

BARBARO'S GLASS BALL AND SOKOLLU MEHMED'S FINESSE. OTTOMAN-VENETIAN PEACE IN 1573

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ABSTRACT

While the naval battle of Lepanto as well as the founding and dissolution of the Holy League has attracted significant scholarly attention, the preparation and ratification of the ensuing peace treaty between Ottoman Empire and Republic of Venice has received relatively little attention. Nonetheless, the three months of lengthy negotiations that culminated in the treaty of capitulations provide a valuable insight into the early modern Ottoman approaches to international negotiations and treaty-making. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1565-1579), Grand Vizier of Sultan Selîm II (1566-1574), was the principal protagonist of these negotiations on the Ottoman side. This article focuses on the encounters of the latter with Marcantonio Barbaro, Venetian *bailo* and François de Noailles, ambassador of King of France Charles IX and aims to provide a new perspective on their bargainings by emphasising the participants' points of view, achievements and failures, hidden agendas, as well as tactics.

KEYWORDS: 1570-1573 Ottoman-Venetian War, Early Modern Trans-cultural Diplomacy; Mediation; Treaty-Making.

LA BOLA DE CRISTAL DE BARBARO Y LA DELICADEZA DE SOKOLLU MEHMED. LA PAZ ENTRE OTOMANOS Y VENECIANOS EN 1573

RESUMEN

Mientras que la batalla naval de Lepanto y la consolidación y disolución de la Liga Santa han suscitado gran interés entre los historiadores, la preparación y ratificación del tratado de paz entre el Imperio Otomano y la República de Venecia ha recibido relativamente poca atención. No obstante, los tres meses de largas negociaciones que culminaron en un tratado de capitulaciones proporcionan una valiosa visión de los enfoques otomanos de principios de la Edad Moderna sobre las negociaciones internacionales y la elaboración de tratados con las potencias europeas. Soğollu Mehmed Pasha (1565-1579), gran visir del sultán Selîm II (1566-1574), fue el

principal protagonista de estas negociaciones por parte otomana. Este artículo se centra en los encuentros de este último con Marcantonio Barbaro, bailo veneciano, y François de Noailles, embajador del rey de Francia Carlos IX, para ofrecer una nueva perspectiva de las negociaciones haciendo hincapié en los puntos de vista de los participantes, sus logros y fracasos, sus agendas ocultas, así como sus tácticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: 1570-1573 Guerra Otomano-Veneciana; Diplomacia intercultural; Mediación; Elaboración de tratados diplomáticos.

After granting your bailo's request, residing in the Sublime Threshold of our felicitous and almighty sultan—may God increase his triumphs!—who had repeatedly submitted letters and a petition with his handwriting and personal seal requesting the restoration of harmony and peace as well as the safety and security that formerly existed in between, we have ventured into this task—as we had done many times before—and made all kinds of efforts to relieve the pauper and the destitute from the suffering and misery by virtue of our strong feelings of charity towards them. Even though this was exceedingly difficult, every required human action was taken to extinguish the fury of the fortunate padishah of the World. Your bailo knows only but partially the challenges involved in delivering the above-mentioned petition, getting its contents approved, and appeasing the padishah's wrath. Thank God, our efforts for this deed of kindness—as well as for the harmony of the cosmos and the tranquility of the people—were not in vain. The unrelenting anger and wrath of our kind and magnanimous padishah were transformed into love and compassion. We have succeeded in getting peace and reconciliation accepted!¹

This is how the peace negotiations were described by Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, grand vizier of Selîm II (1566-1574), in an ostentatious letter sent to the Doge and the Senate of Venice, simultaneously with the treaty of capitulations (*'abd-nâme*) which ended the war between Ottoman Empire and Venice, in March 1573. Although numerous significant studies have been devoted to the naval battle of Lepanto as well as to the formation and the suspension of the Holy League, the preparation and ratification of this peace treaty has scarcely received attention. Yet, the protracted

