

Dirassat & Abhath
The Arabic Journal of Human
and Social Sciences



مجلة دراسات وأبحاث
المجلة العربية في العلوم الإنسانية
والاجتماعية

EISSN: 2253-0363
ISSN : 1112-9751

The Algerian–Spanish and English Conflict in the Mediterranean in Light of Historical Sources

الصراع الجزائري الإسباني والإنجليزي في المتوسط
على ضوء المصادر التاريخية

Dr. Bouchiba Dhiba

Associate Professor (A), Saida University – Dr. Tahar Moulay, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Department of Human Sciences, Research Laboratory of Orientalism Research and Studies in the Civilization of the Islamic Maghreb, Djillali Liabès University, Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria.

dehiba.bouchiba@univ-saida.dz

د. بوشيبه دهيبة

أستاذة محاضرة (أ)، جامعة سعيدة – د. الطاهر مولاي، كلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإنسانية، قسم العلوم الإنسانية، مخبر البحوث والدراسات الاستشرافية في حضارة المغرب الإسلامي، جامعة الجيلالي الياابس، سيدي بلعباس

dehiba.bouchiba@univ-saida.dz

Corresponding author: Bouchiba Dhiba,

E-mail: *dehiba.bouchiba@univ-saida.dz*

تاريخ القبول : 2026/03/04

تاريخ الاستلام: 2026/01/26

Abstract:

The modern era marked the beginning of political and military conflict in the western Mediterranean as a result of the Age of Geographical Discoveries and the rise of colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, and Great Britain. In response, the Ottoman Empire emerged as a dominant force, incorporating key strategic regions of the Mediterranean, including Algeria. Algeria developed into a powerful military entity and a strategic ally of the Sublime Porte, playing a central role in Ottoman policy aimed at controlling the Mediterranean. This led to continuous confrontations with European powers throughout the modern period. The most significant conflict was with Spain between 1505 and 1791 over influence and supremacy, alongside disputes with Italian city-states and France. English threats toward the Eyalet, particularly concerning the issue of captives, further intensified tensions. Military confrontations shaped these relations, while diplomatic treaties played an important role. Over time, these struggles weakened Algeria's naval fleet and exhausted its forces, facilitating the French conquest in 1830 and ending its international standing.

Keywords:

the western Mediterranean, the Ottoman Empire, captives, diplomatic, the Regency of Algiers.

المخلص:

يعتبر العصر الحديث بداية الصراع السياسي والعسكري في الحوض الغربي للمتوسط، وهذا راجع إلى آثار حركة الكشوفات الجغرافية وظهور الدول الاستعمارية التقليدية إسبانيا، البرتغال وبريطانيا العظمى، وفي مقابل ذلك ظهرت الدولة العثمانية التي ضمت أهم المناطق الإستراتيجية في المتوسط من بينها الجزائر، التي ظهرت كقوة عسكرية وحليف إستراتيجي للباب العالي في المنطقة، والتي اعتبرت من أهم أولوياتها تجاه الباب العالي السيطرة على المتوسط وفرض هيمنتها فيه، مما أدى إلى صدام بينها وبين هذه الدول عبر فترات مختلفة من العصر الحديث ن غير أن أهم صراعاتها كانت مع إسبانيا 1505-1791م حول النفوذ، ثم نزاعاتها المختلفة مع المدن الإيطالية وفرنسا، والتهديدات الإنجليزية للإيالة حول مسألة الأسرى، حيث شكلت المواجهة العسكرية واقع تلك العلاقات، والمعاهدات الدبلوماسية محورا لتلك النزاعات، مما أضعف اسطول الإيالة وأنهاك جيشها البري والبحري، ليقض الاستعمار الفرنسي 1830م ويطمس معالمها بعد هيبة دولية واسعة خلال العصر الحديث..

الكلمات المفتاحية: غرب البحر الأبيض المتوسط، الإمبراطورية العثمانية، الأسرى، الدبلوماسية، وصاية الجزائر.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean Sea¹ (Hassan, 1999, p. 28), (Ibn Khaldun, 2004, p. 243), (Braudel, 1982, p. 125)) constituted a geographical and historical reality during the modern period, and the Mediterranean region represented an important strategic and political stake due to its maritime advantages and its unique location. It lies at the crossroads of three continents—Africa, Asia, and Europe—and forms a central axis of connection between the Atlantic and

Indian Oceans, as it oversees three major gateways: the Strait of Gibraltar, the Bosphorus Strait, and the Nile River–Suez Canal. This made it a vital space that controlled political relations among states in both peace and war. It is also regarded as a center of human interaction and ancient civilizations—Egyptian, Greek, and Roman—and as a source of religious and cultural diversity in the world, with Islam prevailing in the south and Catholicism in the north.

Thus, the Mediterranean Sea has

historically been a meeting point between two different worlds, combining cooperation and alliance at times, and war and conflict at others. It was the theater of the conflict between Rome and Carthage in antiquity (264 BC–146 BC), the Crusades during the medieval period (1095 AD–1291 AD), as well as the confrontation between Islam and Christianity in the modern era following the fall of Granada² (al-Hamawi, n.d, p. 221) in 1492 and the emergence of traditional powers in the region, namely Spain, Great Britain, Portugal, the southern kingdoms, and the Ottoman Empire. The latter represented the Islamic Caliphate in the Maghrebi region through its control over Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripoli of the West.

