y de Aragón*, vol. III (Madrid, 1897), p. 162.

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few men destroyed the most powerful armada that has ever been seen. And this will always happen if Your Majesty does not change the form the armada has had until now.¹¹ When in Philip IV's reign the Monarchy's naval forces suffered crushing defeat by the Dutch at the battle of the Downs (1639), one of the admirals could not help recalling 1588. Francisco Feixó de Sotomayor surrendered to the Dutch and wrote letters from prison in The Hague analysing this second black milestone in Spanish naval history. He said the Dutch ships were 'better sailers' and 'could do with ours whatever they wanted, just as in 1588 when Spain's powerful armada was destroyed by a weaker enemy . . . and this will always happen when an armada of bulky galleons enters the Channel . . . we risk losses in those narrows and banks because our vessels draw more water'.¹² For this naval commander it was largely a repeat performance of 1588: again the Channel, again sluggish galleons, and again defeat.

The immediate effects of the defeat of 1588 were grief and demoralization. Jerónimo de Sepúlveda, one of the Escorial's Hieronymite monks, recorded that the disaster was 'worthy to be wept over for ever . . . because it lost us respect and the good reputation among warlike people which we used to have. The feeling it caused in all of Spain was extraordinary . . . Almost the entire country went into mourning. People talked about nothing else.'¹³ When, also in the Escorial, Philip II received the news of the fate of his armada, the reaction long attributed to him was one of Stoic composure. The king was alleged to have responded: 'I sent my fleet against men, not against the wind and the waves.' This has recently been exposed as a three-hundred-year-old myth. Instead Philip was deeply moved by the disaster. In a secret note to his secretary, Mateo Vázquez, he said he wanted to die and that the terrible misfortune was God's punishment for sins; only another miracle could bring Spain a remedy.¹⁴

Yet Philip quickly overcame his anguish and despair; he began to prepare for the resumption of war against England. He appointed Juan de Cardona of the Council of War to rehabilitate the armada, sending him to Santander, where most of the surviving ships had returned. His instructions were to organize repairs, treat the sick, provide victuals and munitions so that the remnants of the armada were 'put in order for sailing and fighting'.¹⁵ Still more had to be done. Extensive reconstruction was essential to replace the destroyed ships. Very large sums of money would be needed. To secure it Philip convoked the *Cortes*. In his opening address of 30 September 1588 Philip declared that the enterprise of England had been for 'the service of God, the well-being and security of these kingdoms, the

¹¹ GA 1305, *consulta, Junta del Refuerzo y Provisión de la Armada y Galeras*, 30 October 1620, Madrid.

¹² Francisco Feixó to unnamed correspondent, 15 November 1639, The Hague; Fernández Duro, *Armada española*, vol. IV, pp. 227–35.

¹³ Quoted in C. Martin and G. Parker, *The Spanish Armada* (London, 1988), p. 260.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁵ BN MS 2058, f. 13, 'Copia de título que llevó D. Juan de Cardona'.

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Indies, and the shipping that arrives from there'. The huge cost of that armada – some 10 million ducats – had exhausted the treasury, yet he now asked for a similar sum to be granted by the *Cortes*.¹⁶ The *procuradores*, delegates of the oligarchies of the eighteen cities represented in the *Cortes*, doubted that Castile could afford it. But in the subsequent months of debate strong support was voiced. Granada's delegates stressed the importance of conserving transatlantic commerce, 'the principal support of these kingdoms', and of preventing the English 'sowing their heresies in the Indies'.¹⁷ The *procuradores* of Toledo similarly warned that the English were a dangerous threat to the Indies. 'Everything possible must be done . . . to defeat them, repair the last loss and restore the reputation of our nation.'¹⁸ Funds must be found. Like the king, they saw the recent defeat not as the end but as a setback in a continuing struggle. The envisaged final victory would bring lasting security to Spain's coasts, preventing any repeat of Drake's audacious attack on Cadiz, and an end to English support of the Dutch Revolt.

