FERNAND BRAUDEL

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD IN THE AGE OF PHILIP Ⅱ

VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER IV

Empires

We must go far back in time, to the beginning of a long process of political evolution, before we can achieve a valid perspective on the sixteenth century.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the Mediterranean belonged to its towns, to the city-states scattered around its shores. There were of course already, here and there, a few territorial states, fairly homogeneous in character and comparatively large, bordering the sea itself: the Kingdom of Naples – 'il Reame' – the outstanding example; the Byzantine Empire; or the possessions united under the Crown of Aragon. But in many cases, these states were merely the extensions of powerful cities: Aragon in the broad sense was a by-product of the dynamic rise of Barcelona; the Byzantine Empire consisted almost entirely of the extended suburbs of two cities, Constantinople and Salonica.

By the fifteenth century, the city-state was already losing ground; first signs of the crisis could be detected in Italy during the early years of the century. In fifty years, the map of the Peninsula was entirely redrawn, to the advantage of some cities and the detriment of others. It was only a partial eclipse. The upheaval failed to achieve what may have been at issue – though I doubt it – the unification of the Italian Peninsula. Naples, Venice and Milan in turn proved unequal to the task. The attempt would in any case have been premature: too many particular interests were at stake, too many cities eager for an individual existence stood in the way of this difficult birth. So it is only partly true that there was a decline in the power of the city-state. The Peace of Lodi, in 1454, confirmed both a balance of power and a deadlock: the political map of Italy, although simplified, was still a patchwork.

Meanwhile, a similar crisis was becoming apparent throughout the rest
'he Mediterranean. Everywhere the city-state, precarious and narrow-
'tood revealed inadequate to perform the political and financial tasks
't. It represented a fragile form of government, doomed to ex-
'trikingly demonstrated by the capture of Constantinople in
'rcelona in 1472 and the collapse of Granada in 1492.[1]
St
' that only the rival of the city-state, the territorial
'npower, would in future be able to meet the

' p. 339.
'ded the term nation-state.

expense of modern warfare; it could maintain paid armies and afford costly artillery; it was soon to indulge in the added extravagance of full-scale naval wars. And its advance was long to be irreversible. Examples of the new pattern emerging at the end of the fifteenth century are Aragon under John II; Louis XI's expansion beyond the Pyrenees; Turkey under Muḥammad II, the conqueror of Constantinople; later France under Charles VIII with his Italian ambitions and Spain in the age of the Catholic Kings. Without exception, these states all had their beginnings far inland, many miles from the Mediterranean coast,[3] usually in poor regions where there were fewer cities to pose obstacles. In Italy by contrast, the wealth and very density of the cities maintained weaknesses and divisions as modern structures emerged only with difficulty from the grip of the past, particularly when that past had been a glorious one and much of its brilliance remained. Past glory could mean present weakness, as was revealed by the first Turco-Venetian war, from 1463 to 1479, in the course of which the Signoria, inadequately protected by her small territory, was eventually obliged, despite her technical superiority, to abandon the struggle;[4] it was demonstrated once more during the tragic occupation of Otranto by the Turks in 1480[5] and appeared even more strikingly in the beginnings of the storm unleashed by Charles VIII's invasion of Italy in 1494. Was there ever a more extraordinary military display than that swift march on Naples, when, according to Machiavelli, the invader had merely to send his billeting officers ahead to mark with chalk the houses selected for his troops' lodgings? Once the alarm was over, it was easy to make light of it, even to taunt the French ambassador Philippe de Commynes, as Filippo Tron, a Venetian patrician, did at the end of July, 1495. He added that he was not deceived by the intentions attributed to the king of France, 'desiring to go to the Holy Land when he really wanted to become no less than *signore di tutta l'Italia*'.[6]

Such bravado was all very well, but the event marked the beginning of a train of disasters for the Peninsula, the logical penalty for its wealth, its position at the epicentre of European politics and, undoubtedly the key factor, the fragility of its sophisticated political structures, of the intricate mechanisms which went to make up the 'Italian equilibrium'. It was no accident if from now on Italian thinkers, schooled by disaster and the daily lesson of events, were to meditate above all upon politics and the destiny of the state, from Machiavelli and Guicciardini in the early part of the century to Paruta, Giovanni Botero or Ammirato at the end.

Italy: that extraordinary laboratory for statesmen. The entire natio
preoccupied with politics, every man to his own passion, from '
in the market-place to the barber in his shop or the

[3] A. Siegfried, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

[4] H. Kretschmayr, *op. cit.*, II, p. 382.

