

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA**
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 7
2026

Fascicolo 27. Luglio 2026
Storia Militare Moderna

a cura di
GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

General Editors: Virgilio Ilari, Jeremy Black, Giovanni Brizzi.

Legal Editor (dir. responsabile Gregory Alegi **Ed. executive (comitato di redazione):** Viviana Castelli, Alessandro Carli, Emiliano Bultrini, Francesco Biasi, Francesco Pellegrini.

Special appointee for Intl cooperation: Dr Luca Domizio.

Scientific Editorial Board : Foreign members: Prof. Jeremy Armstrong, Christopher Bassford, Floribert Baudet, Stathis Birtachas, Lee L. Brice, Loretana de Libero, Fernando Echeverria Rey, John France, Francisco García Fitz, Tadeusz Grabarczyk, Gregory Hanlon, Rotem Kowner, Armando Marques Guedes, Harold E. Raugh Jr, Yannis Stouraitis: **Italian members:** Giampiero Brunelli, Aldino Bondesan, Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi, Alessandra Dattero, Immacolata Eramo, Carlo Galli, Maria Intrieri, Roberta Ivaldi, Nicola Labanca, Luigi Loreto, Luca Loschiavo, Serena Morelli, Francesco Somaini, Gioacchino Strano, Giusto Traina, Federico Valacchi.

Senior Academic Advisory Board. Prof. Massimo de Leonardis, Magdalena de Pazzis Pi Corrales, John Hattendorf, Yann Le Bohec, (†) Dennis Showalter, Livio Antonielli, Marco Bettalli, Antonello Folco Biagini, Franco Cardini, Piero del Negro, Giuseppe De Vergottini, Gian Enrico Rusconi, Carla Sodini, Donato Tamblé,

Special Consultants: Lucio Caracciolo, Flavio Carbone, Basilio Di Martino, Antulio Joseph Echevarria II, Carlo Jean, Gianfranco Linzi, Edward N. Luttwak, Matteo Paesano, Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte, Simonetta Conti, Elina Gugliuzzo, Vincenzo, Angela Teja, Stefano Pisu, Giuseppe Della Torre

Nuova Antologia Militare

Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Periodico telematico open-access annuale (www.nam-sism.org)

Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020

Scopus List of Accepted Titles October 2022 (No. 597)

Rivista scientifica ANVUR (5/9/2023) Area 11, Area 10 (21/12/2024)



Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma

Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

©Authors hold the copyright of their own articles.

For the Journal: © Società Italiana di Storia Militare

(www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org)

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma
info@nadirmedia.it

Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma

www.tabedizioni.it

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 979-12-5669-424-2

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA**
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 7
2026

Fascicolo 27. Luglio 2026
Storia Militare Moderna

a cura di
GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI



Società Italiana di Storia Militare



Vienna, Monumento equestre al Principe Eugenio di Savoia, particolare.
Foto Haeferl, CC SA 3.0 Austria Wikimedia Commons

A defeat that came from the sea: the Venetian loss of the Morea, 1715

by GUIDO CANDIANI

ABSTRACT. Usually, the loss of the Morea Reign by the Republic of Venice in 1715 is attributed to the weakness of its land forces. A closer analysis suggests that the primary responsibility for the defeat was the Venetian navy and chiefly his sailing battle fleet, which at the time had become the backbone of Venetian naval power.

KEYWORDS. SECOND WAR OF MOREA; VENETIAN NAVY; NAVAL MEDITERRANEAN HISTORY

The loss of the Peloponnese peninsula by the Republic of Venice in 1715 is commonly attributed to the weakness of the Venetian forces stationed there and to the lack of fighting spirit among the commanders and troops deployed to defend it. These shortcomings certainly played a role in the rapid - and in some respect unexpected - collapse of the Republic's last remaining Kingdom. However, a closer analysis suggests that the primary responsibility for the defeat lies with the Venetian navy, and in particular with the sailing fleet, the so-called *Armata Grossa*, which had become the backbone of Venetian naval power from the third quarter of the 17th century onward.

During the first phase of the First Morean War (1684-99), the Republic of Venice had invested significant effort in strengthening the *Armata Grossa*, both in terms of shipbuilding and organisational reform.¹ This initiative produced a considerable number of ships of the line. Yet in the fifteen years that followed, precisely because of its apparent strength, the *Armata Grossa* was allowed to fall into relative neglect. Meanwhile, during the same peaceful period, the Ottoman

1 On the evolution of the *Armata Grossa* in the 1690s, see Guido CANDIANI, *I vascelli della Serenissima: guerra, politica e costruzioni navali a Venezia in età moderna, 1650-1720*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2009, pp. 291-405.

navy had benefitted from a major modernisation effort, with the launching of a series of newly-built warships that revitalised its sailing fleet.² Because of the growing disparity, the Venetian navy found itself outmatched during the early campaigns of the Second Morean War (1714-18). The Ottoman fleet – an increasingly modern and effective force of ships of the line – was able to dominate the sea and neutralise its Venetian counterpart. In a paradigmatic example of modern naval warfare, the Ottoman battle fleet effectively «hypnotised» and immobilised the Venetians, allowing the Sultan's army to operate freely in the Morea. Deprived of naval support, the Venetian army was left isolated, and morale among the garrisons plummeted. While some fortresses offered valiant resistance, their eventual fall was inevitable due to the absence of any relief from the sea.