The *Cortes* eventually conceded 8 million ducats over six years, payable from the end of 1590. This was the origin of the *millones* which became a renewable revenue for funding a permanent Atlantic fleet, the *Armada del Mar Océano*. The subsidy was raised in Castile's cities by a universal tax on basic foodstuffs, an onerous imposition resented by rich and poor alike. Its collection would be fraught with difficulty.¹⁹

The pressing matter of Spain's role in the Atlantic was at the same time being debated in the Council of the Indies. There too there were calls for a powerful and permanent Atlantic armada to secure the Indies, protect Spain's coasts and transatlantic commerce, and 'harass our enemies, depriving England, Zealand and Holland of the commerce that is their foundation'. The Council wanted a massive new fleet of sixty ships manned by 5,000 seamen and 11,000 soldiers. Its estimated cost of 1.5 million ducats a year was close to what the *Cortes* was conceding. But the Council suggested different ways for raising the funds: the sale of offices in the Indies, contributions from the merchants of Seville, and savings from abolished garrisons in the Indies rendered redundant by the new armada.²⁰ The Council soon deposited 130,000 ducats in a special chest.²¹ But the main funding would come from the *millones*.

In December 1594 the first officials of the new fleet were appointed: Bernabé de Pedroso, purveyor general; Pedro de Igueldo, purser; and Felipe de Porres, accountant of munitions. And Diego Brochero was recalled from active service in

¹⁶ *Actas*, x, pp. 240–3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 268–9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 422–3.

¹⁹ A. Lovett, 'The Vote of the *Millones*, 1590', *Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), 1–20.

²⁰ FN 23/66/448–50, *consulta Consejo de Indias*, 18 June 1591.

²¹ IG 742, *documento* 168, *consulta, Consejo de Indias*, 4 June 1594; *ibid.*, *documento* 168b, Philip II to President of the *Casa de la Contratación*, 25 August 1593, Escorial.

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Brittany to supervise the fleet's formation.²² At first the *Armada del Mar Océano* was the exclusive responsibility of the Council of the Indies, because of its mission to protect the sea lanes to the Indies. But its wider role soon led to transfer to the Council of War.

Philip II's determination had triumphed over immense difficulties. From the 1590s Spain was in possession of a powerful Atlantic fleet. In these final years of the reign it consisted of between forty and sixty vessels. Although the figure would drop to below twenty in 1610,²³ the fleet remained in existence as Philip II's permanent legacy, and later recovered its original size: in 1639 there were fifty ships totalling 24,270 tons.²⁴

The Atlantic fleet was soon divided into three squadrons operating along different sections of the peninsula's coasts. A third of the ships were based in Lisbon to patrol the coast from Cape St Vincent to Cape Finisterre, and sail to the Azores to escort shipping arriving from the Indies. Another third, based in Cadiz, defended the Straits. The remaining segment, called the squadron of Vizcaya, was based at La Coruña and patrolled the north coast in search of the Dutch.²⁵ This strategy reflected the Monarchy's constant problem of stretched naval resources, facing the impossible task of defending a vast global empire.

POLITICS AND THE CONTEST FOR NAVAL SUPREMACY

Spain was seen at the time as the shining example of the value of naval power for retaining scattered possessions. That was the argument presented in the *Ragion di Stato*, the highly influential treatise of the Piedmontese political theorist, Giovanni Botero. First published in 1589, it appeared in no fewer than six Spanish editions over the next thirty years. The book reinforced the importance Spain already attached to naval power. The evidence is clear that its message was taken to heart by generations of Spanish ministers. Reflecting 'whether compact or dispersed states are more lasting', Botero argued that a scattered empire, inherently weak because of the distance between its parts, could not endure unless assistance was sent from one part to defend another under attack. It was this facility for assistance that gave strength to the Spanish monarchy, making it as strong as a compact state. Flanders, Naples and Sicily were 'all joined by the sea' to Spain. In Spain's empire 'no state is so distant that it cannot be aided by naval forces; and the Catalans, Basques and Portuguese are such skilled sailors . . . With naval forces in the hands of these men, the empire which might otherwise appear scattered and unwieldy

²² Viso: *legajo* 9094-13B, Philip II's appointments of administrators of the AMO, 3 December 1594, Escorial; VP 11/47/124, 'Discurso de D. Diego Brochero'.