[5] See studies by Enrico Perito, E. Carusi and Pietro Ep
in Sánchez Alonso's bibliography).

[6] A.d.S., Modena, Venezia VIII, Aldobran
31st July, 1495.

taverns;[7] for *raggione di stato, raison d'état*,[8] an Italian rediscovery, was the result not of isolated reflection but of collective experience. Similarly, the frequent cruelty in political affairs, the betrayals and renewed flames of personal vendettas are so many symptoms of an age when the old governmental structures were breaking up and a series of new ones appearing in rapid succession, according to circumstances beyond man's control. These were days when justice was frequently an absent figure and governments were too new and too insecure to dispense with force and emergency measures. Terror was a means of government. *The Prince* taught the art of day-to-day survival.[9]

But even in the fifteenth century and certainly by the sixteenth, a formidable newcomer confronted the mere territorial or nation-state. Larger, monster states were now appearing, through accumulation, inheritance, federation or coalition of existing states: what by a convenient though anachronistic term one could call empires in the modern sense – for how else is one to describe these giants? In 1494, the threat to Italy from beyond the Alps came not merely from the kingdom of France but from a French Empire, as yet hypothetical it is true. Its first objective was to capture Naples; then, without becoming immobilized at the centre of the Mediterranean, to speed to the East, there to defend the Christian cause in reply to the repeated appeals of the Knights of Rhodes, and to deliver the Holy Land. Such was the complex policy of Charles VIII, whatever Filippo Tron may have thought: it was a crusading policy, designed to span the Mediterranean in one grand sweep. For no empire could exist without some mystique and in western Europe, this mystique was provided by the crusade, part spiritual, part temporal, as the example of Charles V was soon to prove.

And indeed Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella, was no 'mere nation-state': it was already an association of kingdoms, states and peoples united in the persons of the sovereigns. The sultans too ruled over a combination of conquered peoples and loyal subjects, populations which had either been subjugated or associated with their fortunes. Meanwhile, maritime exploration was creating, for the greater benefit of Portugal and Castile, the first modern colonial empires, the importance of which was not fully grasped at first by even the most perspicacious observers. Machiavelli himself stood too close to the troubled politics of Italy to see beyond them – a major weakness in a commentator otherwise so lucid.[10]

[7] M. Seidlmayer, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

[8] Its first use is usually attributed to Cardinal Giovanni Della Casa, *Orazione di Messer Giovanni della Casa, scritta a Carlo Quinto intorno alla restitutione della città di Piacenza*, published in the *Galateo* by the same author, Florence, 1561, p. 61. For a full treatment of the topic of *raison d'état*, see F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, Munich, 1925 (published in English as *Machiavellism. The doctrine of raison d'état and its place in modern history*, transl. by Douglas Scott, London, 1957).

[9] Pierre Mesnard, *L'essor de la philosophie politique au XVI^e siècle*.

[10] A. Renaudet, *Machiavel*, p. 236.

The story of the Mediterranean in the sixteenth century is in the first place a story of dramatic political growth, with the leviathans taking up their positions. France's imperial career, as we know, misfired almost immediately, for several reasons: external circumstances in part, a still backward economy and perhaps also temperamental factors, prudence, a characteristic preference for safe investments and a distaste for the grandiose. What had failed to occur was by no means an impossibility. It is not entirely fanciful to imagine a French Empire supported by Florence in the same way that the Spanish Empire (though not at first it is true) was supported by Genoa. And the imperial career of Portugal, a Mediterranean country only by courtesy in any case, developed (apart from a few Moroccan possessions) outside the Mediterranean region.

So the rise of empires in the Mediterranean means essentially that of the Ottoman Empire in the East and that of the Habsburg Empire in the West. As Leopold von Ranke long ago remarked, the emergence of these twin powers constitutes a single chapter in history and before going any further let us stress that accident and circumstance did not preside alone at the birth of these simultaneous additions to the great powers of history. I cannot accept that Sulaimān the Magnificent and Charles V were merely 'accidents' (as even Henri Pirenne has argued) – their persons, by all means, but not their empires. Nor do I believe in the preponderant influence of Wolsey,[11] the inventor of the English policy of the Balance of Power who, by supporting Charles V in 1521 (against his own principles) when the latter was already ruler of the Netherlands and Germany, that is by supporting the stronger power instead of François I, the weaker, is said to have been responsible for Charles's rapid victory at Pavia and the subsequent surrender of Italy to Spanish domination for two hundred years.