The immediate origins of the Second Morean War can be traced back to the peace concluded between the Ottoman Empire and Russia on 24 June 1713 (Treaty of Adrianople) and to the subsequent expulsion of Charles XII of Sweden from Ottoman territory. Since taking refuge with the Porte following his defeat at Poltava, Charles had pursued an anti-Russian policy.³ Once freed from their northern entanglements, the Ottomans redirected their focus to their south-western frontier, where the Venetian presence in the Peloponnese remained a persistent and provocative obstacle.

Both the Venetian ambassador in Istanbul (*Bailo*), Andrea Memo, and the Republic's commanders in the Levant underestimated the looming threat – contributing significantly to Venice's lack of preparedness.⁴ Memo did not issue a seri-

2 On the development of the Ottoman fleet in this period, see Yusuf A. AYDIN, *Sultanin kalyonlari: Osmanli donanmasinin yelkenli savas gemileri, 1701–1770*, Istanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2011, pp. 51-66, 117-121, 330-336. 2011); for a Venetian perspective, see Guido CANDIANI, «A New Battle Fleet: The evolution of the Ottoman sailing navy, 1650–1718, revealed through Venetian sources», *Mariner's Mirror*, 104 (2018), pp. 18-26.

3 On the peace negotiations of Adrianople, see Tatiana BAZAROVA, «The Process of Establishing the Border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the Peace Treaty of Adrianople (1713)», in Ivan Parvev-Maria Baramova-Grigor Boykov (eds.), *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Wiesbaden, Harassowitz, 2015, pp. 121-132. On the consequences of the Russian-Ottoman War for Venice, see Domenico CACCAMO, «Venezia, Pietro il Grande e i Balcani», in Francesco Guida-Luisa Valmarin (cur.), *Studi Balcanici pubblicati in occasione del VI Congresso Internazionale dell'Association Internationale d'Études Sud-Est Européennes (AIESEE)*, Roma, Carocci, 1989, pp. 61-83.

4 See for example the dispatches of the *Provveditore Generale* of the Morea Antonio Loredan no. 42, 27.3.1714, and no. 43, 20.4.1714, in Archivio di Stato di Venezia (henceforth ASV), *PTM*, filza 856.



Fig. 1 The administrative divisions of the Venetian Kingdom of the Morea in the Peloponnese, 1688-1715. Basemap from Peloponnese Middle Ages map-en.svg, information from Βασίλης Παναγιωτόπουλος, Πληθυσμός και οικισμοί της Πελοποννήσου, 13ος - 18ος αιώνας [Population and Settlements in the Peloponnese, 13th-18th Century], Athens 1985, page 165.C. Plakidas 2013 own work. CC SA 3.0 Wikimedia Commons

ous warning to the Venetian Senate until the autumn of 1714, mere weeks before the formal Ottoman declaration of war on 8 December.⁵ Notably, this marked the first official declaration of war between the two powers, signalling the Ottoman's increasing adherence to European diplomatic conventions.

Venetian military weakness was apparent, yet the gravest concern was not the limited number of troops stationed in the Morea's fortresses⁶ nor the fact

⁵ ASV, *Dispacci ambasciatori Costantinopoli*, filza 172, dispatch (henceforth disp.) no. 14, 24.10.1714; no. 16, 25.11.1714; no. 18, 20.12.1714.

⁶ On the eve of the Ottoman attack, the Morea had a total of 4,557 soldiers, although this figure does not include the local militias, which may have doubled that number. The capital, Nauplia (Nafplio) had only 1,774 of the 3,000 regular troops considered necessary

that many defensive works begun in the previous decade remained incomplete.⁷ Rather, it was the lack of available naval forces that posed the most critical strategic liability. Without sufficient maritime support, Venice's entire defensive doctrine – based on a system of fortified coastal positions supplied and reinforced by sea, a model successfully used in both Dalmatia and Crete – was bound to fail.⁸ The Venetian's strategic plan did in fact contemplate abandoning rural areas and undefended towns to the enemy,⁹ with resistance concentrated in well-fortified strongholds accessible to the fleet. The primary centres of defence were to be Nafplio (the capital of the Kingdom of the Morea), Modon and the so-called Castle of Morea (Rion), on the northern coast of the Peloponnese;¹⁰ with two secondary fortresses at Acrocorinth (near Corinth) and Monemvasia. Additionally, two small outposts – Zarnata and Chielefà, located in the rugged Mani region ("the middle finger of the Peloponnese"), were manned with expectation of support from the fiercely independent and traditionally anti-Ottoman local population.¹¹

for its defence. In total, Venetian forces in the Levant numbered 12,443 regular soldiers, 5,481 of whom were assigned to the fleet. While it might appear that the embarked troops were available for land operations, it is important to note that 3,443 soldiers were aboard the sixteen ships then in service. Given the particular manning system used on Venetian warships – where soldiers also performed many duties that in other navies were carried out by sailors – their deployment on land would have been highly problematic, as it would have dramatically weakened the *Armata Grossa*. ASV, *PTM*, filza 959, disp. from the *Capitano Generale da Mar* Daniele Dolfin no. 53, 12.5.1715, attachment (henceforth att.) 10.5.1715; filza 857, disp. from the *Provveditore Generale* in Morea Alessandro Bon no. 6, 7.2.1715

7 The *Provveditore Generale* of Morea, Alessandro Bon calculated that only two thirds of the planned works had been completed. ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. no. 3, 4.11.1714.

8 For an analysis of the relationship between the defensive system of the Morea and the fleet, see Fausto LANFRANCHI, «Porti e approdi per la difesa della Morea nella strategia e logistica dell'Armata veneziana», *Studi Veneziani*, n.s., LXVIII (2013), pp. 431-448 (420-463).

