VENICE, GENOA AND CONTROL OF THE SEAS IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

John Dotson

WHEN trying to find the underlying and developing ideas of naval operations and strategy in the events of the naval conflicts between the Italian maritime states of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the fundamental questions are: (1) What do the actions of the hostile parties reveal about the war aims of the participants? (2) How did these change over time if, indeed, they did? (3) What strategies were developed to achieve those aims? In practical affairs, it is common for theory to lag well behind practice.[1] Alfred Thayer Mahan's influential analysis of naval strategy was based on a study of sailing navies that were obsolete in the time that he was writing. This is not to suggest that the commanders of the sailing navies of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries did not grasp the concept of global strategy nor that naval commanders in the fourteenth century did not have clear goals. Rather, it suggests that the theoretical articulation of complex concepts often follows a thorough testing of ideas in the practical sphere. That, in turn, suggests that to understand the development of certain ideas in their contemporary context, one must look to the actions of the participants as indications of the thought processes that guided them.

The north Italian maritime communes, Pisa, Venice, and Genoa, found themselves increasingly in competition and conflict during the eleventh century. In the Tyrrhenian Sea, Pisa and Genoa at first cooperated in operations against Muslim states. Pisa was apparently the senior partner in these early efforts. As Genoa grew rapidly in the first decades of the eleventh century, alliance gave way to competition and growing enmity. Control over the islands of Corsica and Sardinia became the focal point of the developing conflict.

The First Crusade brought a greater presence of Genoese and Pisan shipping into the eastern basin of the Mediterranean than ever before. Since 1082 Venetians had enjoyed the commercial advantage of special status in the Byzantine Empire and were sensitive to any perceived encroachment into their economic

[1] Richard Unger, in a paper presented to the August, 1999 meeting of the Association of the History of the Northern Seas, suggested that the wars between the two great Italian maritime republics of Venice and Genoa led in the fourteenth century to 'what could be called a struggle for command of the sea'. He later observes that 'It is also hard to find among Venetians or Genoese or any other players in the naval battles of the high Middle Ages ideas about naval dominance'.

sphere.[2] In 1099 Venetian and Pisan forces clashed in the harbour at Rhodes en route to support the efforts of the First Crusade. It is significant that Pisan prisoners were released only when they promised not to engage in commercial activities within the Byzantine Empire.[3] Nonetheless, naval and logistical support that could only be provided by the Italian maritime cities was necessary to the long-term success of the crusading movement. As the Crusader States were established, the Italians were given commercial privileges and designated quarters in the cities of Oltremare.[4] Frequent quarrels erupted as they manoeuvred for mercantile advantage in the eastern Mediterranean ports and commercial centres.

The first war fought between Genoa and Venice, the War of San Saba, broke out after years of tension in the ports of the Crusader States, especially in Acre, the largest. Economic competition and civic pride led to disputes that sometimes escalated into violence. An anonymous Genoese chronicler stressed that the conflict in the East was not just between Venetians and Genoese, but included Pisa as well.[5] The local conflict between rival colonial populations in the Levant became a war in 1257. In that year the Venetians – in response to Genoese attacks on their compatriots in Acre and amidst charges and counter-charges about various grievances – sent a fleet of fourteen galleys with their annual caravan to Oltremare. The goal was immediate: to punish the Genoese and to expel them from Acre. Under the command of Lorenzo Tiepolo they drove Genoese shipping out of the harbour of Acre and forced those who remained to withdraw to a strongly fortified tower.[6]

The wars between Venice and Genoa were never between those two cities alone, but involved different constellations of alliance. For much of this period Pisa and Genoa were locked in a struggle over Sardinia so that according to the principle that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' the citizens of the Arno city were natural allies of the Venetians in spite of their animosity in earlier times. In addition, the Genoese chronicler reports, virtually the whole of Oltremare united against Genoa. Only the Anconitans, the Catalans, and Philip of Montfort, Lord of Tyre and King of Armenia, sided with the Ligurians. The Anconitans and Catalans, he says, were of little help because of their fear of the

2 In 1082 the Byzantine emperor Alexius I in a 'Golden Bull' rewarded Venice for its help in fighting off an invasion by Robert Guiscard, the Norman ruler of south Italy, by granting trading privileges and exemption from customs duties within the Empire.

3 Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), 32.

4 'Oltremare' or 'Overseas' or 'Beyond the Sea'was the western term for the area in which the Crusader States were being established.

5 *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e dei suoi continuatori*, trans. Ceccardo Roccatagliata Ceccardi and Giovanni Monleone, vol. VI (Genoa, 1929), 56.

6 Son of Doge Giacomo Tiepolo (r. 1229–49) and operating in conjunction with Venetians in Acre under the leadership of the *bailo*, Marco Giustiniani. F. C. Hodgson, *Venice in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1910), 122 ff.

numbers arrayed against the Genoese.[7] But the Lord of Tyre proved to be a crucial ally and his territory a decisive refuge.

The following year, an attempt by a Genoese fleet to relieve their besieged compatriots in Acre failed in a disastrous defeat just outside the harbor.[8] The remaining Genoese in Acre fled when they saw that their only hope of relief had been destroyed. Their quarter in the city was destroyed and columns from their fortified tower were taken back to Venice where they still stand near San Marco. The conflict in Acre had ended disastrously for the Genoese. They had been expelled from the most important commercial centre of Oltremare. They maintained a presence only in Tyre, a distinctly secondary port. The growing conflict among the Italian maritime cities in Oltremare caused a good deal of concern in the West. The papacy intervened to negotiate a peace and exchange of prisoners among the warring parties.[9] This War of San Saba, so called after the disputed monastery that was its putative cause, was primarily a conflict among the overseas residents of the maritime cities that grew to include the home cities. It centred on Oltremare, and peace came quickly when it became evident that the Genoese would not be able to evict the Venetians and Pisans from Acre, nor they the Genoese from Tyre. Naval strategy was bluntly aimed at the point of conflict.