¹ Archivio di Stato-Venezia (ASVe), Documenti Turchi, 819. *Éyle olsa bu def'a cümleñüze bu husûsüñ i'lâm lâzım geldüğü sa'âdetlü ve kudretlü pâdişâhımız e'azza'l-lâhu te'âlâ ensârahı hazretleriniñ yüce âsitânelerinde olan bâylôsüñüz mukaddemâ bu maslahat için def'aâtle kendü mühri ve battıyla âsitâne-i sa'âdete bî'd-def'aât mektûb gönderüb mâbeyn kemâkân sulh u salâb ve emn ü emân üzere olmasın istid'â eylemegin şimdîye degin édegeldüğümüz gibi mucerred perîşân ve muştaribu'l-bâl olan re'âya ve fukarâya terahhum^m bu 'azîm maslahatüñ içine girüb ve başını ortaya koyub sa'âdetlü pâdişâb-ı 'âlem-penâhuñ bu bâbda olan âteş ve gazabları def'i gâyet müşkil ve 'asîr iken şol ki makdûr-ı beşer-dür bezl ve sarf édüb sa'âdetlü sâbib-keirân-ı zümân hazretleriniñ pâye-i serîr-i â'lâlarında bâylôsüñüzüñ sulh husûsında yazduğı istid'â mahall-i kabûle erişdürince ve gazab [ve] biddetleri def' étdürilince neler çekildüğü bu dostuñuzüñ degil mezbur bâylôsüñüzüñ dabı bir mikdâr ma'lûmı olmış-dur el-hamdulillâbi te'âlâ bu hayra ve nizâm-ı 'âleme ve buşûr-ı re'âyâya olan kasd ve delâletüñüzüñ zâyi' olmayub müriüvetlü ve merhametlü pâdişâhımız hazretleriniñ satvet-i kâhire ve gazabları şefkat ve merhamete tebeddül olub sulh ve salâb kabûl etdirilüb...*

discussions between January and March 1573 resulting in the peace provide considerable insights into the Ottoman strategies in international negotiations and approaches to treaty-making.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who assumed the central role in the talks on the Ottoman side, is simply mentioned in passing in the relevant studies. In this article I focus therefore on his tractations with Marcantonio Barbaro, *bailo* of Signoria and François de Noailles who acted as unofficial mediator of Charles IX (1561-1574) so as to analyse the protagonists' different points of view, hidden motives, successes, and drawbacks in the treaty making process.

AUTUMN 1572: PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND WAR

At the start of the naval campaigns of 1572, as it was the case in the previous year, the Ottoman fleet furthered its advantage over the enemy, by being stationed around Dodecanese for over a month before Papal and Venetian squadrons merged at Corfu. On the other hand, even if the required materials and supplies had already been gathered, as well as rowers and combatants enlisted, the fleet's chances of success seemed slim, given the frailty of the newly-built galleys after the devastating defeat in last October and the inexperience of the majority of its captains. Yet, it had a considerable asset in the person of its new commander, Uluç 'Ali/ *Uchalí* who wanted to defend his reputation as a skillful sailor in front of his opponents whose flaws he knew rather well.² When Uluç 'Ali informed the Sultan and his grand vizier of his plan of actions, *i.e.* the attacks on the Venetian islands in the Ionian Sea, the former approved but the latter reacted with scepticism because he was aware of the fleet's vulnerability. On the other side, the unanimity between the coalesced forces was at its lowest. The Spanish contingent of Don John of Austria could not reach the Ionian Sea until September. *Uchalí* forced his enemies to combat in the most adverse conditions on his selected terrain for the remaining weeks. Eventually, these naval operations came to a close with both parties realizing that further weakening the enemy would be too difficult. Be that as it may, the disastrous setback at Lepanto had mostly been forgotten for the Ottomans.³

The reactions in Venice were varied. While the younger members of the Senate continued supporting a strong alliance with the King of Spain and were keen to fulfil the promises made to the allies, the Council of Ten (*Consiglio dei Dieci*) as well as the so-called *vecchi* in the Senate were now opting for peace and ready to resume the negotiations with the Sublime Porte. Despite the success in Lepanto, putting a term to the conflict had become urgent because of its exorbitant cost (around twelve million

² Cf. Emilio Sola Castaño, *Uchalí: el Calabrés Tiñoso, o el mito del corsario muladíen lafrontera* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2011).