9 Cf. ASV, *PTM*, filza 959, disp. D. Dolfin no. 39, 24.2.1715.

10 According to a 1710 decree that classified all Venetian fortresses into three categories, only Nafplio was considered a first-class fortress, along with Verona, Brescia, Palmanova, Zara, Knin, and Corfu. Eric PINZELLI, «Le forteresses de Morée. Projets de restaurations et de démantèlements durant la seconde période venitienne (1687-1715)», *Thesaurismata*, 30 (2000), p. 425 (379-427).

11 ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 6, 7.2.1715. Eric Pinzelli distinguishes between coastal and inland strongholds (Acrocorinth, Zarnata and Chielefà), but even the latter, in particular Acrocorinth, would have had to rely on the support of the fleet. PINZELLI, *Le forteresses de Morée*, pp. 392, 399. On Venetian rule in Mani, see Marco ROMIO: «"Una scabrosità giurisdizionale". Sistema consuetudinario e giustizia veneziana in Maina (XVIII secolo)», *Acta Histriae*, 25 (2017), pp. 335-348. Regarding the effects of the first Mor-



Fig. 2 Castle of Acrocorinth. Foto MM 2006. Own work. Public domain.
Wikimedia Commons.

However, the weakness of the Venetian fleet quickly undermined this entire plan. At the outbreak of hostilities, only eight ships stationed in the Levant and merely five of them were operational.¹² The shortage of sailors was particularly acute, worsened by the inability to recruit as usual from the Ottoman-controlled islands in the Aegean. Concerned that the Ottoman fleet might cut off his small

ean war on the population of Mani, see Jim M. WAGSTAFF, «*War and Settlement Desertion in the Morea, 1685-1830*», *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s. 3 (1998), pp. 297-298 (295-308). On the 18th-century considerations on the characters of the Maina, see Alfredo VIGGIANO, «*Religion and Borders in Venetian Stato da Mar in the late 18th Century*», in Egidio Ivetic-Drago Roksandic, *Tolerance and Intolerance on the Triplex Confinium. Approaching the "Other" on the Borderlands. Eastern Adriatic and beyond, 1500-1800*, Padova, Cleup, 2007, pp. 234-242 (223-242).

12 ASV, PTM, filza 1340, disp. *Capitano delle Navi* Francesco Correr no. 18, 25.12.1714.

squadron from his Adriatic bases, the Capitano Generale Da Mar (General Captain of the Sea) Daniele Dolfìn ordered the fleet to withdraw from Nafplio as early as the beginning of 1715, relocating first to Modon and then further to the Ionian Islands.¹³ Though arguably defensible from a purely military standpoint, the withdrawal of the *Armata Grossa* severely undermined morale among the defenders in the Morea. This situation deteriorated further when Dolfìn decided to also evacuate the galleys of the *Armata Sottile* (Light Army) from Nafplio and to remove civilians from the strongholds of the Kingdom.¹⁴

The weakness of Venice was countered by extensive Ottoman military preparations, which had already begun in the summer of 1714. Troops coming from both Anatolia and the Balkans were to gather in Thrace, then march through Macedonia and Thessaly down to Thebes, in Boeotia, from where the offensive – led personally by the Grand Vizier Silahdar Damad Ali – would be launched.¹⁵ The supply depot and artillery park, most of which was transported by sea, were established at the port of Negroponte – the capital of the island of Euboea, connected to the mainland by a bridge – about thirty kilometres from Thebes. To facilitate the advance and ensure the passage of troops and artillery, the Ottomans repaired and widened the roads from Thebes to the Isthmus of Corinth, and set up wells and ovens to guarantee supplies.¹⁶

By the end of spring 1715, the Sultan's army had largely concentrated in Thebes. However, additional troops were dispatched toward Lepanto, leading the Venetians to believe that an attack would also come from the north-western Peloponnese, targeting the Morea Castle via the Strait of Rion.¹⁷ In reality, the Porte's military strategy initially focused on a single advance across the Isthmus of Corinth. Only later did the campaign split into two fronts: one pushing south towards Nafplio and the other moving north towards the Morea Castle and Patras.

13 ASV, PTM, filza 959, disp. D. Dolfìn no. 35, 7.2.1715, att. 1, 31.1.1715. Dolfìn had been appointed *Provveditore Generale da Mar*, the highest rank in peace time, in July 1714; once the war began, he became *Capitano Generale da Mar*, the highest rank in wartime.

14 ASV, PTM, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 7, 17.3.1715.

15 Damad was killed a year later during the battle of Peterwardin. See Robert MANTRAN, «Ali Pasha Damad», *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I, Leiden, Brill, 1986, p. 395.

16 ASV, PTM, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 14, 22.5.1715; no. 16, 20.6.1715; Dionysios HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre entre la République de Venise et l'Empire Ottoman (1714-1718)*, Montreal, Collège Dawson, 1999, p. 9.

17 ASV, PTM, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 16, 20.6.1715

While the Ottomans concentrated their forces in Boeotia, the bulk of the Venetian fleet remained stationed at the rear, lingering for two months at Port Climinò (Killini), on the island of Santa Maura (Lefkada). During this time, the fleet gradually expanded to around twenty ships – but this total also included several vessels that had been hastily purchased or leased and were poorly suited for line combat. More broadly, the entire fleet suffered from numerous deficiencies, largely due to the rushed manner in which it had been outfitted.¹⁸ Although eventually reinforced by two galleasses, fifteen galleys, and about ten galliots (followed by the arrival, at the end of June, of nine «auxiliary» Maltese and Papal galleys),¹⁹ the Venetian fleet in the Levant remained markedly inferior to that of the Ottomans. Accurately assessing the size of the Ottoman fleet is nevertheless difficult, as Western sources vary considerably. However, it appears that the *sultanas* (state-equipped warships) numbered around forty. These were accompanied by roughly a dozen heavily-armed merchant vessels carrying 40-to-60-pound guns each, an equal number of Barbary ships, and five fireships. Additionally, the sailing fleet was supported by approximately twenty galleys, thirty galliots, and around sixty *fuste*. In any case, it was the most formidable fleet the Ottomans had launched in over a century – qualitatively superior even to the armada that had landed in Crete in 1645. Its commander, the capable and ambitious Kapudan Pasha Januch Hogia, had good reason to boast that his navy could have reconquered the Morea even without the support of the Ottoman army.²⁰