For without wishing to belittle the role played by individuals and circumstances, I am convinced that the period of economic growth during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries created a situation consistently favourable to the large and very large state, to the 'super-states' which today are once again seen as the pattern of the future as they seemed to be briefly at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Russia was expanding under Peter the Great and when a dynastic union at least was projected between Louis XIV's France and Spain under Philip V.[12] *Mutatis mutandis*, the same pattern was repeated in the East. In 1516, the sultan of Egypt laid siege to the free city of Aden and captured it, in accordance with the laws of logical expansion. Whereupon in obedience to the very same laws, the Turkish sultan in 1517 seized the whole of Egypt.[13] Small states could always expect to be snapped up by a larger predator.

The course of history is by turns favourable or unfavourable to vast

[11] G. M. Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

[12] Baudrillart (Mgr.), *Philippe V et la Cour de France*, 1889–1901, 4 vols., Introduction, p. 1.

[13] See below, p. 667 ff.

political hegemonies. It prepares their birth and prosperity and ultimately their decline and fall. It is wrong to suppose that their political evolution is fixed once for all, that some states are irremediably doomed to extinction and others destined to achieve greatness come what may, as if marked by fate 'to devour territory and prey upon their neighbours'.[14]

Two empires in the sixteenth century gave evidence of their formidable might. But between 1550 and 1600, advance signs can already be glimpsed of what was in the seventeenth century to be their equally inexorable decline.

I. THE ORIGIN OF EMPIRES

A word of warning: when discussing the rise and fall of empires, it is as well to mark closely their rate of growth, avoiding the temptation to telescope time and discover too early signs of greatness in a state which we know will one day be great, or to predict too early the collapse of an empire which we know will one day cease to be. The life-span of empires cannot be plotted by events, only by careful diagnosis and auscultation – and as in medicine there is always room for error.

Turkish ascendancy:[15] *from Asia Minor to the Balkans.* Behind the rise of Turkey to greatness lay three centuries of repeated effort, of prolonged conflict and of miracles. It was on the 'miraculous' aspect of the Ottoman Empire that western historians of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tended to dwell. It is after all an extraordinary story, the emergence of the Ottoman dynasty from the fortunes of war on the troubled frontiers of Asia Minor, a rendezvous for adventurers and fanatics.[16] For Asia Minor was a region of unparalleled mystical enthusiasm: here war and religion marched hand in hand, militant confraternities abounded and the janissaries were of course attached to such powerful sects as the Ahīs and later the Bektāshīs. These beginnings gave the Ottoman state its style, its foundations among the people and its original exaltation. The miracle is that such a tiny state should have survived the accidents and disturbances inherent in its geographical position.