³ Michel Lesure, *Lépante. La crise de l'Empire ottoman* (Paris: Julliard, 1972), 192-249; Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant. 1204-1571* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1984), v. IV, 1075-1086; Niccolo Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Story of the Battle of Lepanto* (New York: Macmillan, 2006), 287-320.

ducats) and because of its ravaging effects on the Dalmatian hinterland.⁴ Yet, the pro-peace Venetians knew that they would need to pay a hefty price for peace, especially after the recent naval operations which did not live up to expectations. At the same time, they could count on the support of the King of France, Charles IX, who from the outset had endeavored to act as a mediator between the Ottomans and Venetians, his two powerful allies in the eastern Mediterranean. Back in 1571, the King had sent his ambassador François de Noailles, Bishop of Dax, first to Venice and subsequently to the Sublime Porte, in order to find a way to reconcile them.⁵ The Ten, however, needed to maneuver in secret because any attempt to initiate peace talks could arouse the suspicion of Giovanni Antonio Facchinetti, apostolic nuncio in the city as well as the ambassadors of their allies in the League. In early August 1572, the Republic dispatched secret orders to Giovanni Michieli, its representative in Paris, to request the King Charles' mediation.⁶

On August 24, the very day of Saint-Bartholomew massacres, Charles IX informed his ambassador in Istanbul of the recent Venetian request.⁷ Noailles, who was a staunch opponent of the Spanish influence in the French Court, had already offered his services to Marc Antonio Barbaro to that end. Yet, according to Noailles, the Venetians were not ready to accept the French offer, in the summer of 1572: “If they let this season to end without carrying out a successful operation, they will have to purchase peace painfully, at great expense, and on such terms that I am certain Your Highness would not want his name or those of his ministers mentioned in any manner. Even though their *bailo* is secluded here, I have managed to reach him and offered him my good offices, at your request. However, he does not seem interested and when he does respond, he does so in a very indifferent way... But, if the Venetians happen to be successful in the War, you will not be happy of its consequences”.⁸ Having these views in mind, Noailles, after concluding an advantageous naval alliance with the sultan,

⁴ The Ten accorded permission to Barbaro in 11 September 1572. ASVe, Consiglio dei Dieci, Deliberazioni, Secreta, reg. 10, fol. 58 v °: “*Se vederete che trattando voi se possa venir a qualche bona conclusione, vi damo libertà col ditto consiglio di Dieci et zonta di trattar.*” For the different factions at that time: Stefano Andretta, “Giovani and Vecchi: The Factionary Spirit in 16th and 17th Centuries Patrician Venice between Myth and Reality”, in *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions*, ed. Rubén González Cuerva and Alexander Koller (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 176-196.

⁵ Güneş Işıksel, *La diplomatie ottomane sous le règne de Selim II. Paramètres et périmètres de l'empire dans le troisième quart du XVI^e siècle* (Paris-Louvain-Bristol: Peeters, 2016), 179-181.

⁶ Ernest Charrière, *Les Négociations de la France dans le Levant ou correspondances, mémoires et actes diplomatiques des ambassadeurs de France à Constantinople et des ambassadeurs envoyés à divers titres à Venise, Raguse, Rome, Malte et Jérusalem en Turquie, Perse, Géorgie, Crimée, Syrie, Égypte etc et dans les États de Tunis, d'Alger et de Maroc*, IV vol. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale [puis impériale], 1848-60), vol. III, 304 and 310, n. 1.

⁷ Charrière, *Négociations*, v. III, 309, n. 1.