Hogia set sail from the Dardanelles on 9 May and, by the end of the month, anchored off Carystus, the southern tip of Euboea.²¹ From there, Kapudan Pasha launched his first offensive against the Venetians, targeting the island of Tinos – their most exposed outpost. Ottoman naval dominance had already convinced the *Provveditore Generale* of the Morea, Alessandro Bon, not to evacuate the island,

18 ASV, *PTM*, filza 1339, disp. *Capitano Straordinario delle Navi* Fabio Bonvicini no. 4, 21.6.1715 and att. 15.6.1715; *PTM*, filza 959, disp. D. Dolfin no. 56, 25.5.1715 and att. *periti* 15.5.1715; no. 60, 23.6.1715.

19 ASV, *PTM*, filza 959, disp. D. Dolfin no. 53, 12.5.1715, att. 10.5.1715, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 66, 6.7.1715; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, p. 54. Maltese and Papal squadrons had also come to the aid of the Republic in the previous Cretan war and the first Morean war.

20 On the size of the Ottoman fleet, see CANDIANI, *I vascelli della Serenissima*, pp. 498-499.

21 ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 61, 23.6.1715; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, p. 46.

fearing that his troops might be intercepted by the numerous Ottoman galleys during transit. Bon hoped that even a brief resistance on Tinos would serve as a useful diversion, though he did not anticipate that Ottoman naval supremacy would lead to such a rapid outcome.²² On 5 June, approximately forty ships and eighty galleys and galliots landed on Tinos, disembarking between twenty-five and thirty thousand Ottoman troops. Faced with this overwhelming force, the small Venetian garrison surrendered after just two days in exchange for safe conduct.²³ Meanwhile, the Venetian fleet remained inactive, not advancing beyond the waters off Cephalonia.²⁴

On land, by early June, the Ottomans had concentrated around 75,000 troops in Thebes, including 40,000 elite Janissaries. By early July, this force had grown to 110,000 men, with Janissaries comprising roughly half. The army departed Thebes on 15 June and began crossing the Isthmus of Corinth two days later. On 28 June, Ottoman forces reached and assaulted Acrocorinth, backed by heavy artillery landed without resistance in the nearby Bay of Aegina after the Venetians abandoned the island. The garrison of Acrocorinth, about 650 men strong, refused to surrender and mounted a determined defence, inflicting heavy casualties on the Janissary assault troops during several days of intense fighting. The defenders had been promised substantial reinforcements by sea across the Gulf of Corinth by *Provveditore Generale* Bon. However, Captain General Dolfin declined to attempt a naval crossing of the Strait of Rio (Rion). Feeling abandoned, the Venetian commander, Giacomo Minotto, agreed to surrender on 2 July, under the condition that his men would be safely transported to Corfu. Tragically, a series of misunderstandings the following day led to a massacre of part of the garrison and civilians sheltering in the fortress. The Ottomans also suffered significant losses

22 ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 16, 20.6.1715.

23 Bon still described Tine's defence as 'bloody' and pointed out that the garrison, fewer than sixty men, had used up all the ammunition at its disposal. ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon n. 17, 21.6.1715; *Hatzopoulos, La dernière guerre*, pp. 54-55. The population's fear in the face of the Ottoman bombardment strengthened the decision to surrender. The Ottomans had learned from the Venetians how to use large-caliber mortars to strike inhabited areas and terrify the civilian populations of the attacked towns. Cfr. Guido CANDIANI, *Novità tecnologica e pressione psicologica: l'introduzione delle galeotte a bombe nella marina veneziana (1685-1695)*, in *Storie di Armi*, a cura di Nicol Labanca-Pier Paolo Poggio, Milano 2009, pp. 183-202.

24 ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 62, 1.7.1715.