Certainly there were economic goals behind the clashes in Oltremare. Any city that could control one of the three great entrepôts for Oriental goods – Constantinople and the Black Sea, Oltremare, or Alexandria – would reap great riches. Alexandria, under powerful Egyptian control, was out of reach. But the Venetian conquest of Constantinople in 1204 had demonstrated that it was possible for an ambitious and aggressive power to gain control of that strategic point. It also must have seemed credible that competitors could be expelled from at least the major ports of Oltremare. The expulsion of Genoese merchants from Acre was a severe blow, but not a fatal one because they remained ensconced at Tyre. Unable to react effectively to the Venetians and Pisans in Syria, the Genoese turned to diplomacy and to another strategic area. In effect, frontal assaults in Oltremare were proving costly and ineffective. The Genoese shifted their attack to a different point where they could find an ally in their struggle against the Venetians.

Around 1260 the Genoese sent ambassadors to negotiate with Michael Palaeologus, the most plausible claimant to the Byzantine throne at Constantinople. In 1261 the parties reached an agreement in the Treaty of Nymphaeum in which the Genoese promised armed support to Michael's claims and he, in turn, promised to put them in the Venetians' place at Constantinople when he had occupied it. As things developed, Greek forces entered the city in the night of 24 July 1261 without encountering any significant resistance.[10] The Venetians im-

7 *Annali Genovesi*, VI, 65. See also Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 146.

8 Georg Caro, *Genova e la supremazia sul Mediterraneo* (Genoa, 1974), I, 74–75. *Annali Genovesi*, 3, 86.

9 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 146; *Annali Genovesi*, VI, 66–7.

10 Caro, *Genova*, I, 110–11; *Annali Genovesi*, VI, 79.

mediately dispatched a fleet of eighteen galleys to Constantinople to protect their citizens and property there, but the Genoese arrived first and burned much of the Venetian quarter of the city. Though Greeks had regained Constantinople without the promised aid of the Genoese, their intervention parried the Venetian riposte. The emperor kept his bargain, realizing that Genoese naval power might yet be necessary to protect his gains. But, he sought to limit their influence in the city itself by confining them to a suburb across the Golden Horn. The Genoese would turn Pera into a thriving city and powerful naval base in its own right.

Pope Urban IV promptly threatened Genoa with excommunication because of its alliance with the schismatic Greeks. Papal pressure did not deter the Ligurian city from its very profitable alliance, but did threaten to create difficulties for its inhabitants. War between the maritime cities resumed and during 1262 diplomatic and military manoeuvring continued. The Latin Emperor, Baldwin II, appealed to the Venetians to aid him to regain Constantinople while Urban IV urged the monarchies of the West to deny the excommunicated Genoese access to their lands and markets.[11] Constantinople, and later Pera controlled entrance and egress to and from the Black Sea more completely than any other naval base could control a major route. The Genoese seemed to have found ample compensation for their expulsion from Acre. The Genoese continued to cooperate with Michael in his reconquest of the Empire. At his command they dispatched thirty-eight galleys to transport munitions and supplies to Malvasia (Monemvasia) in the Morea. When they arrived at Settepozzi (Spetsai) they learned that a Venetian fleet *en route* to Negroponte was in the vicinity. Outnumbering the Venetians thirty-eight to thirty-two, they decided to attack, but the Venetians claimed immunity as crusaders. This was apparently enough to cause most of the Genoese fleet to hesitate. Only fourteen of them pressed forward and of those, four – including the galleys of the two admirals – were captured.[12] Throughout the war Genoese fleets performed uniformly badly, often because of divided or ineffective command. Their commerce-raiding efforts were often more successful.

In 1264 Simone Grillo sailed from Genoa toward Oltremare with a fleet of twenty galleys and two large *navi*. In violation of orders to proceed directly to Tyre that he had sworn to obey, he instead led his forces in a brilliant raid, evading the Venetian war fleet and intercepting their annual Levant caravan near Durazzo, capturing all of it but the great *Roccafortis*. Despite this success, Genoese competence in battle between war fleets did not improve. During the campaign of 1266 the Genoese fleet of Lanfranco Borborino, in spite of superior numbers, was utterly destroyed by Jacopo Dandolo's Venetian galleys near Trapani in Sicily. In this battle the Genoese admiral, like Rosso della Turca

11 Caro, *Genova*, I, 126; *Annali Genovesi*, VI, 81 ff.
12 Caro, *Genova*, I, 132 ff.; *Annali Genovesi*, VI, 90–3.

at Acre, clung to defensive tactics even though his war council advised him to attack.[13]

In 1269 Genoa began negotiations to provide naval support and transport for Louis IX's crusading expedition against Tunis. Under pressure from the French king, and because the war seemed to have reached an impasse, the three maritime cities concluded a truce. In Genoa Oberto Spinola and Oberto Doria seized power in a coup that saw the two of them confirmed as Captains of the People. Events in the central Mediterranean were beginning to overshadow the stalemated situation in the eastern basin. While Venice was able to control the Adriatic and could concentrate on defending its position in the East, Genoa had to face complex situations across the entire Mediterranean basin. Pisa was the first and nearest enemy of the Genoese, but Provençals and Catalans soon emerged as economic competitors and naval rivals. Genoa had been drawn into a conflict in Sicily that had begun with Charles of Anjou's descent into Italy in 1264. In the years following the truce of 1270 they were absorbed by factional strife within the city and war with the Angevin prince who ruled Provence to the west of the city as well as Sicily which dominated their routes to the East. Thus, the truce in the East was continued.