⁸ Charrière, *Négociations*, v. III, 277: “*S'ils laissent passer ceste saison sans frapper ung bon coup, il faudra, l'année qui vient, qu'ilz acheptent la paix par force bien chèrement, bonteusement et à telles conditions que je m'assure que V. M. ne voudroit que son nom et ses ministres y intervinsent. J'ay trouvé moyen, encores que leur baylle soit icy bien resserré, de luy faire communiquer les bons offices que je faitz icy par vostre commandement pour sa république. Mais il fait le froid et ne respond que par voix d'oracle... Si la guerre tourne à bien auxdits Vénitiens, vous ne serez pas marry.*” For Barbaro's version of events: Eugenio Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Veneti al senato. 4: Appendice* (Firenze: Grazzini, 1863), 404:

departed from Istanbul to Paris on September 6 so as to deliver this important document personally to his king, while leaving Barbaro to his own devices.⁹

However when Noailles reached Ragusa, he learnt of the events in Paris which forced him to abandon his journey to France. He sojourned in Ragusa for several weeks waiting for new instructions. Meanwhile, the stranded ambassador pondered the political ramifications of the massacre. Would this cause a reverse in French foreign policy? Would Charles IX decide to join the Holy League? In any case, this would most likely be the perception of the events in Istanbul. In a letter dated November 30, the King finally informed his ambassador that his foreign policy would, for the most part, remain unchanged, and that his kingdom was no longer capable to wage an active war against Spain. Consequently, the two main objectives of Noailles in his dealings with the Sublime Porte would be to settle the Veneto-Ottoman peace and, more importantly, garnering Ottoman support for the duke of Anjou's ascension to the vacant Polish throne, after Sigismund Augustus's death.¹⁰ The Bishop remained in Ragusa for the remainder of 1572, as these instructions arrived there only towards the end of December.

In Istanbul, the quasi-victorious return of *Uchalı* with the navy in autumn fostered the reopening of the peace negotiations. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, assuming that Venice was more determined than ever to end the conflict, was prone to resume the negotiations.¹¹ But, he could not openly meet with the *bailo* since doing so would have given the war party, including *Uchalı*, a chance to accuse him of treason and subsequently remove him from power. Therefore, Sokollu maintained a regular correspondence with Marc Antonio Barbaro through his confidantes, the dragomans, the *çavuşes*, and especially, Rabbi Salomon Ashkenazi who was acting in this initial stage as a go-between, both literally and technically. The Grand Vizier and Barbaro both trusted this physician-*cum*-tradesman from Udine, whose occupation justified his discreet visits to the parties involved in the negotiations.¹²

Sokollu Mehmed's strategy at this early stage was the same as it had been since the beginning of the hostilities. Selim II would be portrayed as the source of most objectionable demands, while the pasha would act as the diplomat, attempting to soften the Sultan's position and mediating on behalf of Venice.¹³ During the initial talks, for which there is little documentation, each side refused to disclose its intentions, and neither knew the extent to which concessions might be taken from the opposing

⁹ Işıkşel, *La diplomatie ottomane*, 190-197.

¹⁰ Service Historique de la Défense (Vincennes), A 1 4, fol. 216 r^o-220 v^o; Charrière, *Négociations*, v. III, 339-348. For the French diplomatic efforts in Istanbul about the Polish elections, Işıkşel, *La diplomatie ottomane*, 197-206.

¹¹ Maria Pia Pedani (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato. XIV. Costantinopoli. Relazioni inedite 1512-1789* (Padova: Aldo Ausilio, 1996), 172.

¹² Michel Lesure, "Notes et documents sur les relations vénéto-ottomanes 1570- 1573, II", *Turcica* VIII/I (1976) 117-156 : 143-145 and Benjamin Arbel, "Venezia, gli ebrei e l'attività di Salomone Ashkenasi nella guerra di Cipro" in *Gli Ebrei e Venezia (secoli XIV-XVIII)* ed. Gaetano Cozzi (Milano: Edizione di Comunità, 1987), 163-197 : 176-178.

¹³ Güneş Işıkşel, "Diplomatik Bir Yenilik? II. Selim'in Nâmesi ve Sadrazamının Mektubu Bağlamında 1570 Yılında Venedik Cumhuriyeti'ne Verilen Ültimatomun İncelenmesi ve İlgili Metinlerin Neşri", *Tarih Dergisi* 76 (2022): 21-34; Lesure, "Notes et documents".

camp. Du Ferrier, the French envoy in Venice, informed his King about the Grand Vizier's request about Kotor and Corfu's surrender as a preliminary to the peace talks. The *bailo* counterproposed the return of Cyprus to the Republic, with its strongholds dismantled and yearly payment doubled. Sokollu rejected this condition.¹⁴ There does not seem to have any negotiations in December 1572 and in the first weeks of January 1573.