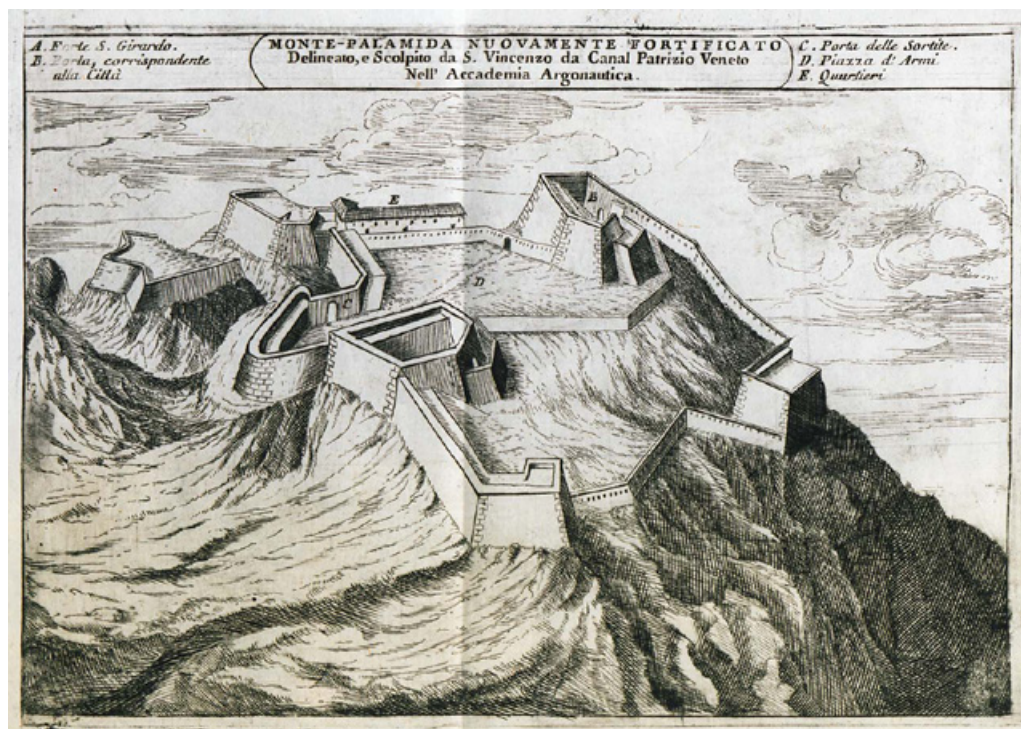


Fig. 3. Monte Palamida nuovamente fortificato. Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Morea, Negroponte & Adiacenze*, Venice, 1708. Wikimedia Commons.

when an ammunition depot – possibly ignited by accident – exploded, killing or wounding an estimated 2000 Janissaries.²⁵

The events at Acrocorinth foreshadowed a recurring pattern in the Ottoman campaign against Venetian strongholds: initial resistance by the defenders was followed by demoralisation largely due to the Venetian fleet's inability – or unwillingness – to provide relief. This failure was especially demoralising after six decades of Venetian naval supremacy. In contrast, the Ottoman fleet – comprising 45 ships, 25 galleys and 40 galiotts by the end of June²⁶ – offered consistent support to their land forces, successfully avoiding Dolfin's attempts to draw them into the safer, more favourable waters around the Ionian Islands.

25 ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 63, 1.7.1715; filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 18, 2.7.1715. HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 52-53, 57, 59-65.

26 ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon n. 18, 2.7.1715.

Following the fall of Acrocorinth, on 9 July the Ottoman army advanced towards Nafplio, the capital of the Kingdom of the Morea and its principal stronghold. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Kapudan (admiral), having also secured the island of Aegina on 7 July, moved into the Gulf of Argolis to support the offensive from the sea, patrolling between the island of Spezie (Spetses) and Zacogna (Tsaconia, modern-day Tyros), on the Gulf's western coast.²⁷ The siege of Nafplio, which had about 2,700 garrison troops, including regular and auxiliary militias, began on 12 July. In the absence of the Venetian fleet, the Ottoman soldiers had already managed to approach the walls from the sea side on 10 July. Here they found much-needed shelter in the houses of the Borghetto suburb, which had not been properly (or perhaps mercifully) demolished. The first assault took place on 15 July, but the Venetian artillery inflicted heavy losses on the attackers. However, on that same day, the Ottoman fleet arrived, further demoralising the defenders; that evening, the transport vessels following the fleet offloaded seventeen large cannons and an unspecified number of mortars, some of which were capable of firing projectiles weighing nearly half a ton.

Over the following days, the fighting raged on with great intensity, resulting in heavy casualties for the attacking forces – particularly along the defences of the Palamède, the new fortress built a decade earlier to protect the hill overlooking Nafplio.²⁸ On 17 July, the Ottomans began excavating a tunnel beneath the main defensive structure, the bastion known as the *Tenaglia* (Pincer), with the intention of placing a mine. Taking advantage of some tunnels left by the Venetians during the fortress's construction in previous years and of the fact that the ground had not yet fully settled, in just three days of digging they succeeded in detonating a large mine. On 20 July, the explosion brought down part of the vital bastion, triggering the collapse of much of the Palamède's defences. This outcome was worsened by the inexperience of many defenders – raw recruits who had not been properly trained to conduct an organised withdrawal from one fortified position to the next, yielding ground gradually rather than all at once.²⁹

27 ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon n. 19, 10.7.1715; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 66-67.

28 On the fortification works in Nafplio see PINZELLI, *Le forteresses de Morée*, pp. 401-403, 409-410, 419-420, 425-427.

29 As often happens in Venetian history, there was no shortage of accusations of treason, specifically against the French colonel and engineer (though in one document he is listed

While the defenders were being overwhelmed on the hill of the Palamède, the Ottomans succeeded in breaching the city's eastern defences, advancing across the plain in front of the walls. They forced their way between the Mocenigo bastion – positioned offshore – and the Dolfin bastion, which marked the north-eastern corner of the main curtain wall. Exploiting the defenders' complete lack of naval support, the Ottoman troops advanced along the shoreline, at times wading forward with water up to their necks. Already demoralised by the loss of the Palamède, the Venetian forces abandoned both bastions, allowing the Ottomans to scale the main curtain wall. A mass of Janissaries then surged into the city, looting and setting fire to most of the buildings while massacring much of the population. Only a portion of the garrison, having surrendered to the crews of nearby ships, managed to find refuge aboard the *sultanas* (Ottoman warships). Despite the brief duration of the siege, Ottoman casualties were extremely high—8,000 dead and 6,000 wounded—underscoring the ferocity of the fighting.³⁰ If at Acrocorinth the absence of the Venetian fleet had contributed to a collapse in morale, at Nafplio it had a more immediate and tactical impact, enabling the enemy to overcome a critical section of the defences. With proper naval support, the capital of the Morea might well have withstood the siege far longer.