International interest in the Mediterranean region developed across different historical periods, as the strategic thinking of the political powers associated with it was based on the idea that whoever controls the Mediterranean Sea controls maritime navigation within it, and consequently influences the political and economic policies of other states. The conflicts that emerged during the modern period clearly illustrate this reality, leading us to pose the following research problem:

The Reality of the Relations of the Regency of Algiers in the Mediterranean during the Modern Era

2. The Mediterranean Sea as a Vital Space for International Interaction

The Ottoman presence in the western Mediterranean had a significant impact on the course of events witnessed in the region of the Islamic West during the 10th century AH / 16th century AD. Through their movements in the western Mediterranean and their interventions in certain regions of the Maghreb, the Ottomans sought to consolidate their presence in the Mediterranean by establishing key strategic bases, represented by the island of Djerba³ (al-Bakri, n.d, p. 668), Malta, Tunisia, and Rhodes⁴ (Ben Sahraoui, 2014). This policy came as a response to the Christian advance that intensified after the Spanish–Portuguese Treaty of Tordesillas⁵ in June 1494, which

undoubtedly contributed to revitalizing the resistance movement launched in response to Christian attacks targeting the Maghreb region during this period (Rezzag Baara, 2015, pp. 150-174).

Ottoman expansion in the western Mediterranean falls within a broader historical movement aimed at creating a form of balance in the face of the new Christian expansion, whether on the religious level—namely the wars of Reconquista—or on the commercial level, through Europe's entry into the age of geographical discoveries. This movement sought to outflank the Muslim world, dominate its lands, weaken its economy, and establish alternative routes to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea (Ben Sahraoui, 2014, pp. 229-245). These developments compelled the Ottoman state to transform the nature of its military power from land-based to naval. This shift is evident in what Khayr al-Din Barbarossa recorded in his memoirs, stating: "I gave orders to the naval commanders to set out on raids in the eastern Mediterranean and the regions of Cyprus, and then return to Algiers" (Barbaross, n.d, p. 75).

Accordingly, efforts were made to transform Ottoman activities in the Maghreb region into maritime operations and to strengthen the Ottoman naval fleet, "as the Ottomans turned their attention to the western Mediterranean basin after their inability to confront Portuguese power in the Gulf, Yemen, and India. They dispatched their infantry forces and private fleets, such as those led by Kemal Pasha⁶ and the Barbarossa brothers, to launch raids against Spanish ports in order to assist Muslims on the one hand, and to divert Spanish forces from advancing toward the Maghreb and the eastern Mediterranean on the other—that is, to preserve the existing boundaries between the two worlds and civilizations..." (Rezzag Baara, 2015, p. 163).

It was not easy for the Ottomans to enter the realm of naval power at a time when the main seas—the Mediterranean and the Red Sea—had become havens of piracy

fueled by ecclesiastical circles (Ben Sahraoui, 2014, p. 230), which used Christian religious duty as a justification for pursuing merchants and pilgrims. Therefore, granting the Barbarossa brothers a free hand in the Mediterranean constituted a fundamental pillar of Ottoman strategy in its struggle against Christian powers in the western Mediterranean (Boutaba, 2018, pp. 117-138).

The Ottoman Empire assumed the responsibility of defending the Islamic principalities and protecting them from the increasing Christian threat, known as the Spanish *Wars of Reconquest* (La Reconquista), which targeted the western Mediterranean basin. As a result, key cities fell one after another, including El Marsa Kabira (1505), Oran (1509), and Béjaïa (1510–1511). The allied Spanish forces even managed to penetrate the central areas of these strategic cities.

In this context, Captain Piri Reis noted: “The city of Béjaïa was subjected to a Spanish invasion in a military campaign comprising 60 ships. After it fell into the hands of the infidels, the inhabitants fled to the nearby mountains along with the city’s ruler, Abd al-Rahman⁷ (Ibn al-Sharef, 1969). Once the infidels gained control of the city, they demolished the buildings, and the city became entirely at their mercy...” (Reis, 1986, p. 164)

This prompted the inhabitants of Béjaïa to contact the Barbarossa brothers for assistance in liberating their city from Spanish occupation (Haedo, n.d, p. 47). However, it appears that Khayr al-Din and Aruj were unable to regain control in Béjaïa due to insufficient forces and manpower. According to al-Hasan al-Wazzan, who witnessed the events in Béjaïa: “I departed from Algiers intending to reach Béjaïa and found Barbarossa besieged in its citadel. I stayed with him to observe the end of this battle until he fled and took refuge in Jijel” (al-Wazzan, 2003, p. 272).

This failure was due to weak local resistance, the collusion of the Zayyanid authorities with the Spaniards, and the lack

of Ottoman reinforcements for Aruj. After several attempts by the Barbarossa brothers to liberate the Algerian coasts from Spanish occupation, Aruj was martyred by the Spaniards in 1518. Khayr al-Din intended to leave Algiers following his brother’s death, but the city’s notables requested him to stay (Darwish, 2020, pp. 5-19). Consequently, he abandoned his plan and began working on strengthening the foundations of the Algerian state (Darwish, 2020, p. 9).

Faced with Spanish threats to the Algerian coasts, the absence of a military force to confront the Spaniards, and the weakness of the central authority, Khair ad-Din believed that the only power capable of protecting the country was the Ottoman state. He presented this to the notables of the city of Algiers, who agreed and sent a message to the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (1512–1520) requesting submission to the Ottoman state in 1519 (Darwish, 2020, p. 9). Sultan Selim I consented to incorporate Algiers into his kingdom and appointed Khair ad-Din as governor of Algiers and its territories, in order to face the Spanish threat in the Mediterranean basin (Seddiki & Ben Yattou, 2023, pp. 419-446).

Ibn al-Mufti mentioned this, saying: “And he informed Sultan Mansur Bayezid Khan, son of Sultan Muhammad Khan, of these events in the year 925 AH – 1519 CE, so he sent Ishaq Pasha to Algiers with some soldiers, followed by others, until Algiers became a matter of great importance” (Chaouch, 2009, p. 80).