²³ I. A. A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain 1560-1620* (London, 1976), pp. 194-5 and 303.

²⁴ GA 3173, 'Relación de los bajeles . . . que hay', with JA, 28 October 1639.

²⁵ GA 653, CG, 21 August 1606, and the associated *consulta* of 4 November 1606.

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must be accounted united and compact.²⁶ It was in exactly these terms that Spain's secretary for the navy, Martín de Aróztegui, urged Philip III to maintain powerful forces at sea:

The king of France has his realms united and he has no need to maintain armadas or galleys to conserve them. The same benefit is enjoyed by other kings who have their realms contiguous . . . The Monarchy of Spain consists of so many distant kingdoms that it needs superior forces at sea to oppose the forces of kings, potentates and provinces who envy its grandeur and wealth, and who desire its destruction. Your Majesty's principal source of wealth, and that of his subjects, comes from the Indies and other kingdoms that are subject to this crown, such as Sicily, Naples, Milan, Flanders and other isles and provinces with whom there is frequent contact through commerce and navigation. Therefore it is desirable that your Majesty order that there shall at all times be a quantity of ships of the requisite quality, size and strength not only for armadas . . . but also for trade and commerce, and other necessary purposes.²⁷

When, two decades later, Spain was in the grips of a protracted war with France, the same analysis formed the basis of strategy recommended to the French for the conquest of Catalonia:

Naval forces are the only chain that links Spain to all of its detached possessions, and they bring the funds for war from the West Indies . . . If the French lose a naval battle they suffer no other loss than that engagement. But if that happened to the Spanish they would run the great risk of losing their states in Italy . . . and it would disrupt their sailings to the Indies, which would be an indescribable setback. That is why the Spanish never seek a great battle at sea.²⁸

Botero's influence is also likely on Count-Duke Olivares, Philip IV's powerful prime minister.²⁹ His magnificent library included works by Botero. His cherished plan, first conceived in 1621, for a Union of Arms called for the co-operative military action sketched by Botero, yet to be realized in a Monarchy whose entire defence burden had fallen on one part, Castile. Now he demanded contributions from all parts of the Monarchy, each providing a fair share of the military or naval forces needed to preserve an endangered possession. This was the mutual assistance Botero had seen as the key to the survival of Spain's scattered empire.

Spanish readers of Botero also found discussion of the dictum 'whoever is master of the sea is also master of the land'.³⁰ Its origin is obscure but it may well have been inspired by classical precedents. Spaniards quoted Xenophon's belief

²⁶ G. Botero, *The Reason of State*, trans. P. and D. Waley (London, 1956), pp. 9–12.

²⁷ CJH 554, *documento* 8/56/3, Martín de Aróztegui to Philip III, 15 August 1617, Madrid.

²⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris: Manuscrits espagnols no. 337, f. 279, anon., 'Réflexions historiques sur la facilité de la conquête de l'Espagne en 1642'.

²⁹ For the probable influence on Olivares of a second political theorist, Baltasar Alamos de Barrientos, see J. H. Elliott, *The Count-Duke of Olivares. The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven and London, 1986), p. 143.

³⁰ Botero, *Reason of State*, pp. 215–18.

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that navies were more valuable to Athens than armies.³¹ And one reader of the Castilian translation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* was impressed in discovering that the Athenians had become 'master of their land and of many others' by investing in a powerful fleet.³² What is undoubted is the prevalence of the saying in Spain in this period. It was frequently invoked in arguments to strengthen naval forces. In 1616 Spain's ambassador in London, the count of Gondomar, concerned at the growth of the English fleet, advised an appropriate Spanish response 'because in today's world whoever has mastery of the sea also has mastery of the land, and everyone can see that Spain is losing'.³³ And the same dictum was voiced at a meeting of the Council of State in 1636 when there was alarm over reports of an impending French invasion of an exposed part of the Monarchy: Sardinia. While it was agreed that the island's infantry and cavalry must be mobilized, the most effective means of defence was seen to be the dispatch of a naval force. Bartolomé de Anaya advised Philip IV to prepare for victory at sea. A strong navy would be a highly effective deterrent and 'it cannot be denied that with forces at sea Your Majesty is lord of the land'. Another councillor, marquis of Gelves, veteran soldier, naturally turned to military preparations in Sardinia. But he too conceded that naval strength was 'the true and certain way of stopping all these dangers, because the sea covers, surrounds, and reaches all'.³⁴