Upon learning of the fall of Nafplio, Dolfin finally decided to advance toward the waters off Modon, the next target of the Ottoman offensive. The Venetian fleet—in which the *Armata Grossa* now counted twenty-four ships and preceded the *Armata Sottile*—spotted the enemy fleet near the fortress on 12 August. However, Dolfin chose not to engage. Instead, he focused on evacuating civilians – an operation that did little to lift the defenders' morale. The Captain General continued to avoid confrontation, deterred not only by the strength of the Ottoman forces but also by the flagging morale of his own crews. Once the evacuation of ci-

as English) in the service of the Republic, Pierre La Salle. La Salle, who had contributed to the construction of the Palamède, had allegedly colluded with the Ottomans from the beginning of the campaign. He was immediately prosecuted, but no evidence appears to have been brought against him. ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 73, 8.8.1715, att. no. 2, constituted 9.8.1715; *Senato Deliberazioni Rettori*, filza 130, 23.3.1697; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, p. 51; Eric PINZELLI, *Venise et la Morée: du triomphe à la désillusion (1684-1718)*, Thèse du Doctorat, Directeur de Thèse Daniel PANZAC, Université de Provence, 2003, pp. 431, 487-488.

30 On the fall of Nafplio, see ASV, *PTM*, filza 857, disp. A. Bon no. 20, 13.7.1715; filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 73, 8.8.1715 and annexes; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 69-77.

vilians was completed, Dolfin withdrew from the waters of Modon on 14 August, retreating into the Gulf of Arcadia and effectively abandoning the fortress. That same day, the Ottomans, who had begun their siege on the 12th, launched their first major assault. Demoralised by the fleet's withdrawal, the 900-man garrison at Modon surrendered on 17 August. From that point on, Dolfin focused solely on preserving the fleet in anticipation of a final defence of the Ionian Islands and the Adriatic approaches. The Venetian naval squadrons returned to the waters off Lefkada, aiming either to defend the island or, if necessary, to demolish its fortifications to prevent their use by the enemy.³¹

Even before the surrender of Modon, the Ottomans had also captured the small fortresses of Kelefa and Zarnata. On 9 August, several Ottoman light ships anchored in Itilo Bay near Kelefa. The following day, the garrisons of both fortresses surrendered without a fight, persuaded by the local Mainote population that resistance was hopeless. This lack of resistance from the Mainotes – long known as fierce opponents of Ottoman rule – underscores how swiftly the population recognised that Ottoman supremacy, both on land and sea, had made any attempt at defence futile. Around the same time, on the northern front of the campaign, the Ottomans launched an attack on the Castle of Morea, marking the second phase of their offensive. An estimated 40,000 Ottoman troops confronted a garrison of just over 900 men. After enduring four days of artillery bombardment, and despite inflicting significant casualties – around a thousand dead and wounded – the defenders, without reinforcements, surrendered on 13 August in exchange for safe passage.³²

Despite these successes, the Ottomans paid a high price for their victories. In addition to the heavy casualties sustained in the assault, the army suffered widespread desertions following the capture of Nafplio. So extensive were the losses that the Grand Vizier Damad Ali was able to send no more than 10,000 Janissaries to besiege Modon. Many soldiers, having seized loot in the recently conquered capital, deserted the army, assuming the campaign was effectively over.³³ These setbacks led Damad Ali to adopt a more cautious approach in his final objective:

31 ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin n. 76, 20.8.1715; no. 78, 5.9.1715; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 84-86; PINZELLI, *Venise et la Morée*, pp. 491-493.

32 HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, p. 89; PINZELLI, *Venise et la Morée*, p. 493.

33 HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, p. 83.

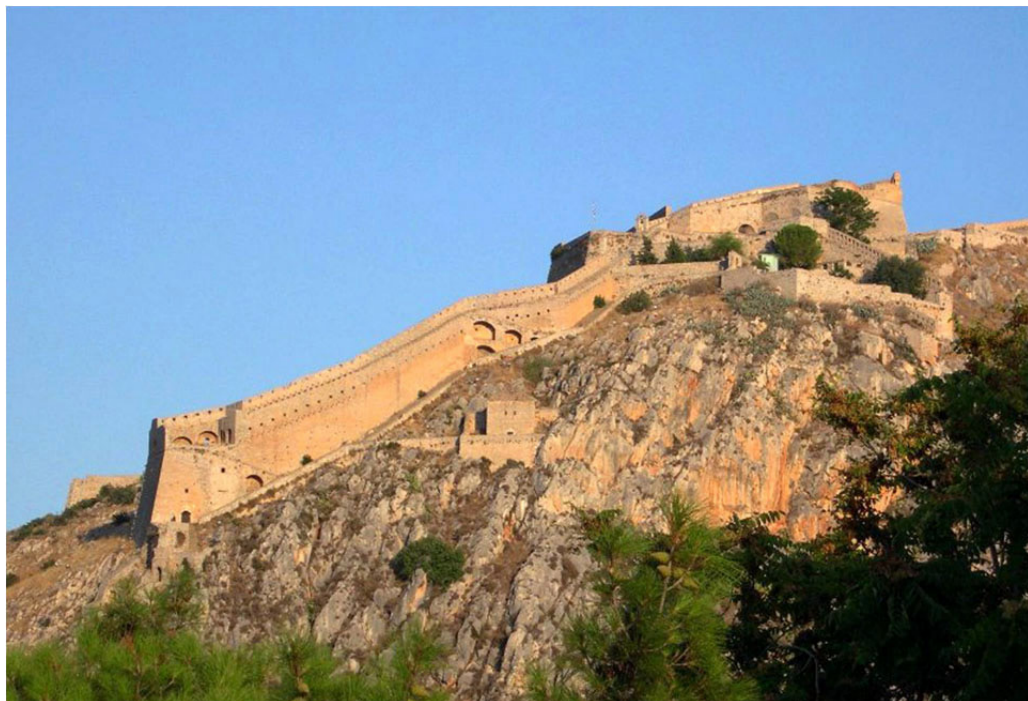


Fig. 4 The Palamidi Fortress at Nauplio, Foto Brastite 2005. CC SA 3.0
Wikimedia Commons