The year 1519 is considered the date of the official annexation of the Regency of Algiers to the Ottoman Caliphate, making Algiers the most important Ottoman province in the Maghreb (Raymond, 1985). It would gain international prestige thanks to the support of the Ottoman state and the financing of its fleets in the Mediterranean, thus establishing extensive relations with European states and principalities under the framework of their relations with the Sublime Porte. The Ottoman sultans required the rulers of Algiers to respect this relationship, whether in peace or war. For

example, the firman sent by Sultan Mustafa III (1757–1774 CE) to Dey Ali Pasha in late Dhu al-Qi'dah 1172 AH – 1758 CE ordered Algerian sailors to avoid attacking ships belonging to the principality of Ravore and to return the captured ship (National Library of Algeria, n.d), because its subjects paid tribute to the Sublime Porte (Darwish, 2020, p. 9).

The circumstances in the Mediterranean basin compelled Algiers to adopt the principle of jihad as a fundamental basis for its maritime relations in the Mediterranean, in order to confront European aggressions in the region.

To achieve this, it focused on intensifying recruitment and strengthening the naval fleet, with recruitment requests sent through Algiers' agents residing in various Ottoman provinces in Anatolia, in order to protect Algiers from surrounding threats (Ottoman State Archives, n.d). In *Al-Tibr al-Masbuk* it is stated: "...for God has favored you above other lands by making you a land of jihad..." (Khodja M. b., n.d, p. 2), as well as: "Praise be to God who blessed us with jihad and promised us one of the two best outcomes on Monday and aided us against the worshippers of idols and the stubborn people..." (Khodja M. b., n.d, p. 2)

The Ottoman state also sought to equip the naval fleets of the Regency of Algiers to assert its control over the Mediterranean and turn it into an Ottoman lake, sending war supplies and various military equipment. Regarding these Ottoman aids to Algiers, a document provides information of great importance, including details related to Ottoman supplies (Ottoman State Archives (BOA), 1245 AH).

3. Algerian-European Relations:

Faced with the imbalance between the Christian West and the Islamic East, the superiority of the Iberian powers, and the decline of the Maghreb powers at the beginning of the 15th century, Spain and Portugal competed against Islam and Muslims in a crusade supported materially

by the Church, launching raids characterized by brutality, while the official resistance of the Zayyanid state remained ineffective (Ben Hadda, 2019, pp. 345-358).

The Islamic Ottoman power intervened to save the Islamic Maghreb and respond to the calls of the local populations for help against the Crusader attacks, protecting and liberating the coastal strongholds (Ben Hadda, 2019, p. 348). This is what became known as maritime jihad, which Algiers adopted after its official incorporation into the Ottoman sanjak, opening wide opportunities for the regency to diversify its foreign relations, both in terms of cooperative integration within the Islamic Caliphate (Ben Hadda, 2019, p. 348) and defensive balance with the enticements of major naval powers.

Thus, it can be said that since the early 16th century, Algiers had been engaged in naval wars with the traditional European powers, primarily Spain, to maintain the security and stability of the regency. Algiers functioned as a defensive line for the Ottoman state in the Mediterranean, and securing it meant preserving Ottoman territories in the eastern and western Mediterranean. This is reflected in the words of Ibn Rukiya al-Tlemsani: "...they exerted all their efforts against us, yet as long as we live, you will not seize even a stone from Algeria, and between us and you there is nothing but the sword and jihad until God judges between us, and He is the best of judges..."⁸ (Al-Jadiri, n.d, p. 5).

For the purpose of dominating the Mediterranean, the Ottoman state organized the military institution in Algiers and strengthened the naval fleet during various phases of Ottoman presence in the regency. Most relations with Europe, whether peaceful or wartime, aimed to supply the regency with military equipment: weapons, cannons, ammunition, ready ships, sails, etc.

In this regard, William Schaler mentions: "...in times of prosperity, the regency would present a gift to the Ottoman Sultan once every three years... and in return, the Ottoman state would send a ship

loaded with military ammunition to the Dey...” (Shaler, 1982, p. 44), in order to reinforce its defensive power and ensure control over the western Mediterranean basin. Hamdan Khoja also indicated: “...Ottoman support was natural because the regency was part of its provinces and under its protection...” (Khodja H. B., 2006).

Ottoman support for the regency was not limited to material assistance alone; it also extended to human resources, represented by successive groups of volunteer recruits whom the Sublime Porte sent to Algiers. The Ottoman sultans realized the importance of these recruits in strengthening the military capacity of the regency in confronting European aggressions (Hammache, 2003, pp. 27-48). As a result, Algiers faced a series of European naval campaigns aimed at eliminating it and reinforcing European dominance in the Mediterranean.

3.Causes of the European–Algerian Conflict

The causes of the conflict between Algiers and European states, including Spain and England, can be traced to several factors:

Strategic and Religious Causes:

The conflict between Christianity and Islam; the desire to control the western Mediterranean basin and its most important straits and maritime passages; and the attempt to secure certain European coastlines—particularly Spain—from Algerian corsair activity.

Political and Military Causes:

The continuation of Ottoman–European rivalry and the pursuit of geopolitical control over key Ottoman territories in North Africa, especially Oran, which belonged to the Regency of Algiers from 1509 to 1791. This also included expansionist ambitions in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, as promoted by the Age of Geographical Discoveries, in preparation for establishing colonies in strategically important regions. Another objective was to secure the coasts of most European states from the attacks of the Sublime Porte’s

corsairs, foremost among them Algiers, and to repel the attacks of Ottoman regency fleets in the Mediterranean.

Economic Causes:

The protection of European trade in the Mediterranean, the securing of maritime shipping, and control over major maritime trade routes. This also involved linking Mediterranean maritime outlets to the Atlantic Ocean in order to expand trade with major powers, especially England.

Humanitarian Causes:

Reducing the phenomenon of captivity and the enslavement of Europeans, which had become an important source of revenue for the Ottoman regencies in the Mediterranean.

First: The Spanish campaigns against the regency between 1516 and 1791, foremost among them the royal expedition known as the “Charles V Campaign”⁹.