It was in confrontation with Pisa, not Venice, that the armistice first broke down. When a Corsican noble rebelled against the Genoese and then found refuge in Pisa in 1282, that was enough to rekindle the war in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Most important the Ghibelline Captaincy of Spinola and Doria organised the resources of the Genoese state for war. They established a new magistracy, the Credenza, that was charged with financing and procurement of *matériel* for war.[14] They also seem to have established a more effective command structure. In the last two decades of the thirteenth century Genoese prosperity reached its medieval zenith, enabling the newly established Credenza to build fleets of unprecedented size and effectiveness. While Venetian fleets were built by the state in the famous Arsenal, Genoese fleets were always made up of a combination of communal and private vessels in varying proportions. Often, communal vessels made up the lesser proportion of the fleet. While the Genoese system was certainly more administratively awkward, it may also have been more open to technological innovation.[15] Late in 1282 the Credenza made plans for a fleet of one hundred and twenty galleys, including fifty newly built by the commune. Such a large fleet – almost three times the size of the largest used up to this point – put severe demands upon the ability of the Genoese to provide manpower for it.[16] A Genoese raid on Elba in February 1283 indicates a change in the conditions of naval warfare in the Mediterranean. The seas were no longer closed in winter, due in part to new navigational techniques developed with the

13 See John E. Dotson, 'Fleet Operations in the First Genoese–Venetian War, 1264–1266', *Viator*, 30 (1999), 165–80, for a detailed discussion of both these actions.
14 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 158.
15 See p. 124 below at note 18.
16 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 158–9.

introduction of the compass at about this time.[17] It would be increasingly difficult to predict when ships could be found in the strategic narrows of the Mediterranean shipping lanes as Simone Grillo had done with the Venetian caravan of 1264. There were also evolutionary developments in the ships used in war. The last decade of the thirteenth century saw the introduction of the trireme galley, a heavier vessel with a crew half as large again as the bireme galleys heretofore used and a capacity three times that of the bireme.[18] Larger crews and increased capacity for marines and mechanical artillery at little or no cost in speed and manoeuvrability would make this new galley type the most effective warship of its day. There is some evidence to indicate that Genoese prosperity and efficient fiscal organisation led to earlier, or at least more extensive, adoption of trireme galleys in their fleets than was the case with their opponents. During 1283 the war for Corsica and Sardinia developed with several indecisive sea battles and much commerce raiding. In July 1284 a Pisan fleet commanded by the Venetian, Albertino Morosini, attempted to bring Benedetto Zaccaria's Genoese squadron to battle near Portofino. Finding themselves almost trapped between Zaccaria and another large force that sortied from the port of Genoa, the Pisans retired to Porto Pisano where they found refuge behind its fortifications and the great chain across the mouth of the harbour. Oberto Doria's Genoese fleet of ninety-three galleys followed them there and with a clever ruse tricked the Pisan fleet of seventy-two galleys into a battle near the Meloria reefs. The Pisan fleet was entirely destroyed and the mariners who were not killed were taken captive to Genoa. An alliance with Pisa's rivals in Tuscany, Florence and Lucca, further weakened Pisa, which never recovered from these events. Though not totally eliminated, Pisa was reduced to a condition where it was never again a serious maritime threat. In fact, there were almost certainly many factors at work other than the defeat at Meloria that explain the decline of Pisa.

The fall of Acre to the Saracens in 1291 set the stage for a second Genoese–Venetian war, the War of Curzola. Since 1258 the Venetians and Pisans had dominated in Acre. But after its capture new ports, Famagusta in Cyprus and Lajazzo in Armenia, became more important. In these areas the Genoese were competitive.[19] Venice and Genoa each wanted to expel the other from the Black Sea. The armistice of 1270 had been renewed repeatedly, but that war had ended without any clear result.[20] Any incident would do to reignite hostilities. There were many points of friction between the rivals. Genoese

17 Frederic C. Lane, 'The Economic Meaning of the Invention of the Compass', *American Historical Review*, 68 (1963), 605–17; reprinted in *Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane* (Baltimore, 1966), 331–44.
18 John E. Dotson, 'Merchant and Naval Influences on Galley Design at Venice and Genoa in the Fourteenth Century', in Craig L. Symonds *et al*., eds, *New Aspects of Naval History* (Annapolis, 1981), 25.
19 Caro, *Genova*, II, 172–3.
20 Ibid., II, 174.

corsairs captured Venetian ships, chartered by Pisans. Some Venetians were robbed and roughed up by Genoese in Palermo. Genoa, wanting to prevent Pisa from receiving any aid from Venice, established a blockade of Pisa. Venetians were accused of carrying horses and mercenaries to the Pisans in Sardinia. Both sides were inclined to resume hostilities to seize an advantage in the rapidly changing economic environment of the late thirteenth century. All of these factors rekindled the old enmity between Venice and Genoa. The Genoese showed a new feeling of confidence, no doubt engendered by the experience gained in the war with Pisa. The Venetians began the war with the old certainty that they could easily defeat twice their number of Genoese.[21] In July 1293 there were no formal hostilities, but tensions were running high. When seven Genoese merchant galleys from Romania encountered four Venetian galleys near Corone they expected the smaller squadron to yield the right of way as was customary. Instead, the Venetians formed a battle line and rowed to the attack. The Genoese captured and sacked the entire Venetian flotilla.[22]

At the end of the thirteenth century, Genoese tactical superiority was as overwhelming as the Venetians' had been at mid-century. The extension of the sailing season year round, however, made the task of choking off an enemy's commerce by interception of a single convoy impossible. The galley's limitations as a blockading craft were considerably more evident in these new conditions of navigation. As already noted, there were no spectacular convoy victories in this second Genoese–Venetian war like Grillo's victory over the *Roccafortis* convoy.