NEGOTIATIONS SEMI-OFFICIALLY RECOMMENCE BEFORE HALTING AGAIN

On January 29, 1573, Ashkenazi paid another visit to the *bailo* to suggest the following principle, which remained constant throughout the negotiations: The peace agreement should be based on the previous Ottoman-Venetian treaty of 1540.¹⁵ This included, for the Venetians, the payment of a lump sum and the cession of some potentially troublesome strongholds from the Ottoman point of view.¹⁶ Barbaro, devoid of new instructions from Venice, had to accept these vague foundation principles for the peace talks willy-nilly.¹⁷ Still, these preliminary discussions were far from conclusive. Barbaro had been unable to persuade the grand vizier to obtain the retention of at least some Venetian strongholds in Cyprus. Nonetheless, he had proved to the Porte that its isolation notwithstanding, Venice would never accept to compromise with its sovereignty. Therefore, when Sokollu offered him the guarantee of perpetual peace in return for an annual tribute (*harâc*), Barbaro declined without any hesitation. Two days later, Sokollu Mehmed demanded five hundred thousand ducats for the suspension of arms and offered the principle of *uti possidetis* as the conditions for a peace agreement. Barbaro then requested some time to consult with the Venetian authorities.¹⁸

On February 6, Ashkenazi paid another visit to the Venetian embassy in the vineyards of Pera. Barbaro proposed to reward the Grand Vizier with a sum ranging from 25 to 30 thousand gold pieces for his services. Ashkenazi promised to communicate this offer while also noting pasha's insistence on the surrender of Corfu

¹⁴ Charrière, *Négociations*, v. III, 358; ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 310 r^o-v^o, (20 January 1572, *mv*).

¹⁵ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 312 v^o, (29 January 1572, *mv*): “*La pace non si farebbe sinon nel modo che la fu fatta l'altra volta con gratificar Q<uest>o Sig<no>r. de danari et con da di qualche castello*”.

¹⁶ For the treaty of 1540, see Hans Theunissen, “Ottoman Venetian Diplomacy: The Ahdnames. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political-Commercial Instruments together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents”, *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*, I (1998), 370-635: 165-168 and 448-469.

¹⁷ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 313 r^o (29 January 1572, *mv*).

¹⁸ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 316 r^o-v^o (31 January 1572, *mv*). *Uti possidetis* principle was used in territorial conflicts between states throughout the early modern era. It redefined ownership and borders of lands gained by invasion, treaties, or other methods. The idea sought to avoid future wars by maintaining the status quo and recognising de facto rule of territory.

or Kotor and some other Venetian strongholds in and around the Ionian Sea.¹⁹ The *bailo* was reminded by Ashkenazi that failing this condition, three hundred galleys were waiting for the upcoming campaign season in the Ottoman arsenal and that *Uchalı* was ready to strike the Venetian islands. Semiz Ahmed, the third vizier and successor to Sokollu Mehmed as the Grand Vizier (1579-1580), was equally prepared to launch attacks from the land to the Dalmatian hinterland.²⁰ Indeed, Sokollu was simultaneously overseeing the preparations for the summer campaign of 1573. Ashkenazi arrived to the bailate some days later with the news that the Ottomans had held a war council (*ayak divanı*) on February 8 deciding to launch a decisive offensive against Corfu and Zadar.²¹ Sokollu was not bluffing. On the other hand lacking new instructions from the Council of Ten, Barbaro was frequently forced to employ generic language and ambiguous formulations. This was a challenging situation for the *bailo* in as much as to negotiate advantageous peace terms, he had to be both pertinent in his counter-propositions and careful so as to conceal his fragile position.