This campaign is considered the most important of the European expeditions against the regency, as the king personally supervised it, due to the traditional hostility between the Ottomans and the House of Habsburg¹⁰. This conflict had intensified since the beginning of the 16th century and extended across vast areas of Central Europe as well as the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean Sea (Al-Oubaidi, 2010, pp. 40-48). It was therefore natural for this struggle to escalate and occupy a significant place in the relations between the two sides. From this perspective, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–1566) realized the necessity of expanding the scope of military operations in the central and western Mediterranean.

The Wars of Algiers with Spain

Charles V prepared to confront Khair ad-Din, adopting a defensive strategy aimed at confining the Ottomans to the eastern parts of the Mediterranean. The maritime corridor stretching from Sicily toward Tunisia was intended to serve as a strategic and naval boundary for the Habsburg Empire.

Charles V began preparations for the campaign, which consisted of a naval

armada of approximately 500 ships, carrying 24,000 soldiers (Al-Oubaidi, 2010, p. 41) and 12,000 sailors. The fleet was placed under the naval command of Admiral Andrea Doria, while the land forces were led by General Duke of Alba. By contrast, the city of Algiers had only 600 Turkish soldiers and 2,000 Arab volunteer horsemen under the command of Hasan Agha. The expedition set sail from the port of Mahon on 18 October 1541, reaching the waters off Algiers on 20 October. However, due to adverse natural conditions and the lack of a precise military strategy on the part of Charles V's forces, the campaign ended in a disastrous failure, the repercussions of which echoed across Europe and led to the collapse of the religious and military European alliance that Charles V had mobilized to eliminate Algiers.

The Campaign of Count O'Reilly¹¹ (1769–1775)

In the second half of the 18th century, Spanish campaigns reemerged with the aim of subjugating the city of Algiers and incorporating it into Spanish possessions. King Carlos III (1759–1788) decided to send a military expedition consisting of six large ships, fourteen frigates, and 300 transport vessels, carrying 22,000 combatants, under the command of Count O'Reilly. The campaign set sail from the port of Carthage on 15 May 1775, but due to adverse weather conditions, it was delayed until June 1775, reaching the coast of Algiers on 1 July 1775. The Spanish forces landed west of El Harrach, at the river known as Arach (Venture de Paradis, n.d, pp. 165-166).

One of the most important accounts of this campaign, provided by **Al-Matmati**, states:

“He prepared an army—rather, many armies... and headed for Algiers. The ships anchored close to its coast on the first of Jumada al-Awwal, which was a Friday. When the following Friday passed, they went ashore on Saturday, the ninth of the month, in a location known as El Harrach...” (Al-Matmati, n.d, p. 153)¹²

The regency's army consisted of Dey

Muhammad Pasha (1766–1791) as overall commander, Mustafa Bey Tietri (1775–1794) on the left flank (Jebha Foust), and Saleh Bey (1771–1792) on the right side of Wadi El Harrach, leading a large army.

Ibn Rukiya reported:

“Afterwards, Muhammad Pasha sent orders to Saleh Bey, responsible for the eastern sector, because he never left it and could reach Algiers in two or three days if summoned; likewise to Bey of the Tetré sector, and also to the deputy of the western sector...”⁴³ missing bibliography

Sources note that the two armies met at Tabna El Harrach (Anonymous, p. 3), a site where the Spanish had landed on two occasions: first during Charles V's campaign in 1541, and second during O'Reilly's campaign in 1775. The battle lasted eleven days, during which Dey Muhammad Pasha surrounded the Spanish forces, who used every tactic to breach the city of Algiers. However, O'Reilly's campaign failed disastrously, with between 4,000 and 10,000 Spaniards killed, and some missing. Algiers captured 16 cannons¹³, 40,000 cannonballs, and a large quantity of ammunition, firearms, wood, and clothing (Bouaziz, 2009, p. 20).

O'Reilly and Pedro Castejo retreated from the outskirts of Algiers, and King Carlos III's hopes of fulfilling the ambitions of the House of Habsburg to seize Algiers were completely thwarted.

The First and Second Campaigns of Don Antonio (1783–1784)

The Spanish Kingdom and the Papal Church sought to compensate for their repeated defeats against Algiers by preparing a new campaign under Don Antonio de Barceló. According to historical accounts, “in the year 1197 AH, the Spaniards arrived for the second time... bringing large boats, some equipped with cannons and some with mortars... and they began firing bombs. On that day, the mosque built by Muhammad Pasha, the Mosque of Sayyida, was destroyed” (Al-Zahar, 1980, p. 31).

According to De Grammont, the

Spanish expedition set sail from Cartagena on 13 July 1783, and the military fleet consisted of four large warships, six frigates, twelve small vessels, three cutters, ten gunboats, and forty bomb-launching boats 4 (De Grammont, 1887, p. 334). The campaign reached the Algerian coast on 29 July, and Dey Muhammad Pasha prepared to confront the Spaniards. The bomb-launching vessels caused damage to the forts and castles of Algiers because the Spanish used floating artillery ships (*lajur*), as noted by De Paradis: "In July 1783, the Spaniards bombarded the city of Algiers, causing damage" (Venture de Paradis, n.d, p. 165). However, these attacks failed to breach the city, and the Spanish forces retreated.

The second campaign, also called the Triple Crusade, involved Spain, Naples, and Malta. It departed from Spain on 28 June 1784, after receiving papal blessing (Venture de Paradis, n.d, p. 3). In preparation, Dey Muhammad ibn Uthman (1766–1791) sought to remedy the weaknesses exposed during the previous campaign. As Charles Féraud reports, the Dey removed the traces of the earlier bombardment as part of his military preparations, knowing that the Spaniards "would seek revenge" (Féraud, 1876, p. 313).

The crusader fleet reached Algiers on 9 July 1784, and the Algerian forces prepared to defend the city. This time, the defense was conducted at sea, as the Dey dispatched artillery-carrying ships to prevent the Spanish from approaching the Sultan's palace and causing damage. De Paradis reports: "...in 1784, the Spaniards bombarded Algiers, but the Algerian artillery boats intercepted the Spanish bombs, so that not a single bomb fell on the city, because the Spanish fire was too distant" (Venture de Paradis, n.d, p. 165).