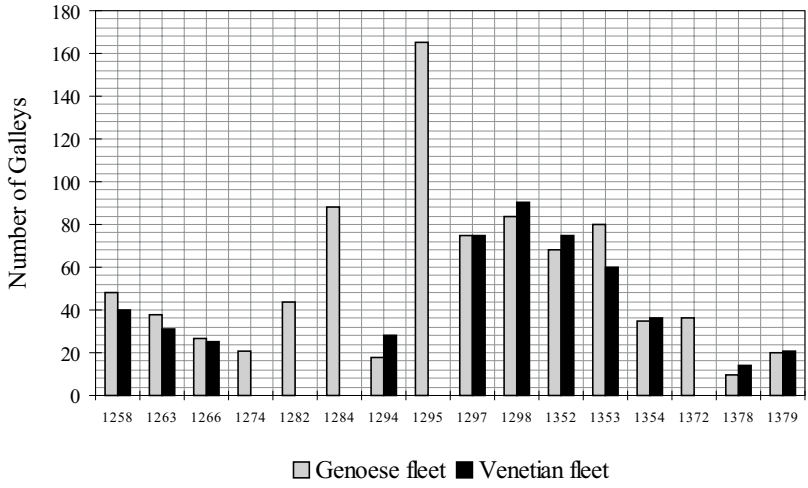
The value of the colony at Pera to the Genoese was demonstrated in the opening phases of the Second Genoese–Venetian War. When Venice sent fourteen war galleys to Cyprus and Armenia with their merchant fleet in 1294 intending to drive the Genoese from Famagusta and Lajazzo, the Genoese of Pera raised a scratch fleet of hastily armed merchant galleys. Though outnumbered, this makeshift flotilla inflicted a severe defeat on the overconfident Venetians, capturing most of their vessels. Their rapid and successful response saved the Genoese merchant communities in Cyprus and Armenia.[23]

The average size of fleets in the second Genoese–Venetian war and, despite the Black Death, even in the third war, was much greater than in the first war. The average fleet size in the major engagements of the first war was around thirty galleys. In the second and third wars the average was around sixty (see Table I). Early in the Corsican War both Pisa and Genoa made use of very large fleets. This was almost certainly made easier by the very restricted theatre of operations in that war, confined as it was to the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Gulf of Genoa. Even when this general increase in the size of forces is taken into consideration, the fleet, which the Genoese sent out in 1295, was truly remarkable. That summer they strained to arm two hundred galleys and, in the event,

21 Ibid., I, 185 ff.
22 Ibid., II, 177.
23 Caro, *Genova*, II, 183 ff.; Lane, *Venice*, 83.

Table I

Size of Selected Fleets: 1258–1379



put to sea with around one hundred and sixty-five. The majority of these were new trireme galleys, larger and heavier than the earlier bireme types.[24] A formal challenge was sent inviting the Venetians to meet this formidable fleet in battle, even offering to meet them near Messina so that they would not have to endure the fatigue of a long voyage to Genoa. This huge fleet did, in fact, travel to Messina, where it waited in vain for almost three weeks for the Venetians.[25] Even if the Venetians had had a comparable fleet, they would have been foolish to attempt the passage of the Strait of Messina in the face of so powerful a force. In fact, it appears that the Genoese were operating at the limits of their capacities just to get this assemblage to Sicily and back. If not, why did they not go on to the Adriatic when the Venetians did not come to them?

The great fleet of 1295 represented a maximum effort for the Genoese, requiring the mobilisation of virtually all the private galleys, manpower, and money of the Riviera.[26] Following this unparalleled and fruitless effort, and to

24 Ibid., II, 196 and n. 52. Cf. also Dotson, 'Merchant and Naval Influences'. The Genoese chronicler Jacopo da Varagine gives the figure of 165 galleys and says that only vessels with at least 220 men on board 'as is commonly reckoned' were allowed to sail with the fleet, but that many had 250 and some as many as 300 men. He places the total number of men in the fleet at 45,000 which would make an average of 272 men per galley. *Annali Genovesi dopo Caffaro e suoi continuatori*, G. Monleone, trans. and ed., vol. I (X in the series of *Annali Genovesi*), 22 ff. The problems of victualing, watering, and sanitation for these numbers in the limited space of even the larger triremes must have been monumental.

25 *Annali Genovesi*, X (I), 24 ff.

26 Ibid., 26 ff. What Jacopo da Varagine actually wrote was that there remained in Genoa and the Rivera enough men to equip a further forty galleys left behind as a home guard.

some extent as a result of the strain of financing and manning it, bitter internecine fighting broke out among the opposing parties at Genoa. No fleet at all was sent out the next year while a Venetian fleet of some seventy galleys attacked Genoese possessions in Romania, including even Pera and Caffa.[27] In 1297 the Genoese sent a large fleet of about seventy-five galleys to sea, but divided the command between two admirals. This fleet entered the Adriatic to challenge the Venetians. Predictably, the commanders, Gando de Mari and Tomaso Spinola, soon fell out and parcelled the fleet out between them, de Mari taking the larger part to Sardinia while Spinola returned to Sicily. The Venetians had sent out a number of small squadrons raiding Genoese possessions in Sicily, Armenia, Cyprus and Byzantium. These were united off Sicily under the command of Andrea Dandolo. He chased the smaller part of the Genoese fleet there all the way to North Africa without bringing it to battle.[28] Internal dissensions would eventually prove fatal to the Genoese efforts. Toward the end of August 1298, a Genoese fleet commanded by Lamba Doria, originally of eighty-four galleys but due to losses to a storm in the Adriatic finally of seventy-seven, harried Venetian possessions on the Dalmatian coast, forcing the Venetian fleet to accept battle near Curzola Island early in September.[29] Andrea Dandolo's Venetian fleet was considerably larger, with ninety-six galleys, but was outmanoeuvred and outfought by the Genoese. Fewer than a dozen of the Venetian galleys escaped and thousands of Venetian mariners were taken prisoner. A contemporary Venetian analyst, Marin Sanudo, observed that the Genoese galleys were larger and better equipped than the Venetians'. This appears to be yet another indication that the Genoese had a greater number of the new triremes in their fleet.[30] In spite of the overwhelming victory, no attack on the Venetian lagoon followed. The Genoese had also suffered heavily and Doria feared internal dissension at home where Genoese Guelfs, based at Monaco and allied with Venice, threatened the city.[31] By this time, both sides had reasons to seek a peace. The Genoese, with the civil war between the Guelfs and the Ghibelline government of the metropolis growing increasingly dangerous and with the expense of maintaining hostilities growing increasingly burdensome, needed to end this war on two fronts. Venice and Pisa, with so many of their citizens imprisoned at Genoa, also had reason to seek an armistice. The Venetian failure to achieve decisive results by their attempt to destroy all of Genoa's eastern commerce in the strenuous campaign of 1297 and the inability of Genoa to follow a naval victory with an attack on the enemy home city led to the peace.