Barbaro's metaphor in his first *relazione* illustrate this ambiguity: "The means required to negotiate with the Turk are almost same to those necessary while playing with a glass ball. When the partner sends the ball with force, it must not be flung back powerfully, nor should it be dumped on the ground, because doing so, either way, risks crushing it. It is consequently vital to reply deftly to the Turks' pride and ignorance, without feeding their arrogance by making use of listless moves".²² In any event, the negotiations were heading to a stalemate by mid-February. The two parties not only disagreed on the substance of the treaty as I will discuss below, but also on some important articles regarding the Dalmatian frontiers. It was still unclear whether the prospective agreement would maintain the communities, locations, and boundaries as they were before the war or if the fighting groups would claim any additional properties they had accumulated during the conflict. However, the long-awaited Bishop of Dax was on his way to the Ottoman capital, resolute to resolve the diplomatic standoff.

NOAILLES ARRIVES...

Indeed, the intervention of Noailles would open the final round of the game. This was at least the hope of Sokollu, who had regularly inquired about the return of the French ambassador and his whereabouts in his way from Ragusa to Istanbul. However, as the anonymous author of a *relazione* pointed out, the pasha made an unexpected manoeuvre just before Noailles' arrival at the French embassy in Pera, neighbor to the Venetian one: "On the 28 [of February] our *çavuş* and janissary were

¹⁹ The information on this aspect of the negotiations is not very clear. According to Noailles, Sokollu was to receive 50000 ducats at the end. Charrière, *Négociations*, v. III, 368.

²⁰ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 317 r°-319 v° (6 February 1572, *mv*).

²¹ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 320 r°-322 r° (10 February 1572, *mv*).

²² Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Veneti al senato. Serie III, Volume I*, (Firenze: Insegna di Clío, 1840), 341: *Il negoziato con li Turchi era simile a chi giocava con una palla di vetro, che quando il compagno la manda con forza, non bisogna violentemente ribatterla e nemmeno lasciarla cadere in terra, perche nell'uno e nell'altro modo si viene a romperla; e che perciò era necessario destralmente rispondere alla superbia ed ignoranza dei Turchi, senza nutrir l'arroganza loro con il negoziar fiacco e debole.*

called back and a much stern one had been appointed who had orders to lock us down tighter, *i.e.* to close all the windows to the point where it is necessary to lit candles in every room of the building”.²³

It is evident that the simultaneity of these events is not merely coincidental. As the important phase of the negotiations was about to begin, Sokollu ordered to place the entire building of the embassy under a strict lockdown. As soon as Noailles appeared, Sokollu Mehmed prevented Barbaro from hearing any news from the long-awaited ambassador and restricted his access to his dragomans, which would prove to be crucial in the later stages. The pasha then questioned the French ambassador immediately upon his arrival to be the first to learn the intentions of both the Republic of Venice and the King of France. As Barbaro had expressed in his second *relazione* which focused uniquely on his peace negotiations: “[B]ut, all my efforts were vain because the pasha had discussed with him first and discovered that the Bishop of Dax had no mandate whatsoever for the peacetalks”.²⁴ By curtailing their contacts, the pasha had deprived them from formulating compelling counter-propositions. Moreover, Sokollu seized the opportunity to manipulate Noailles, who was all the more ignorant of details concerning Dalmatian towns and villages. The *bailo* would have little option but to consent if the latter were to adopt the Grand Vizier’s viewpoint on the terms of Ottoman-Venetian peace in order to avoid being seen by Noailles as someone who is not genuinely interested in French intervention, as was the case in summer 1572, or worse, in peace.

At this point, the Venetian diplomat had reached an impasse. Months had passed as he awaited the French ambassador’s arrival, but neither new information nor instructions arrived with him. He had only received vague hints of action from Venice for a subject of such importance, which may be attributed to either a tumultuous diplomatic situation or disagreements between the Council of Ten and the Senate. He was, in fact, used to the hesitations and voltes-faces of his government. For example, he was not informed about the substantial progress in the concomittant negotiations for the continuation of the League. A peace treaty considered as unfavorable or even a *faux pas* during the talks would place him in a delicate situation when he would return to Venice. At this moment, however, even his return was far from being certain.