The two sides engaged in continuous battles morning and evening until 22 July 1784, after which the Spanish fleet began to withdraw on 23 July. Al-Zahar notes: "...and the fleet remained for days, and realized it had no power over Algiers, so it left" 53 (Al-Zahar, 1980, p. 33).

The Spanish campaign resulted in losses for both sides; however, its most important outcome was peace. After all military options against the Regency failed, the Spaniards resorted to negotiation and settlement with Algiers. Al-Zahar reports: "In 1199 AH, the Spaniards came for peace, bringing with them the captives they held, and exchanged them for Christian prisoners" (Al-Zahar, 1980, p. 34).

In 1785, Spain sent delegates D'Expilly Conte and Admiral Mazarredo to settle the dispute between the two countries through the French consul De Kersey. A peace treaty was signed on 17 Shawwal 1200 AH (corresponding to 14 June 1786 CE), establishing a maritime truce¹⁴ with King Carlos III (1759–1788), while land hostilities regarding Oran remained ongoing. The treaty consisted of 25 articles, addressing various issues primarily related to maritime navigation, trade exchanges, the status of the Spanish community, the powers granted to the Spanish consul, and the matter of occupying Oran and Mers El Kebir.

The Anglo-Algerian Conflict

The dominance of the Algerian fleet in the Mediterranean led to various conflicts with several states, including England, which was affected by Algeria's growing control over the region. The two sides confronted each other on multiple occasions. The first English campaign took place in 1620, led by Mr. Robermansal (Playfair, 1800, pp. 408-432). This expedition consisted of 18 ships carrying 250 men and 40 cannons. It was a disciplinary liberation campaign that did not result in direct confrontation. Dey Sharif Kosa (1619–1621) released 40 English captives, while the English bombarded the city of Algiers. Robermansal proposed a peace agreement between Algeria and England, but the situation in the Mediterranean remained unchanged.

The English organized another campaign in 1643, led by Casson. After negotiations, they reached an agreement providing for the release of all English captives in Algiers, reportedly 244 prisoners,

including women and children. The English government sent a ship to transport the freed captives, while Casson remained in Algiers to oversee the process (Playfair, 1800, p. 312).

It appears that the most significant factor governing Anglo-Algerian relations was the issue of captives, as the total number of English prisoners in Algiers reached approximately 650, reflecting the frequent targeting of English ships by piracy in the Mediterranean.

In 1658, the English declared war on the Regency, dispatching a fleet led by Admiral Robert Blake aboard the ship *St. George*. This campaign, however, was similar to the previous one and did not result in actual warfare. It seems that the English aimed primarily at a show of force, while Dey Ahmed Pasha (1658–1659) responded by releasing the English captives.

The 1658 campaign concluded with the signing of a peace treaty on 23 April 1662. Nevertheless, Algerian naval activity in the Mediterranean violated the agreement, prompting England to declare war again. This led to Admiral John Harman's campaign between May 1669 and August 1671, which resulted in the assault on the port of Béjaïa and the burning of anchored ships. In 1674, the campaign of Sir John Marber Cold Selechoval targeted pirates in Tunisia, Tripoli, and Algeria, successfully curbing their activity in the Mediterranean (Playfair, 1800, p. 404).

Anglo-Algerian relations oscillated between accord and tension and never achieved stability. This was naturally due to conflicting interests and each state's desire to control the Mediterranean until 1815, the year of the Congress of Vienna, whose most important decisions included the abolition of piracy and slavery in the Mediterranean. This congress led to differing European perspectives, with some countries supporting and others opposing the measures, especially since most, including France and England, had multiple interests linked to the Ottoman Empire. England therefore prepared a military expedition

against Algiers, led by Lord Exmouth¹⁵. This expedition arrived at the Regency at the end of August 1816. Unlike previous campaigns, as described by Abdul Rahman bin Idris Al-Tenlali Al-Tuwati:

“...on Sunday of that month, at sunset, the ships of the enemy of God, the English, landed near Algiers. They were 40 ships, each carrying a large cannon, each cannon loaded with a hundredweight of gunpowder, and they disembarked far from the city so that Algerian fire could not reach them...” (al-Tanlālī, 2006, p. 201)

According to historical sources, Lord Exmouth employed a ruse to enter the port of Algiers:

“On the morning of Tuesday, they raised all their ship flags, changing them from black to white, signaling peace and safety; unlike the black flags, which meant war...” (al-Tanlālī, 2006, p. 245)

He then began bombarding strategic locations in the city, including the water source that supplied the city for drinking and ablution, hitting it with three cannons (al-Tanlālī, 2006, p. 247). He also destroyed and burned a significant portion of the Algerian fleet in the harbor:

“...the number of burned ships was 14 very large vessels; 13 were completely destroyed, leaving no trace, and the fourteenth had some remains...” (Shaler, 1982, p. 156)

Schaller notes:

“...when Admiral Exmouth reached Algiers, he sent a warning to his government and demanded a response within a specified period...” (Shaler, 1982, p. 156)

It is clear that Dey Omar Pasha (1815–1817) had disagreements with the English regarding the issue of prisoners and the ransom amount, as reported in some sources. This led to the English bombardment of Algiers:

“...then he fired upon the city with gunpowder, beginning after afternoon and continuing until nearly midnight; the duration, according to verification, was 11 hours...” (al-Tanlālī, 2006, p. 247)

He did not stop until the Dey, Omar

Pasha, accepted the peace settlement, the terms of which had been determined by the British and, naturally, served their interests. Evidence of this is the long period during which the Dey deliberated before agreeing to the conditions of the peace. Exmouth then departed from Algiers.