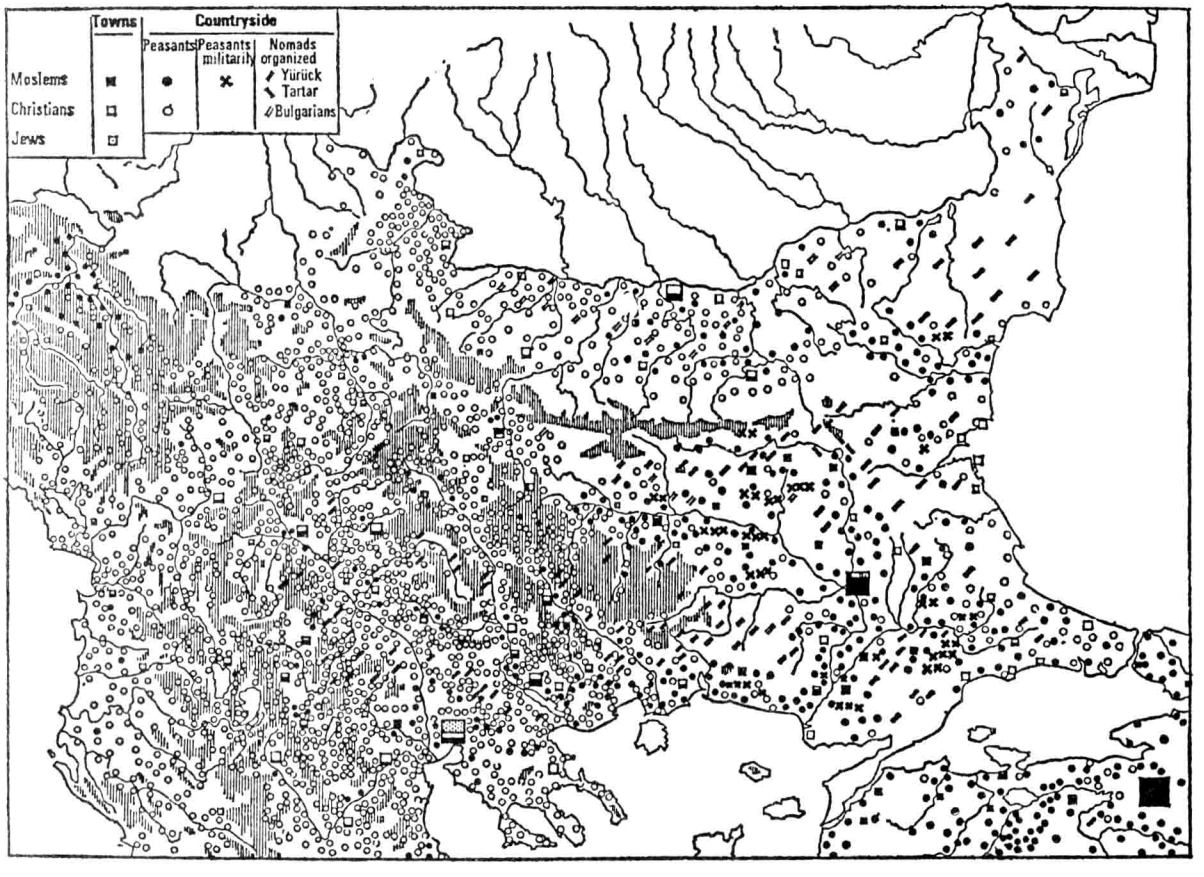
But survive it did, and put to advantage the slow transformation of the Anatolian countryside. The Ottoman success was intimately connected with the waves of invasion, often silent invasion, which drove the peoples of Turkestan westwards. It was brought about by the internal transformation of Asia Minor[17] from Greek and Orthodox in the thirteenth century to Turkish and Moslem, following successive waves of infiltration and indeed of total social disruption; and also by the extraordinary propaganda

[14] Gaston Roupnel, *Histoire et destin*, p. 330.

[15] On the greatness of Turkey, see R. de Lusinge, *De la naissance, durée et chute des États*, 1588, 206 p. Ars. 8° H 17337, quoted by G. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 184–185, and an unpublished diplomatic report on Turkey (1576), Simancas E° 1147.

[16] Fernand Grenard, *Décadence de l'Asie*, p. 48.

[17] See above, Vol. I, p. 178.


Towns
Countryside
Peasants
Peasants militarily
Nomads organized
Moslems
Christians
Jews
Yürück
Tartar
Bulgarians

of the Moslem orders, some of which were revolutionary, 'communist, like the Bābāīs, Ahīs and Abdālān; others more mystical and pacifist, for example the Mawlawīs of Konya. Following G. Huart, Koprülüzade has recently drawn attention to their proselytism'.[18] Their poetry – their propaganda – marked the dawn of western Turkish literature.

Beyond the straits, the Turkish conquest was largely favoured by circumstances. The Balkan Peninsula was far from poor, indeed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was comparatively wealthy. But it was divided: Byzantines, Serbs, Bulgars, Albanians, Venetians, and Genoese fought amongst themselves. There was religious conflict between the Orthodox and the Roman Churches; and socially the Balkan world was extremely fragile – a mere house of cards. So it should not be forgotten that the Turkish conquest of the Balkans was assisted by an extraordinary social revolution. A seignorial society, exploiting the peasants, was surprised by the impact and collapsed of its own accord. The conquest, which meant the end of the great landowners, absolute rulers on their own estates, was in its way 'a liberation of the oppressed'.[19] Asia Minor had been conquered patiently and slowly after centuries of effort; the Balkan Peninsula *seems* not to have offered any resistance to the invader. In Bulgaria, where the Turks made such rapid progress, the countryside had already been unsettled, well before their arrival, by violent rural disturbances.[20] Even in Greece there had been a social revolution. In Serbia, the native aristocracy was wiped out and some of the Serbian villages were incorporated into the *wakf* (possessions of the mosques) or distributed to the *sipāhis*.[21] And the *sipāhis*, soldiers whose titles were held only for life,

(Opposite) Fig. 55: *The population of the Balkan Peninsula at the beginning of the sixteenth century*