Although Spain had adopted a predominantly Atlantic naval strategy, she could not turn her back completely on the Mediterranean. Ships were needed to defend the Monarchy's Italian possessions and Spain's long Mediterranean coast. The Armada of Naples was created by Philip III in 1619. Originally a fleet of twelve strong warships, locally funded for defence, it would grow to twenty-eight vessels before it was destroyed by the French in the 1650s.³⁵ But in the Mediterranean, Spain relied mostly on galley squadrons. Here there was continuity with past tradition, a sharp contrast with the technological change in the Atlantic.

The Monarchy operated four permanent galley squadrons. The galleys of Spain, the senior squadron, used to be based at Cartagena, the closest point on the peninsula to the Algiers pirate-nest. After the annexation of Portugal they were moved to a station on the other side of the Straits, to Puerto de Santa María in the bay of Cadiz. But the war with France after 1635 ensured that they would spend most of the year in the Mediterranean, around Catalonia, Valencia and Italy. They were funded by the *subsidio*, a tax on ecclesiastical benefices. Declining resources

³¹ BL: Egerton 332, f. 60, 'Memorial del Capitán D. Jusepe Puxol', undated.

³² FN 9/33/358-9, 'Discurso sobre la importancia de tener fuerzas y poder por mar', undated.

³³ MC, II, p. 142. One of several examples of Brochero's coining of the dictum is GA 640, memorial of Brochero, with CG, 3 March 1605.

³⁴ GA 1154/8, *consulta, Consejo de Estado y Guerra*, 10 June 1636.

³⁵ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (Paris), *Mémoires et Documents: Espagne*, vol. 265, f. 151, Philip III to duke of Osuna, viceroy of Naples, 28 October 1619, Madrigalejo; and GA 3395, JA, 7 August 1657.