The campaign of Lord Exmouth is considered one of the boldest naval expeditions launched against Algiers. It caused severe damage to the city and threatened the Dey in the very heart of his seat of power. This reflects the European resentment¹⁶ toward the Algerian navy and the effort to eliminate it, viewing it as a center of piracy, and also highlights the military strength of Britain. (Saïoud, 2011, pp. 145-162)

1. the Mediterranean Sea

The name “Mediterranean Sea” is derived from two Latin words: *medius*, meaning “middle,” and *terra*, meaning “land.” It is considered one of the most important seas in the world, as it connects three continents: Africa, Europe, and Asia. The Mediterranean also represents a basin that encompasses an endless number of nationalities, languages, and cultures along its southern and northern shores. Ibn Khaldun and the local inhabitants described it as “the sword of this sea, and its shores—its enemies suffer from its conditions what no other nation of the seas suffers.”

As Braudel stated: “...one cannot understand the history of the world and the inland seas without understanding the history of the Mediterranean Sea...” He adds in this context: “Whoever controls the sea always controls the wealth...”¹⁷

2. Granada:

In *Mu‘jam al-Buldan* (Dictionary of Countries), its name means “the pomegranate” in the language of the Andalusian non-Arabs, and it was called so because of its beauty. Granada is also considered one of the oldest cities of the Kura of Al-Bira during the Andalusian period, distinguished by its elegance, grandeur, and fortifications (al-Hamawi, n.d, p. 221).

3. Djerba:

Near Gabès, the island of Djerba has numerous gardens and olive groves. Its inhabitants are known for causing disturbances on land and at sea and are described as Khawarij. (al-Bakri, n.d, p. 668)

4. Rhodes:

A Greek island that was established as the headquarters of the Knights of St. John in 1309 CE, after they transformed from monks into a military order following the Crusades. The Ottomans attempted to capture the island several times but were unsuccessful until 1522. Afterward, the Knights of St. John spread along the coasts of the Mediterranean before establishing their headquarters in Malta, which was granted to them in 1530. (Ben Sahraoui, 2014)

5. Tordesillas:

A Spanish-Portuguese agreement during the period of Christian-Islamic conflicts following the fall of Granada in 1492. The treaty, signed on 7 June 1494, aimed to resolve disputes over newly acquired lands by Christopher Columbus or other European explorers. It delineated the borders between Spanish and Portuguese territories as established by Pope Alexander VI in 1493. Spain gained control over newly discovered lands in the west, while Portugal obtained rights to new territories in the east.

Conclusion

The Regency of Algiers emerged as an effective regional naval power in the western Mediterranean following its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire in 1519. This rise occurred within the context of European expansion, particularly Spanish, after 1492, and the European powers’ efforts to secure maritime routes and limit Ottoman influence.

This struggle involved several European powers, most notably Spain, the traditional and most confrontational adversary, and England, due to the issue of English captives in the Regency of Algiers. The conflict took various forms, including direct military confrontations and irregular

naval warfare.

Algiers faced this struggle relying on a strong naval fleet, militarily reinforced by the Sublime Porte, and guided by an effective political and military leadership (Beylerbeys – Deys). Most European campaigns to subjugate Algiers by force failed, leading many European states to adopt diplomatic solutions, treaties, and agreements to coexist in the Mediterranean.

The Algerian-Spanish-English conflict in the Mediterranean illustrates a model of naval power struggles in the early modern era, where the Regency of Algiers successfully asserted its presence as a significant political and military actor for several centuries before the international context shifted in favor of European powers.

Bibliography

- al-Bakri, U. A.-A. (n.d). *Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik* (Vol. 2). (J. Talibah, Ed.) Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami.
- al-Hamawi, Y. (n.d). *Dictionary of Nations* (Vol. 1). (M. A. al-Rahman, Ed.) Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi.
- Al-Jadiri, A. a.-R. (n.d). *Al-Zahra al-Na'ira fi Majra al-Jaza'ir Hina Agharat 'Alayha Junud al-Kafara*. Algiers: National Library of Algeria (Manuscripts Department).
- Al-Matmati, b. D.-S. (n.d). *Sharh Tanwir al-Basa'ir wa al-Absar fi Tahrid Sultan al-Jaza'ir 'ala Qital al-Kuffar. MS 1218/7, Folio 153b*. Saudi Arabia: Library of the Prophet's Mosque.
- Al-Oubaidi, A. (2010). The Spanish Campaign against the City of Algiers in 1541 and its Impact on the Balance of Power in the Western Mediterranean. *Osour Journal*, 9(1), 40-48.
- al-Tanlali, A. a.-R. (2006). The Tuati Journey. (H. Mokhtar, Ed.) *Annals of the University of Algiers*, 1(16).
- al-Wazzan, a.-H. (2003). *Description of Africa* (1st ed.). Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami.
- Al-Zahar, A. a.-S. (1980). *Memoirs of al-Hajj Ahmed al-Sharif al-Zahar*.

Algiers: National Company for Publishing and Distribution (SNED).

- Anonymous. (n.d.). *Tarikh Maji' Kafarat Makhzum Espanyol li-Mahrusat al-Jaza'ir al-Gharb fi Jumada al-Ula 1189*. 3. Algiers: National Library of Algeria (Manuscripts Department).
- Barbaross, K. a.-D. (n.d). *Memoirs of Khayr al-Din*. (A. Darraj, Trans.) Algiers: Dar al-Asala Publishing.
- Ben Hadda, M. (2019, January). A Reading of Algerian-European Relations through Consul Charles-Philippe Vallière. *Al-Ibar Journal for Historical and Archaeological Studies*, 2(1), 345-358.
- Ben Sahraoui, K. (2014, February). The Islamic-Christian Conflict and its Indicators in the Mediterranean during the 16th Century. *Journal of Islamic Civilization*(20-21), 229-245.
- Bouaziz, Y. (2009). *Algerian-Spanish Correspondence in the National Historical Archive of Madrid 1780–1798*. algiers: Dar al-Basa'ir.
- Boutaba, L. (2018, December). The Christian-Islamic Conflict in the Mediterranean Basin during the 16th Century: The Spanish Occupation of Algerian Coastal Cities as a Model. *Algerian Historical Journal*, 4, 117-138.
- Braudel, F. (1982). *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Vol. 1). Paris: Armand Colin.
- Chaouch, H. b. (2009). *Ibn al-Mufti's Notes on the History of the Pashas and Scholars of Algiers*. (F. Kaouan, Ed.) Algiers: Bayt al-Hikma.
- Currey, E. H. (1910). *Sea-Wolves of the Mediterranean*. London: John Murray.
- Darwish, A.-S. (2020, December). The Role of Algeria in the Mediterranean Battles of the 16th Century: Confronting the Christian Project. *Algerian Journal of Historical and Legal Studies*, 15(2), 5-19.