27 Ibid.; Caro, *Genova*, II, 220 ff.
28 Caro, *Genova*, II, 227 ff.
29 Ibid., II, 233 ff.
30 The exact composition of the fleets is unknown, but it is possible that the manpower of the Genoese fleet might have equalled or even exceeded that of the Venetians. Considering an extreme case in which all seventy-seven of the Genoese galleys were triremes carrying crews one and a half times as large as a bireme, and all ninety-six of the Venetian galleys were biremes, the disparity might have been as great as the proportion of 115.5 to 96.
31 Caro, *Genova*, II, 236 ff.

Matteo Visconti, ruler of Milan, acted as broker for the accord. The treaty between Venice and Genoa established peace on terms of relative equality. Venice promised to stay out of any conflict between Genoa and Pisa and abandoned its support of the Genoese Guelfs. Likewise, the Genoese promised not to enter the Adriatic in the event of war between Venice and any of its neighbours. Genoa's peace with Pisa was considerably more harsh, signalling the imbalance of power that had existed between the two since the Battle of Meloria.[32]

Nonetheless, at the end of the War of Curzola, Genoa was arguably the most formidable maritime power in the Mediterranean. It was rich and populous. It could put to sea larger and more effective fleets than any other state. Not only were the fleets large, but the skill and bravery of their crews and commanders were acknowledged by all. Pisa was no longer a threat and Venice was checked.

During the first half of the fourteenth century the Genoese tightened their hold on the Black Sea trade. The third Genoese–Venetian war arose from this fact. The war began in 1350, only two years after the Black Death had devastated Italy. Both cities were hard pressed for manpower. The distinguished historian of Venice Frederic Lane estimated that the usual draft in Venice would have manned only twenty-five galleys. Additional manpower had to be sought in Dalmatia and Greece. The Venetians faced further difficulties when many of those drafted hired substitutes and discipline proved to be a problem. This was obvious in the first battle of the war when thirty-five Venetian galleys attacked fourteen Genoese merchant galleys at Castro, near Negroponte. The Venetian authorities were scandalised to learn that four of the Genoese galleys had escaped as the Venetian crews scrambled to plunder those vessels already taken.[33] Worse, the escaped galleys joined with several others out from Genoa and sacked the harbour at Negroponte.[34] Large fleets had, however, become the standard in naval war between the two cities. If local drafts and mercenaries were not sufficient, allies might be found. The Venetians found them in the Aragonese, who were contesting with Genoa for domination of Corsica and Sardinia,[35] and the Greek Emperor, John Cantacuzene. Venice offered subsidies to the king of Aragon and the Byzantine emperor in an effort to raise a fleet comparable to those that had operated during the second war.[36] In 1351 it was evident that the Genoese would move as quickly as they could to reinforce their colony at Pera. From there they might intimidate the Byzantine emperor into withdrawing from the coalition and shore up their strategic position there. King Pedro IV of Aragon's instructions to his admiral made it clear that destruction of the Genoese fleet was his primary objective. He would have preferred a strategy based on intercepting the Genoese before they could reach the East and only

32 Ibid., II, 246.
33 Lane, *Venice*, 175–6.
34 *Annali Genovesi dopo Caffaro e i suoi continuatori*, ed. and trans. Giovanni Monleone, II (XI in the series), *Giorgio Stella* (second part) (Genoa, 1972), 76. Cf. Mario Brunetti, 'La battaglia di Castro (1350)', *Rivista marittima*, 43 (Jan.–Mar. 1910), 269–82.
35 Caro, *Genova*, II, 224 ff.; Lane, *Venice*, 84.
36 Lane, *Venice*, 175 ff.

reluctantly permitted his admiral the discretionary power to proceed to Romania if he failed to intercept the enemy. The allied plan was a good one. The Catalan and Venetian fleets would rendezvous near the Strait of Messina to intercept the Genoese if they moved toward the East.[37] However, they underestimated the size of the Genoese fleet and the alacrity with which their admiral, Paginino Doria, could move. He was on his way to Pera before the allies could get their fleets in position. The Venetians and Catalans were forced to pursue him to Constantinople.

The Genoese fleet of sixty galleys proceeded to Romania in the winter of 1351. The only Venetian force in its path, a fleet of twenty galleys, fled to Negroponte where the commander, Niccolo Pisani, scuttled it and undertook the defence of the port with the crews. When the Venetian and Catalan main force arrived to help the defenders, the Genoese lifted the siege and proceeded to their base at Pera. The Venetians and their allies strengthened their fleet by refloating Pisani's galleys. They then moved to join with the Greeks in order to dislodge the Genoese from the Bosporus.[38] There the fleets met in February 1352. Doria drew up his sixty galleys in a narrow part of the Bosporus so that their flanks could not be turned by the more numerous allied fleet. The allied fleet amounted to some eighty-nine galleys, forty-five Venetian, thirty Aragonese and fourteen Greek.[39] By all accounts the Greeks were never engaged and fled at the first opportunity, so the effective strength of the allies was only slightly greater than that of the Genoese. The battle was considered an especially bitter one, the more horrifying because it continued into the night as a storm broke over the sea. Losses were high on both sides. The Genoese chronicler, Giorgio Stella, said that there were reports of four thousand Venetian and Catalan dead and seven hundred or so Genoese.[40] Despite claims of victory by both sides the Genoese were clearly the victors. The Venetians and Aragonese had to withdraw their fleets and the Byzantine emperor was forced to accept a peace that recognised a strengthened Genoese position at Pera. Still, the Venetian–Aragonese combination was a potent one, even if the Greeks had been knocked out of the war. The focus of interest of the allies was different: Venice hoped to expel the Genoese from their strategic position on the Bosporus and in the Black Sea while Aragon wanted to wrest control of Sardinia from Genoa. Having failed to dislodge the Genoese from Constantinople in the bloody Battle of the Bosporus, the scene of battle shifted closer to the Aragonese area of interest. In August 1353, the allied fleet of eighty galleys, again under the command of Nicolo Pisani, inflicted a crushing defeat on Antonio Grimaldi off the harbour of Alghero in Sardinia. Forty-one of the sixty Genoese galleys were captured along with their crews.[41] The Genoese Guelfs and Ghibellines blamed one another for