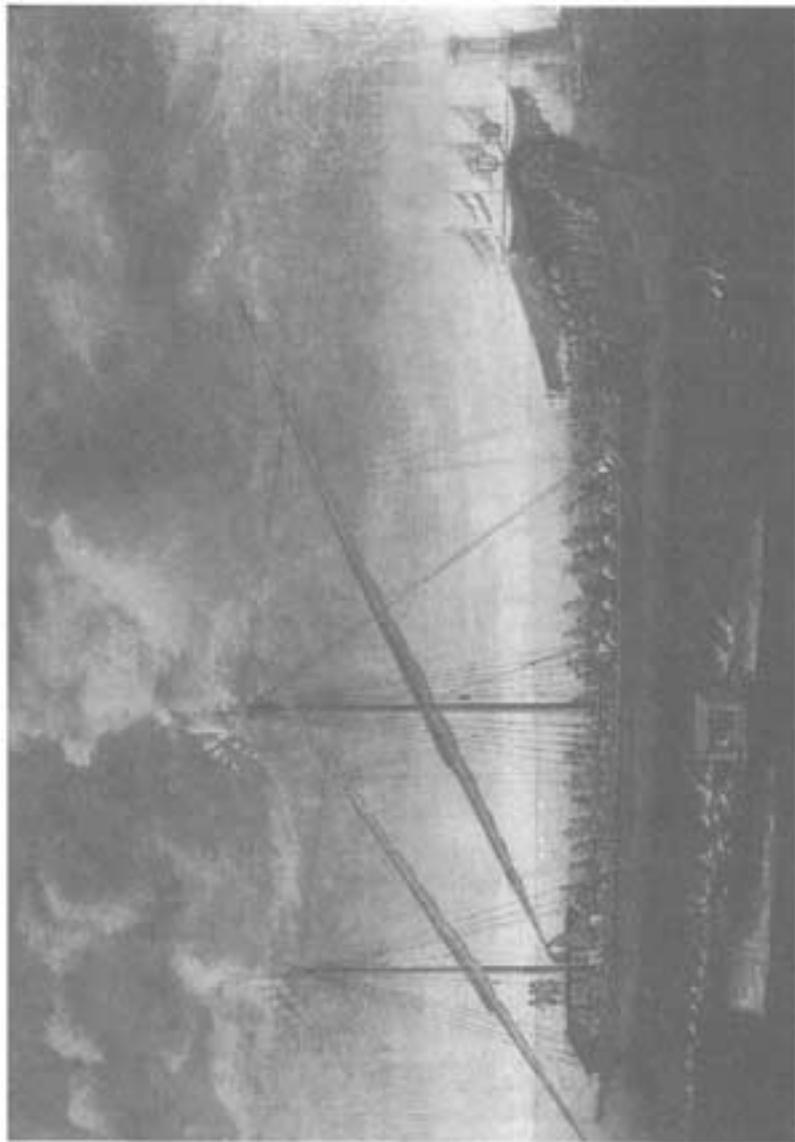


Plate 1 One of the larger Spanish galleys of the seventeenth century. *Galera almiranta*, attributed to Manuel Castro, seventeenth century.

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explain the reduction in size of the squadron from twenty vessels in 1591 to fourteen in 1640 and a mere seven in the 1660s. The same decline occurred with the galleys of Naples, which fell from twenty-four units in 1606 to twelve in 1646. The functions of this squadron were 'to patrol the coasts, sailing to Genoa, Spain and Sicily; seek out corsairs in the Levant and Barbary; and serve in wars in Italy and France'.³⁶ These galleys were owned by the king and funded by revenues from Naples. The smaller galley squadron of Sicily was seen as the principal defence of the island, as instructions to newly appointed viceroys made clear.³⁷ The Turks were the main threat here. Sicily's squadron was internally funded by the Court of the Royal Patrimony. Another Italian squadron, the galleys of Genoa, had served the Monarchy continuously since 1528 when Andrea Doria, the Genoese military contractor, changed sides in the war between France and Spain. For the next century and a half, members of the Doria family would retain command of the squadron, renewing contracts to serve the king of Spain. Their faithful service was rewarded with the title of dukes of Tursi. During Philip II's reign two of them held the supreme naval rank of *capitán general de la mar*.³⁸ Three of the galleys were owned by the Dorias, a few more by other Genoese nobles, the rest by the king. This squadron too was funded by the *subsidio* contributed by Spain's clergy. It was therefore seen as 'a branch of the squadron of Spain' with obligations to protect Spain's coasts, and 'the bridge' for infantry to cross between Barcelona and Genoa, the terminal of the 'Spanish Road' that led to Flanders.³⁹ Composed of eighteen galleys in 1590, the squadron of Genoa later suffered heavy losses in the defence of Catalonia and was reduced to just six units in the 1650s.

Galleys therefore remained a part of the Monarchy's naval forces throughout this period. They were at their most effective in the close inshore fighting and amphibious operations in the Mediterranean. But they had value also as auxiliary craft. They ferried essential supplies of food, munitions, horses and money across the Straits to maintain the African fortresses. They transported munitions around the peninsula. And they were indispensable for towing becalmed galleons in Atlantic ports out to sea.

Spain's monarchs encouraged privateering to supplement the forces of armadas and galleys. Like other maritime powers, Spain recognized that privateering was an economical means of defending coasts and attacking enemy commerce. It was Philip III who set the pattern in 1615 with his issue of letters of marque to native seamen of the north coast to combat marauding Algerian corsairs.⁴⁰ The terms of

³⁶ GA 1310, marquis of Santa Cruz to Philip IV, 18 August 1633, with JG, 23 November 1633.

³⁷ FN 3/68/517, Philip IV's instructions to Pedro Fajardo de Zúñiga y Requesens, 8 December 1643, Madrid.

³⁸ VP 9/13/104-8, 'Orígenes de las galeras de S.M. de la escuadra de Genoa'.

³⁹ GA 900, CG, 30 May 1624; GA 1310, JG, 23 November 1633.

⁴⁰ GA 799, CG, 7 March 1615; GA 883, 'La orden que han de guardar los vasallos de mis reinos . . . que quisieren armar por su cuenta navíos de alto bordo . . .', 19 May 1615, Madrid.