Missing from this map, compiled by Ömer Lutfi Barkan from Ottoman population counts, are the figures for Istanbul, which do not appear to have survived. The Turks controlled their acquisitions from frontier posts and above all from the key towns. Note the large implantation of Yürük nomads in the plains, but also in the highlands, in the Rhodope for example and in the mountains to the east of the Struma and Vardar. A line running roughly from the island of Thásos through Sofia divides a predominantly Christian zone, only partially colonized by the Turks, from a zone of strong Moslem implantation in Thrace and through to Bulgaria. Subsequent research by Ömer Lutfi Barkan and his pupils has now analysed virtually all the sixteenth century censuses, revealing a large population increase and confirming what was already thought: that Moslems predominated in the population of Anatolia. Every symbol on the map represents 250 families, that is over 1000 people. Note the density of the Moslem population in Bosnia and the large Jewish colony in Salonica.

[18] *Annuaire du monde musulman*, 1923, p. 323.

[19] An expression used by Mr. B. Truhelka, archivist at Dubrovnik, during our many discussions on this subject.

[20] Cf. in particular Christo Peyeff, *Agrarverfassung und Agrarpolitik*, Berlin, 1927, p. 69; I. Sakazov, *op. cit.*, p. 19; R. Busch-Zantner, *op. cit.*, p. 64 ff. However, according to an article by D. Anguelov, (Bulgarian) *Historical Review*, IX, 4, p. 374–398, Bulgarian resistance to the Turks was stronger than I have suggested.

[21] Jos. Zontar, 'Hauptprobleme der jugoslavischen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte' in *Vierteljahrschr. für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 1934, p. 368.

at first asked for rents in money, not in kind. It was some time before the condition of the peasants once again became intolerable. And in Bosnia, around Sarajevo, there were mass conversions, due in part to the flourishing Bogomilian heresy.[22] The situation was even more complicated in Albania.[23] Here the landowners were able to take refuge in the Venetian *presidios*: Durazzo for example, which remained in Venetian possession until 1501. When these fortresses fell, the Albanian nobility fled to Italy, where some of their descendants remain to the present day. The Musachi family did not survive: its last member died in Naples in 1600. It left behind however the *Historia della Casa Musachi*, published in 1510 by Giovanni Musachi, a valuable record of the family fortunes which tells us much about the country and its ruling caste. The name of this ancient family is preserved in the Muzekie region of Albania[24] where it once had immense holdings.[25] The story of these exiles and their wanderings is an astonishing one. The same path was not trodden by all nobles and landowners in the Balkans. But whatever their fate, even when they succeeded in maintaining themselves for a while, by abjuring or otherwise, the general pattern was the same: before the Turkish advance an entire society fell into ruins, partly of its own accord, seeming to confirm yet again Albert Grenier's opinion that 'to be conquered, a people must have acquiesced in its own defeat.'

Social conditions in the Balkans help to explain the invader's success and the ravages it brought. The Turkish cavalry, ranging rapidly far and wide, blocking roads, ruining crops and disrupting economic life, went ahead of the main army and prepared the ground for an easy victory. Only the mountainous regions were for a while protected from the relentless invasion. Bowing to the geography of the Balkans, the Turks took control first of the principal highways, along the river valleys leading down to the Danube; the Maritsa, the Vardar, the Drin and the Morava. In 1371, they triumphed at Chernomen on the Maritsa; in 1389 they won the battle of Kossovo Polje, 'the Field of Blackbirds', from which flow the Vardar, Maritsa and Morava. In 1459, this time north of the Iron Gates, the Turk was victorious at Smederevo 'at the very point where the Morava meets the Danube and which as much as Belgrade commands the approaches to the Hungarian plains'.[26]

Conquest was rapid too in the wide spaces of the eastern plains.[27] In 1365, the Turk settled his capital at Adrianople, by 1386 all Bulgaria had been subdued, to be followed by Thessaly.[28] Victory came more slowly in the mountainous west and was often more apparent than real. In Greece, Athens was occupied in 1456, the Morea in 1460, Bosnia in 1462–1466,[29]

[22] J. W. Zinkeisen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 143; R. Busch-Zantner, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
[23] R. Busch-Zantner, *op. cit.*, p. 65. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 55
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 65 and references to studies by K. Jireček and Sufflay.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[27] W. Heyd, *op. cit.*, II, p. 258. [28] *Ibid.*, II, p. 270.
[29] *Ann. du monde musulman*, 1923, p. 228.