The position of the Grand Vizier was only slightly better. How could he succeed in persuading the sultan to sign a peace, given that the Ottoman fleet was preparing to set sail with more than three hundred galleys? Would the presence and good offices of Noailles convince the Sultan and his war party to abandon their current plans? Would he not be held liable for lost time if the negotiations failed in some way? The ambassador of the French king was briefed on the matter by Sokollu during their extensive conversations that got underway as soon as he arrived. In fact, they were to hold four meetings regarding the peace negotiations : The most significant one was

²³ Maria Pia Pedani (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*. XIV. Costantinopoli. *Relazioni 1512-1789* (Padova: Aldo Ausilio, 1996), 173.

²⁴ Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni*, 406: “*Ma ogni diligenza fu vana, perchè il bassà abbocatosi quanto prima con esso, ed entrato in questo proposito, scoprì monsignor d’Alìx non aver autorità alcuna.*” Barbaro bitterly writes in his letter to the Senate that this ambassador’s only commission was to “*acettar le condizioni che sono state trattate*”. ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 330 r^o (7 March 1572, mv).

made in front of the sultan, together with two one-on-one meetings and another one with all the Ottoman high dignitaries in the imperial divan.²⁵ In this regard, Noailles provided the following account to Ferrals, the agent of Charles IX in Rome, naturally, with some consideration so as not to be perceived as the saboteur of the Holy League:

He [Sokollu] was eagerly awaiting my arrival. After learning of my return, he sent his men three times to hasten my journey because he believed that my presence would make his scheme (*dessein*) successful. As previously stated, I finally landed [in Istanbul] on the last day [of February]. On the second day of March, a Monday, I spent more than three hours with the pasha, during which time I gave him a plethora of compelling arguments and reasons for why he should change his mind about his fears. As he exited the room, he implored me to petition (*arzé* > 'arz) the Sultan regarding all of which we had agreed upon, but especially for the above-mentioned peace. The petition was prepared on Tuesday; one of the dragomans translated it on Wednesday; the pasha received it on Thursday; he delivered it to his master on Friday; and on Saturday [7 March 1573], the peace was concluded... Regarding the terms of peace, I did not interfere at all.²⁶

Even though Noailles did not place much emphasis on it, he facilitated tremendously Sokollu's *dessein* by submitting the peace petition. The *arzé*, which left no trace in the archives, served more than one purpose. As the ambassador of the sultan's unique ally in Christian Europe, the Bishop of Dax was not only cautioning the peace in the name of his King and emphasising its benefits to the sultan, especially in the volatile European balance of power after Saint- Bartholomew massacres, but also rendering a crucial service in a more important way. Since, signing a bi-lateral peace treaty would be beneath the dignity of the empire, which was also illicit by Islamic law, especially after a conquest like that of Cyprus, Selim II was waiting a formal demand from Venice in accordance with the Ottoman principle and strategy of "making the other bid for peace." On the other hand, not only did Barbaro lack proper instructions, but also being in the position of a petitioner for peace was a question of dignity for him. He was at least hoping for an honourable and bi-laterally signed treaty after Lepanto which would save the face of Signoria in front of her allies. Sokollu then must have reasoned that if someone else, a third party, had acted as the peace petitioner, appearances would have been saved. This was why Noailles was expected by all

²⁵ Temizay de Laroque, "Documents relatifs à l'ambassade de France à Constantinople", *Archives historiques du département de Girond*, XV (1874), 229.