the capture of Malvasia (Monemvasia), the last remaining Venetian stronghold in the Morea, without the need for an attack. After the fall of Modon, the 400 defenders of Malvasia entered negotiations, proposing to surrender if no Venetian fleet arrived within twenty days to relieve them. The Grand Vizier, waiting for the outcome, left Modon no earlier than 22 August, advancing slowly eastward. The negotiations ultimately favoured the Ottomans. With no fleet in sight, the defenders of Malvasia surrendered on 7 September, handing over the final Venetian possession in the Morea.³⁴

Perhaps the most striking examples of Ottoman naval supremacy during the campaign, however, occurred not in the Morea, but in Crete, with the fall of Spinalonga and Souda - the last Venetian strongholds on the island. Of particular note is the surrender of Souda on 22 September, after resisting the Ottoman forc-

³⁴ ASV, *PTM*, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfin no. 83, 6.10.1715 [1°]; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 91-94.

es stationed in Crete for two and a half months. Yet, the fortress capitulated just four days after the Ottoman fleet appeared – unopposed – in the bay that bears its name. This swift collapse, after several failed attempts during the twenty-five-year Cretan War, highlights how naval dominance allowed the Ottomans to achieve in days what had previously eluded them for years.³⁵

This episode underscores a broader point: the failure of the 1715 Venetian campaign was largely due to the inadequacies of its navy, especially its most modern component – the sailing fleet, or *Armata Grossa*. This proved unable to challenge the Ottomans at sea or contribute meaningfully to the defence of the Morea. Ottoman naval superiority enabled them to fully exploit a strategy built around battle squadrons of ships of the line: to intimidate a weaker opponent into avoiding confrontation, thereby leaving the field open for Ottoman initiatives. This strategy directly led to the surrender of Monemvasia, Spinalonga and Souda in Crete, as well as the island of Kythira, and played a decisive role in the fall of Tinos, Nafplio, Modon, and the Castle of Morea. More generally, sailing warships demonstrated their ability to isolate and quickly bring down the same fortified bases that had once made possible the operations of rowing vessels (compensating for the significant logistical limitations of galleys) and which had been so central to naval warfare in the Mediterranean since at least the 16th century. From a strategic standpoint, too, the eastern Mediterranean now saw the definitive ascendancy of battle fleets composed of ships of the line. Ironically, although the Venetian fleet had pioneered this naval model, it was the Ottoman fleet that first succeeded in applying it effectively on a strategic scale.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AYDIN, Yusuf A., *Sultanin kalyonlari: Osmanli donanmasinin yelkenli savas gemileri, 1701–1770*, Istanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2011
- BAZAROVA, Tatiana, «The Process of Establishing the Border between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the Peace Treaty of Adrianople (1713)», in Ivan Parvev-Maria Baramova-Grigor Boykov, *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Wiesbaden, Harassowitz, 2015, pp. 121-132.
- CACCAMO, Domenico, *Venezia, Pietro il Grande e i Balcani*, in Francesco Guida-Luisa Valmarin, *Studi Balcanici pubblicati in occasione del VI Congresso Internazionale*

35 ASV, PTM, filza 1134, disp. D. Dolfino no. 85, 6.10.1715 [3°]; HATZOPOULOS, *La dernière guerre*, pp. 96-102.

- dell'Association Internationale d'Études Sud-Est Européennes (AIESEE), Roma, Carocci, 1989, pp. 61-83.
- CANDIANI, Guido, «A New Battle Fleet: The evolution of the Ottoman sailing navy, 1650–1718, revealed through Venetian sources» *Mariner's Mirror*, 104 (2018), pp. 18-26.
- ID., «Novità tecnologica e pressione psicologica: l'introduzione delle galeotte a bombe nella marina veneziana (1685-1695)», in *Storie di Armi*, a cura di Nicola Labanca-Pier Paolo Poggio, Milano, Unicopli, 2009, pp. 183-202.
- ID., *I vascelli della Serenissima: guerra, politica e costruzioni navali a Venezia in età moderna, 1650-1720*, Venezia, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2009.
- HATZOPOULOS, Dionysios, *La dernière guerre entre la République de Venise et l'Empire Ottoman (1714-1718)*, Montreal, College Dawson, 1999.
- LANFRANCHI, Fausto, «Porti e approdi per la difesa della Morea nella strategia e logistica dell'Armata veneziana», *Studi Veneziani*, n.s., LXVIII (2013), pp. 420-463.
- PINZELLI, Eric, «Le forteresses de Morée. Projets de restaurations et de démantèlements durant la seconde période venitienne (1687-1715)», *Thesaurismata*, 30 (2000), pp. 379-427.
- ID., *Venise et la Morée: du triomphe à la désillusion (1684-1718)*, Thèse de Doctorat, Directeur de Thèse Daniel Panzac, Université de Provence, 2003-
- ROMIO, Marco, «“Una scabrosità giurisdizionale”. Sistema consuetudinario e giustizia veneziana in Maina (XVIII secolo)», *Acta Histriae*, 25 (2017), pp. 335-348.
- VIGGIANO, Alfredo «Religion and Borders in Venetian Stato da Mar in the late 18th Century», in Egidio Ivetic-Drago Roksandic, *Tolérance and Intolérance on the Triplex Confinium. Approaching the “Other” on the Borderlands. Eastern Adriatic and beyond, 1500-1800*, Padova, Cleup, 2007, pp. 223-242.
- WAGSTAFF, Jim M. «War and Settlement Desertion in the Morea, 1685-1830», *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s. 3 (1998), pp. 295-308.