37 C. Manfroni, 'Il piano della campagna navale veneto-aragonese del 1351 contro Genova', in *Rivista marittima*, 35 (July–Sept. 1902), 323–32.
38 Lane, *Venice*, 178.
39 Giorgio Stella, II, 77.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 78.

the disaster and civil war again threatened. This was averted by placing the government in the hands of the ruler of Milan, its archbishop Giovanni Visconti.[42]

The following year, 1354, the Genoese were still able to assemble a fleet of twenty-five galleys. Command was given to Paganino Doria who cruised first along the coast of Catalonia, then into the Adriatic where he burned the Istrian town of Parenzo (Porec). Another ten galleys were sent to reinforce this fleet. Venice armed thirty-six galleys and five great ships as well as smaller vessels to oppose him.[43] The fleets met near Porto Longo on the island of Sapienza (Sapiéntza) just south of Modon on 4 November. In the battle Doria's forces captured the entire Venetian force with very little loss to their own.[44] Both sides seem to have reached the end of their resources. Archbishop Giovanni Visconti had died and his nephews, Maffeo, Bernabó, and Galeazzo, did not want to continue to be entangled in Genoa's quarrel. A peace was negotiated that gave no great advantage to either side.

An incident in 1372 revealed the extent of hostility that still existed between the Genoese and the Venetians and led to the fourth war between Venice and Genoa, the War of Chioggia. At the coronation of King Peter II of Cyprus in Famagusta a quarrel broke out between them over a question of precedence. The Genoese seem to have got the worst of it. Genoa reacted by organising an expedition under Pietro Campofregoso, the doge's brother, to Cyprus. While this main force was being readied, a squadron of seven galleys commanded by Damiano Cattaneo went ahead to harry the island kingdom. The financial situation of the commune was so straitened that it had to turn to a private company, a *maona*, to raise the necessary money to pay for the main fleet. In early August thirty-six galleys and various other ships carrying fourteen thousand men set sail for Cyprus.[45] By 10 October Famagusta had been captured. Peter II was forced into a peace that eventually made Cyprus a virtual Genoese colony.[46] When the Genoese were granted control of the small island of Tenedos at the mouth of the Dardanelles by the Byzantine usurper, Andronicus IV, Venice became very concerned by this growing presence in two sensitive strategic areas. Besides, Venice had claims of her own to Tenedos. War threatened and the Genoese began with a diplomatic offensive that made clear that their strategy was to deliver a knockout blow to Venice itself. They tried to assemble a combination of allies on land to complement their naval forces to crush Venice, as Pisa had been crushed in a similar vise almost a century earlier. First, Aragon was neutralised at great sacrifice to Genoese interests by an agreement not to interfere in Sardinia. Alliances were forged with the king of Hungary and Francesco Carrara, the despot of Padua. Other local enemies of Venice entered the alliance, but provided little help.

42 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 220.
43 Giorgio Stella, II, 80.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 114; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 236.
46 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 237.

Venice also found allies in, not surprisingly, Peter II, the king of Jerusalem and Cyprus, but also Bernabó Visconti of Milan. The latter would prove very valuable to them. Venice and Milan encouraged revolt in Liguria while Milan prepared to invade, hoping to re-establish Milanese lordship over Genoa. Fourteen Venetian galleys under the command of Vettor Pisani were sent to support these efforts. On 30 May, near Cape Anzio, south of Rome, they intercepted ten Genoese galleys under Luigi Fieschi on their way to join forces with the king of Hungary.[47] The considerably smaller size of these fleets is an indication of the reduced circumstances of both cities in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Five of the Genoese galleys were lost, one ran aground, and the remaining four fled back to Genoa. These unfortunate events provoked another turnover in the government of Genoa. Doge Domenico Campofregoso was deposed and imprisoned by his successor, Nicolo Guarco. The new regime continued the war with Venice along the previously established lines. At the end of the summer, Luciano Doria was sent with seventeen galleys to Zara, now controlled by the king of Hungary. There he linked up with three of the survivors of the Battle of Cape Anzio who had returned to sea to harry Venetian shipping.[48] The following spring Doria cruised north-west along the Dalmatian coast. He found the Venetian fleet of twenty-one galleys refitting at Pula (Pola) in Istria on 5 May 1379. Only six of the Venetian galleys escaped the battle with their captain general, Vittore Pisano. Luciano Doria was killed in the fighting.[49] The victory was celebrated as a major triumph in Genoa and a kinsman, Pietro Doria, was appointed to replace the fallen Luciano. Within two weeks of the battle he sailed from Genoa with another fifteen galleys to take command.