- De Grammont, H.-D. (1887). *History of Algiers under Turkish Rule 1515–1830*. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- Féraud, L.-C. (1876). The Three Spanish Attacks Against Algiers in the 18th Century. *African Review*(20), 313.
- Haedo, F. D. (n.d). *History of the Kings of Algiers*. (Berbrugger, & Monnereau, Trans.) Bouchène Edition.
- Hammache, K. (2003, March). Recruiting Volunteers for the Algerian Army in the Provinces of the Ottoman Empire. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2(1), 27-48.
- Hassan, I. (1999). *A Study in the Geography of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin*. Alexandria: Alexandria Book Center.
- Ibn al-Sharef, S. A. (1969). *Silsilat al-Usul fi Shajarat Abna' al-Rasul*. Tunis: Al-Matba'a al-Tunisiyya.
- Ibn Khaldun, A. a.-R. (2004). *Al-Muqaddimah*. Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr for Publishing, Printing, and Distribution.
- Khodja, H. B. (2006). *The Mirror*. Algiers: National Agency of Typographic Arts (ENAG).
- Khodja, M. b. (n.d). *Al-Tibr al-Masbuk fi Muharabat Ghuzat al-Jaza'ir wa al-Muluk*. El Hamma, Algiers, Algeria: National Library of Algeria.
- Lane, F. C. (1973). *Venice: A Maritime Republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Matthew, C. (2004). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moukdache, K. M. (2022). Charles V's Campaign against Algiers in 1541 and its Consequences. *Afaq li-al-'Ulum Journal*, 7(4), 300-312.
- National Library of Algeria. (n.d). *Collection 3190–325*. Manuscripts Department, El Hamma.
- Ottoman State Archives (BOA). (1245 AH). Imperial Decree, No. 16237. Istanbul: Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives.
- Ottoman State Archives. (n.d). *Collection 3190, Document No. 128*. Istanbul: Ottoman State Archives (BOA).
- Playfair, R. L. (1800). *Episode in the History of Relations between Great Britain and the Berber States*.
- Raymond, A. (1985). *Great Arab Cities in the Ottoman Period*. Paris: Sindibad.
- Reis, P. (1986). The Description of the Algerian Coasts. In *Studies on Turkish–Arab Relations*. Istanbul.
- Rezzag Baara, M. (2015, November). The Importance of the Mediterranean Basin in Mediterranean Relations and the Resurgence of Algerian Maritime Activity in the Modern Era. *Al-Ma'arif Journal for Research and Historical Studies*(3), 150-174.
- Rifaat, M. (1959). *History of the Mediterranean Basin and its Political Currents*. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif.
- Saïoud, I. (2011). Mediterranean Piracy during the Early Modern Period: The Italian Piracy as a Case Study. *Al-Wahat Journal for Research and Studies*(11).
- Sarhank, I. (1913). *The Truths of News about Maritime Nations* (1 ed., Vol. 1). Cairo: Al-Amiriya Press.
- Seddiki, B., & Ben Yattou, A. (2023, June). Central and Regional Administration in Ottoman Algeria (1519-1830). *Al-Mofakir Journal*, 7(1), 419-446.
- Shaler, W. (1982). *Sketches of Algiers: Memoirs of William Shaler (1816–1824)*. (I. al-Arabi, Ed., & I. al-Arabi, Trans.) Algiers: National Company for Publishing and Distribution (SNED).
- Venture de Paradis, J.-M. (n.d). *Algiers in the 18th Century*. Tunis: Édition Bislama.

* Comments :

¹ The name Mediterranean Sea is derived from two Latin words: medius, meaning “middle,” and terra, meaning “land.” It is considered one

of the most important seas in the world, as it connects three continents: Africa, Europe, and Asia. The Mediterranean also represents a basin that brings together an immense diversity of peoples, languages, and cultures along its southern and northern shores. Ibn Khaldun and coastal inhabitants described it as follows: "The sword of this sea and its shores, from both of its sides, suffer from its conditions in a manner unmatched by the peoples of other seas."

Fernand Braudel, for his part, stated: "...it is impossible to understand world history and inland seas without understanding the history of the Mediterranean Sea..." He further adds in this context: "Whoever controls the sea always controls wealth..."

² Granada: In Dictionary of Nations, its name means "the pomegranate" in the language of the non-Arabs of al-Andalus, and it was given this name in reference to its beauty. The city of Granada is also considered one of the oldest cities of the Kūra of Elvira within the administrative divisions of al-Andalus. It was distinguished by its beauty and grandeur, as well as by its strong fortifications.

³ The City of Djerba: Located near Gabès, the island of Djerba contains numerous orchards and abundant olive groves. Its inhabitants are described as causing disorder on land and at sea, and they are identified as Kharijites.

⁴ Rhodes: A Greek island that was adopted as the headquarters of the Knights of Saint John from 1309 AD, after they transformed from monastic orders into a military force following the Crusades. The Ottomans attempted to conquer the island several times but were unable to do so until 1522. After their expulsion, the Knights of Saint John spread along the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea before establishing their headquarters in Malta, which was granted to them by Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, in 1530.