Fig. 5 Portrait of Daniele IV Dolfin (Giambattista Tiepolo).
Pinacoteca Querini Stampalia Web gallery of Art. Wikimedia Commons



Johann Georg Ziesenis (1716-1776). Portrait of Friedrich the Great (1763).
Sans-Souci Palace. Wikimedia Commons

Storia Militare Moderna

Articoli / Articles - Military History

- On the dating of the Trigonion Tower, Thessaloniki,
by DIONYSIOS HATZOPOULOS & STATHIS BIRTACHAS,
 - «Ut insigna nostra ad libitum tuum deferri facere possis». Ferrante Gonzaga e Giulio III,
di GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI,
 - Tra tecnica e retorica: come opporsi a un nemico più forte nei trattati di architettura militare del Cinquecento
di MICHEL PRETALLI,
 - Genova contro i Barbareschi: una piccola lunga guerra mediterranea (XVI-XVIII sec.),
di EMILIANO BERI,
 - A Knight of the “Imagined Kingdom”: *fra* ‘Don Alfonso d’Avalos Between Spanish Italy and Habsburg Netherlands,’
by MAURIZIO ARFAIOLI,
 - The first dragoon companies of the Habsburg Empire The organization, recruitment, arming and first muster of during the Long Turkish War (1591–1606),
by ZOLTÁN PÉTER BAGI,
 - Sir Robert Dudley in the Service of the Medici: Tuscany in the Theatre of Global Politics and Trade,
by MIRELA ALTIĆ,
 - The Evolution of Fighting Tactics in the Mediterranean: Ottoman-Venetian Naval Battles during the Cretan Campaigns (1649-1655),
by EMIRHAN ÖZÇELİK,
 - «Spettacolo di onore e di orror pienissimo». La guerra nei ‘Campeggiamenti’ di Emanuele Tesauro,
di DENISE ARICÒ,
 - Battle plans in the 17th century on the example of the ‘Ordres de bataille’ from Riksarkivet – Focusing on the Armies of Western Europe,
by MARIUSZ BALCEREK,
 - Le più antiche armi da fuoco portatili a ripetizione,
di MARCO MERLO,
 - A defeat that came from the sea: the Venetian loss of the Morea, 1715,
by GUIDO CANDIANI,
 - Storia, fonti e strategia delle fortificazioni campali sabaude in valle Stura di Demonte nel XVIII secolo,
di ROBERTO SCONFENZA,
 - La dissolution des Cent-Suisses de la Garde du Roi de Sardaigne, le 20 juin 1802,
par BRUNO PAUVERT,
 - Il 13° Reggimento Ussari napoleonico reclutato nelle Divisioni di Toscana e di Roma (1813-1814),
di PIERO CROCIANI,
-

Recensioni

- CHRISTOPHER LYNCH, *Machiavelli on War*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- OLIVIER ARANDA, JULIEN GUINAND, CAROLINE LE MAO (dir.), *Atlas des guerres à l’époque moderne, XVI^e - XVII^e - XVIII^e siècles*,
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- JAAKKO BJÖRKLUND et al., (eds.), *The Business of War in the Early Modern Baltic Sea Region, 1530-1765*
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- LOTHAR HÖBELT, PAVEL MAREK (eds.), *The Escalation of the Thirty Years’ War in the 1620s. The Threats to Habsburg Hegemony and the Rise of Wallenstein*
(by LUCA DOMIZIO)
- MARZIO MAGNO, *Venezia in 10 battaglie navali*
(di FEDERICO MORO)
- CHANNA WICKREMESEKERA, *A Modest Arsenal. Gunpowder Weapons in Sri Lanka*
(by KAUSHIK ROY)
- GEOFFREY PARKER, *Il re imprudente. Una nuova vita di Filippo II*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- STEPHEN ALFORD, *All His Spies. The Secret World of Robert Cecil*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- EMRAH SAFA GURKAN, *Spies for the Sultan*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- GIAMPIERO BRUNELLI (ed.) *Giovanni Marco Isolani Compendio di molti anni di guerre seguite in Ungheria*
(by VIKTOR KANÁSZ)
- IAN GENTLES, *The New Model Army*
(di GIANCARLO FINIZIO)
- TOBY GREEN, *The Heretic of Cacheu. Struggles Over Life in a Seventeenth-Century West African Port*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- ANNA BRINKMAN, *Balancing Strategy. Sea Power, Neutrality, and Prize Law in the Seven Years’ War*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- SUZANE SUTHERLAND, *The Rise of the Military Entrepreneur*
(by JEREMY BLACK)
- VALERIA MANFRÉ, *Immagini cartografiche e ingegneri in Sardegna e Sicilia nel Settecento*
(per DANIEL CRESPO DELGADO)
- DOMENICO ANFORA, *L’istruzione pubblica ai tempi dei Borbone*
(di ROSA CARNEVALE)
- Compte rendu d’ouvrages 2025-2026,
(par ROBERTO BARAZZUTTI)