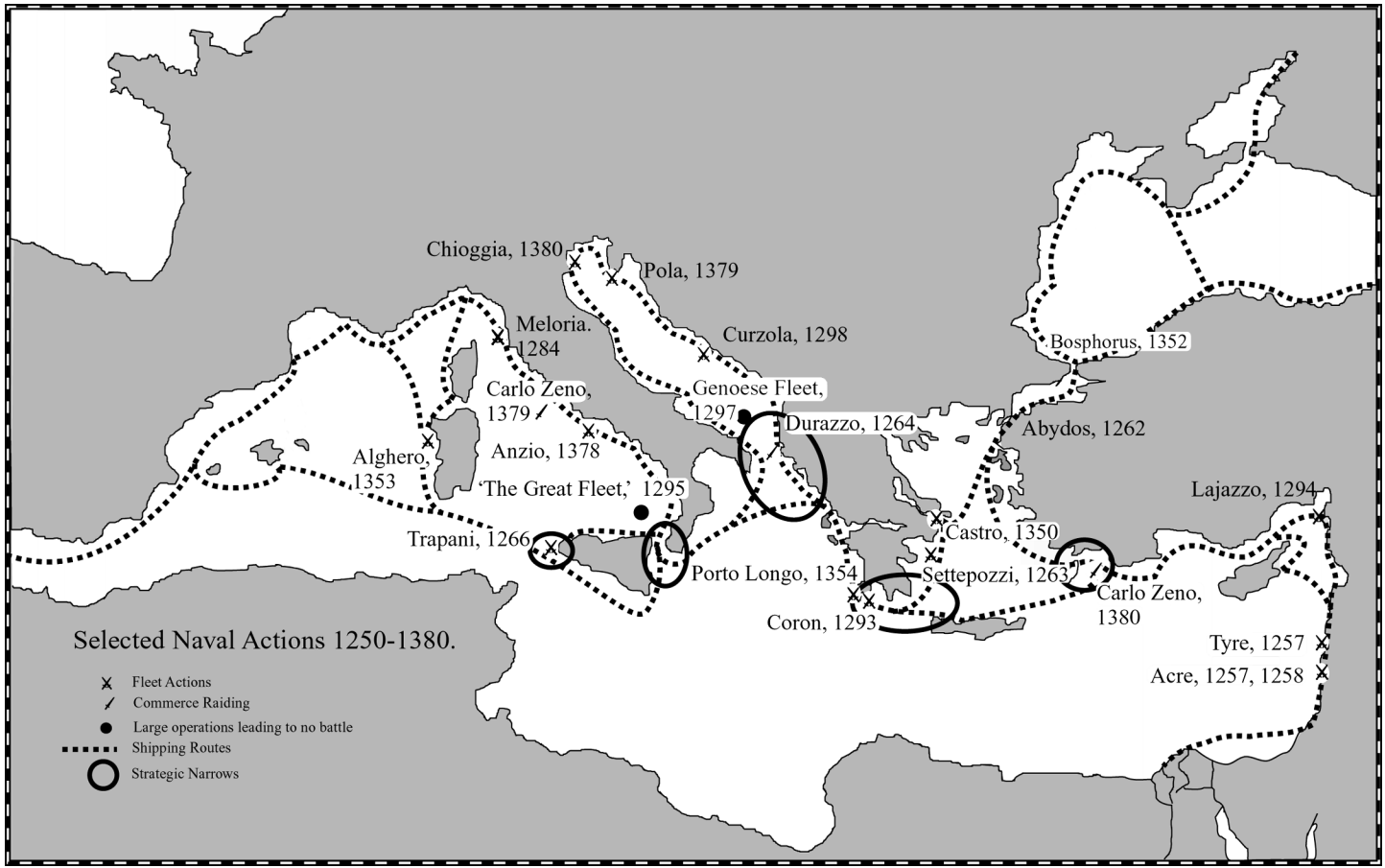
Vettor Pisani's reception at Venice was quite different. He was arrested, charged with incompetence and cowardice, and imprisoned despite much popular support, especially from the sailors.[50] Carlo Zeno had earlier taken five galleys to harass Genoese shipping. After the Battle of Pula (Pola), six more were sent to reinforce him, apparently with the intent that an attack along the Riviera would force the Genoese fleet to withdraw as they had after Curzola. The Genoese were determined to end the conflict with Venice as it had the one with Pisa and conditions seemed right to make that possible. Hungarian forces threatened from the north, the Carrarese occupied Terra Ferma to the west and the Genoese fleet, far from returning home, dominated the Gulf. With supplies cut off Venice was threatened with starvation. Then in August 1379, combined Genoese and Paduan forces captured Chioggia at the southern entrance to the

47 Giorgio Stella, II, 122; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 238.

48 Giorgio Stella, II, 127. Stella says that the total Genoese fleet was twenty-two galleys, but seventeen plus three is only twenty.

49 Ibid., 128–9. Stella repeats that the Genoese fleet had twenty-two galleys. He also reports that the Venetian fleet had 425 mercenaries aboard 'the usual complement of the galleys' as well as many men from Pula (Pola). The Venetian galleys and 2407 prisoners were sent back to Zara. Fifteen captured galleys with 2407 prisoners would be about 160 men per galley, a perfectly believable figure.

50 Lane, *Venice*, 192–3.



Map 1. The Mediterranean: selected naval actions, 1250–1380

lagoon. Venice sued for peace. In an often-quoted reply the Genoese refused to negotiate 'until they bridled the horses of San Marco'.[51] Clearly, they intended to occupy Venice itself. However, instead of pressing an assault on the unfortified city, they settled down at their base in Chioggia to starve the Serenissima into submission. Given the difficulties of navigating through the tortuous and unknown channels of the lagoon, this was, on the surface, a prudent strategy though it proved fatal in the end. In extreme danger, and needing the complete support of the population, the Venetian government turned to Vettor Pisani. With extreme difficulty another thirty-four galleys were armed. Finding crews for them was more difficult and a draft brought many landsmen to the benches where they learned to row between the Giudecca and the Lido. Pisani planned to sink stone-laden hulks in the major channels of the lagoon to make them impassable to large ships that might carry an army to the Rialto. Under cover of a dark winter night in December and a diversionary attack on Chioggia, the obstacles were placed. The siege of the besiegers had begun.[52]

Meanwhile, with virtually the entire Genoese fleet involved in the attack on Venice, Carlo Zeno had a free hand to sweep the Mediterranean attacking Genoese ships wherever he found them, from Portovenere to Beirut. Even after he received an urgent recall from Venice, he attacked and captured a large and richly laden Genoese cog in the harbour at Rhodes. Even after his return the Venetians did not give battle to the Genoese fleet in the Adriatic, but doggedly kept to their siege of Chioggia. The War of Chioggia is notable in another respect. It appears to be the first time that gunpowder artillery was used on a large scale and from on board ships. Pietro Doria was killed by a shot from a bombard.[53] The Genoese sent reinforcements, thirteen galleys in March, and another five in May, to relieve their besieged forces in Chioggia. The efforts were in vain. Even an attempt to subvert mercenaries in the Venetian forces with a large bribe failed.[54] Finally, in June, running out of food and ammunition, the Genoese forces in Chioggia surrendered. The Venetians captured four thousand Genoese citizens and nineteen galleys. The war continued for several more months. Milanese forces captured Novi in September. Vettor Pisani died in battle against the remaining Genoese forces in the Adriatic.[55] But, for all practical purposes the War of Chioggia ended with the failure of the Genoese and their allies to capture Venice itself.