⁵ Tordesillas: A Spanish-Portuguese agreement concluded during the period of Islamic-Christian conflict following the fall of Granada in 1492. It was a treaty signed between Spain and Portugal on 7 June 1494, aimed at settling disputes over newly acquired territories discovered by Christopher Columbus or other European explorers. The treaty delineated the boundaries between Spanish and Portuguese possessions as previously defined by Pope

Alexander VI in 1493. Under its terms, Spain gained control over lands discovered to the west, while Portugal secured rights of ownership over newly claimed territories in the east.

⁶ Kemal Pasha (1451–1511) was the most renowned naval commander of the Ottoman Empire's fleet. He was born in Gallipoli in 1451, and his full name was Ahmed Kemal al-Din. He undertook his first naval mission to Spain in 1487, when Sultan Bayezid II tasked him with defending Granada during the reign of Abu 'Abd Allah al-Zughbi. He also succeeded in transporting Andalusian Muslims and Jews fleeing Spain between 1490 and 1492.

His fame spread in 1499, when he defeated the Venetian fleet under Antonio Grimani at the Battle of Zonchio, also known as the First Battle of Lepanto (1499). He repeated his success in August 1500, defeating the French at the Battle of Modon, or the Second Battle of Lepanto.

Kemal Pasha conducted several naval operations during which he captured several Italian islands, including Pianosa (1501), Napolion, Monemvasia, Basadonna, Mares, and Safario. He became known for his campaigns against the Venetians and the Spaniards, achieving numerous gains for the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. He died in 1511 in a naval accident near the territories of the Duchy of Naxos.

⁷ Prince Abd al-Rahman, the ruler of the city of Béjaïa, belonged to the Idrisid lineage. He arrived there from the Banu Hammad Fortress in al-Hadna after it was occupied by the Arab Hilalians. The city was founded by Furqan in the 15th century AD. Abd al-Rahman died in 1500 and was succeeded by his son, Sultan Ahmed.

⁸ This was the response of Bayraktar Khair ad-Din Barbarossa to the Spanish admiral, in which he said: "See what befell your brothers 'Arouj and Ishaq and the humiliation and killing that came upon them; if you save yourself, it is well and good, otherwise, what befell them will befall you..." (Ibn Rukiya, op. cit., p. 5).

⁹ Charles of Habsburg, also known as Charles V, was the grandson of King Ferdinand I of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, and the son of Philip the Handsome and Princess Joanna the Mad. He was born in 1500 in Ghent. He was crowned Duke of Burgundy and later became King of Spain in 1516, and King of Germany in 1519. He fought wars on two fronts: against the Ottoman Empire and against the kings of

Europe, notably Francis I of France (1494–1547) and Henry II of France (1519–1559). (Sarhank, 1913, p. 359)

¹⁰ A European ruling house founded in Switzerland in 1273, whose possessions expanded through marriage alliances, wars, and political alliances to encompass vast regions of Europe, including Spain, Portugal, the Italian principalities, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, and parts of the American continent. By 1867, nothing remained of this empire except Austria and Hungary, which disappeared after the end of the First World War in 1918 due to ethnic diversity and the emergence of social divisions.

¹¹ Alejandro O'Reilly was born on 24 October 1723 in Ireland. He later joined the service of the Spanish crown and was appointed military commander of the Spanish naval forces, most notably leading the 1775 campaign. He died on 23 March 1794.

¹² Quoted from: Saleha Bouzid, "The Spanish Campaigns against the City of Algiers through the Explanation of the Manuscript *Sharh Tanwir al-Basa'ir wa al-Absar fi Tahrid Sultan al-Jaza'ir 'ala Qital al-Kuffar*," *Majallat al-Bahith*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2022, pp. 110–123, p. 116.

¹³ Ahmed al-Sharif al-Zahar reported the spoils of war as follows: the Muslims captured what the Spaniards had left on the ramparts, including approximately 100 cannons and all the war machinery (Ahmed al-Sharif al-Zahar, *Memoirs of Hajj Ahmed al-Sharif al-Zahar*, edited and verified by Ahmed Tawfiq al-Madani, National Publishing and Distribution Company, Algiers, 1980, p. 27).

¹⁴ In 1785, Spain sent delegates D'Expilly Conte and Admiral Mazarredo to settle the dispute with Algiers through the French consul De Kersey, resulting in a peace treaty signed on 17 Shawwal 1200 AH (14 June 1786 CE). This treaty established a maritime truce with King Carlos III (1759–1788), while land hostilities regarding Oran remained unresolved. It consisted of 25 articles addressing issues such as maritime navigation, trade exchanges, the status of the Spanish community, the powers granted to the Spanish consul, and the occupation of Oran and the Grand Harbor. According to Al-Zahar, "They concluded a peace for one hundred years, and this was only at sea, whereas on land,

regarding Oran, no peace was concluded" (Al-Zahar, *ibid.*, p. 34)

¹⁵ Lord Exmouth (Edward Pellew, 1st Viscount Exmouth) was an officer in the British Royal Navy. He was born on 19 April 1757 in Dover and held several political and naval positions in England until he attained the rank of admiral. He led the military campaign against Algiers in 1816 alongside Prince Van Capellen. Although the campaign failed, it inflicted heavy damage on the city of Algiers. It is said that when he approached the Algerian coasts, a storm broke out—something rare in the region—upon which the lord remarked, "I swear this land is protected by spirits." He died on 23 January 1833. Colin Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁶ Commonly referred to as the Congress of Vienna (1815).

¹⁷ Hassan, I., *A Study in the Geography of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin* (Alexandria: Alexandria Book Center, 1999), 28; Ibn Khaldun, A. al-R., *Al-Muqaddimah* (Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr for Publishing, Printing, and Distribution, 2004), 243; Braudel, F., *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1982), 125. For further information, the civilizations around the Mediterranean include the Egyptian civilization (3200 BCE – 31 BCE), the Greek civilization (1200 BCE – 323 BCE), and the Roman civilization (8th century BCE – 476 CE).