The Peace of Turin, concluded in August 1381, ended the war. Possession of Tenedos, the immediate cause of the war, was ceded to Genoa. But the Genoese agreed not to fortify it. The Venetians promised not to interfere in the conflict

51 Ibid., 192; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 239.
52 Lane, *Venice*, 193.
53 Giorgio Stella, II, 140; Lane, *Venice*, 195. Whether he was killed directly by a stone projectile, or by a stone from a collapsing tower, is unclear. The Genoese seemed to have been surprised by the extensive Venetian use of these new weapons (Giorgio Stella, II, 141, n. 436).
54 Lane, *Venice*, 195.
55 Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 241; Lane, *Venice*, 195.

on Cyprus. Thus ended the last major episode in the conflict between Venice and Genoa that had lasted for a century-and-a-quarter. It can be argued that the terms of the peace were favorable to Genoa; after all they had possession of Tenedos. The cost of the war and, one suspects, the failure to finish off the old enemy after coming so near, was more than Genoese society could bear. Venice recovered, ultimately coming to dominate the Terra Ferma. Genoa slipped into a period of foreign domination, first by the Milanese and then by the French. Very soon the naval power of both cities would be overshadowed by national monarchies and great empires.

Over a series of wars spanning nearly a century-and-a-half, much changed. Technology evolved, but did not yet change the fundamental nature of naval warfare in the Mediterranean Sea. That would occur only when northern powers introduced full-rigged ships with broadside batteries. The ships used in combat became larger as the trireme galley replaced the bireme. By the 1370s gunpowder artillery had made an appearance, though not a decisive one. The deadliest weapon in naval warfare was still, at the end of the fourteenth century, almost certainly the crossbow. The Genoese seemed to have gained a slight technological edge for a time late in the thirteenth century if, indeed, they did lead in the introduction of the trireme, but it was not decisive.

Strategic goals evolved from the rather limited attempts to expel the enemy from the immediate point of conflict to the aim of eliminating his ability to conduct war at all. Complex naval operations over large stretches of the Mediterranean involving a sophisticated understanding of time and geography, utilizing intelligence gathering, subterfuge, and a variety of stratagems to bring enemy fleets to battle on favorable terms could be, and were, mounted. Still, the limitations of galley warfare are clear. While the interception of major merchant fleets might be the effective equivalent of a blockade, this became more difficult from the late thirteenth century as navigational and other technical advances opened the seas to year round navigation. Even under the earlier conditions of limited sailing seasons the interception and capture of a merchant convoy was a difficult and chancy affair. Only Simone Grillo's operation in 1264 actually succeeded in such an endeavor on a major scale. On the whole, merchant activity could be harassed, but not interdicted. Nonetheless, the Eastern luxury trade was a high-stakes commerce that moved goods of enormous value and huge profit margins in a very few vessels. The loss of even individual ships could inflict painful, if not fatal, economic damage.

The elimination of a war fleet, while serious, did not spell ruin for the maritime cities. Great naval victories seem to have brought only minimal results. The capture of the entire Genoese fleet at Trapani in 1266 did not end the war, nor did other seemingly stunning victories by one side or another. The loss of trained manpower that such a defeat entailed was apparently more damaging than the loss of galleys. Successive defeats could wear down an opponent as indispensable skilled mariners were killed, disabled, or taken away into captivity. The huge numbers of Venetian and Pisan prisoners held by Genoa at the end of the War of Curzola seems to have been a major factor in persuading

them to seek a peace. In the end, though, manpower losses could lead to a suspension of hostilities, but not to long-term control of the seas.

The amphibious nature of galley warfare is evident in the wars between the Italian maritime republics. Decisive actions focused on the control of ports and bases. Venice gained the upper hand in Oltremare when the Genoese were forced out of Acre. The very effective Genoese reply was an alliance that forced the Venetians out of Constantinople. Even when the Venetians returned to the city on the Bosphorus they found themselves trumped by the independent Genoese base at Pera. The most decisive naval battle of the era occurred when Benedetto Zaccaria crushed the Pisans at Meloria in 1284. Pisa, however, was a relatively small city caught between Genoa at sea and its Tuscan neighbors, Lucca and Florence, on land. This combination, in which a victory over an enemy fleet was followed by an attack on its home city, supported by land-based allies, seems to have provided the Genoese with a paradigm for victory which they would attempt to repeat in subsequent wars with the Venetians.

Relatively quickly after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, Venice built a chain of bases from the lagoons of the northern Adriatic, along the Dalmatian coast, across the Aegean to the Bosphorus. This enabled the Venetians to rely on an essentially defensive strategy to protect their position in the eastern basins of the Mediterranean. Genoa was able to establish powerful bases in the East, but they did not form a nearly continuous chain as did the Venetian bases. Even Pera was, at times, less effective than one might expect because its population could be at odds with the metropolis during Genoa's frequent internecine struggles. Venices's Aegean bases were strongly held. In the end, it took the Ottoman Turks over a century of combined military and naval assaults to uproot them. Genoa did not have comparable resources at its disposal. On the other hand, Venice was never able to mount a major fleet operation within the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Gulf of Genoa to compare with those of the Genoese in the Adriatic.

In the final analysis, the strategic situation put the burden of offensive on the Genoese. The Venetian bases gave them not outright domination of the Eastern Seas but a dominant position. Lacking the resources to grind away at the Venetians as the Ottomans would later do, the Genoese struck at the two anchor points: first, at Constantinople and then at Venice itself. In the War of Chioggia, they came very near to succeeding.

The Venetians with their Arsenal and state-owned ships perhaps more nearly approached the modern idea of a navy than did the Genoese combination of state and privately financed fleets. Still, the conduct of the wars, with their economically-driven enmities, the search for a decisive battle between fleets combined with intensive commerce raiding, certainly seems to foreshadow the undeniably modern wars of the eighteenth century.