²⁶SHD Vincennes A17, fol. 175v°, Dax to Ferrals, 8 March 1573 and Charrière, *Négociations*, vol. III, p. 363: "*Quant à la paix des Vénitiens, ledit bassa m'a franchement confessé, après beaucoup de discours sur ce sujet, comme le baile l'en avait recherché et qu'ils avaient esté bien près de la conclure: Ayant en avis de mon retour, il m'attendait en grande expectation de faire réussir son dessein par ma présence qui fût cause qu'il m'envoie hâter par trois fois en chemin Pour conclusion, j'arrivai comme je vous ai dit le dernier je fus avec ledit bassa, le lundi deusxième du présent, plus de trois heures où je lui représentais tant des vives raisons et inductions, que je lui fis penser et craindre ce qu'il n'n'e pas voulu. Au sortir de l'audience, il me pria de faire arzé au Grand Seigneur de tout ce qui s'était traité entre nous et singulièrement de ladite paix. Ledit arzé fut fait le mardi; le mercredi un des drogmans le traduisit; le jeudi il est mis entre les mains dudit bassa; le vendredi il le présente et fait voir à son maître; le samedi le paix est conclu... Quant aux conditions de la paix je m'en suis point meslé?*"

interested parties, and why several attempts were made to hasten his journey so as to conclude the peace.

Some further remarks regarding the role of the Bishop of Dax's are in order here. The latter did not possess the credentials to be officially recognized as a mediator. He simply practiced *bons offices officieux* with the tacit acceptance of the participants. However, any mentions of his name, let alone the name of his King, in the final treaty would have damaged the reputation of the Most Christian King in the *Respublica christiana*. That is why he had refrained from interfering with the articles of the peace. He remained in the background during the composition of the treaty, for all intents and purposes.²⁷

As Noailles himself had stated, his return was however timely. When he noticed that the discussions were leading to a stalemate, he reacted promptly to revivify the talks. In his meetings with both sides, Noailles worked hard to paint a positive picture about the prospects of peace, even if it meant downplaying critical facts to support Sokollu's scheme and persuade both Barbaro and the sultan. Had the French crown, the sultan's unique ally, not intervened through Noailles, Selim II would have most likely rejected the reconciliation. Throughout the negotiations, the Bishop of Dax styled himself as altruistic and desirous for peace.²⁸ Despite this idealised self-portrait, however, he was far from disinterested. Noailles had received orders from Charles IX to elicit the support of the Sublime Porte in the nomination of Henri d'Anjou to the Polish throne.²⁹

A BI-LATERALLY NEGOTIATED, BUT UNILATERALLY SIGNED PEACE

Because the ambassador of the French crown's brief but essential account focuses mostly on his role as a mediator, let us take a step back and concentrate on the final stage of treaty preparation since at the same time the *bailo* was discussing treaty provisions. After everything had been discussed between parties and the articles formulated, according to the anonymous author of the *relaxzjone*, on March 7 Sokollu summoned the *bailo* to his residence, where the latter was informed about the sultan's consent for signing the peace treaty.³⁰ He was also told that the dragoman and Ashkenazi would come in the night to write down the text of the treaty (*notar la capitulaxzjone*).³¹ Seemingly, even in their late stages, the peace talks were kept secret by

²⁷ SHD Vincennes, A 1 4, fol. 233, Dax to Catherine de Medici, 6 March 1573 and Charrière, *Négociations*, vol. III, p. 362.

²⁸ *Ivi*.

²⁹ Christian Schneider, "Types' of Peacemakers: Exploring the Authority and Self-Perception of the Early Modern Papacy", in *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Stephen Cummins, Laura Kounine (London: Routledge, 2016), 77-103.

³⁰ Pedani (ed.), *Relaxzjoni*, 174.

³¹ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 332 r^o-v^o, (7 March 1572, *mv*); Alberi (ed.), *Relaxzjoni*, 408. For Ottoman treaty-making, cf. Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations, 15th-18th Centuries. An Annotated Edition of 'Abdnames and Other Documents*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 35-46 and the *temessük*-type documents, *ibid.*, p. 47-56.

Sokollu in order to avoid any counter-reactions from the war-party. Here is the preamble of Barbaro's draft:

I, Marc Antonio Barbaro, procurator of St. Mark and the *bailo* for the most serene Doge and for the most serene Signoria of Venice ... by the commission and command given to me by the aforesaid most serene Doge and Signoria I have made and concluded peace with the most mighty sultan on the basis of the articles below ... For the observance of all these articles his Imperial majesty will give his noble command with his oath and promise and for the confirmation of the aforesaid articles I, the aforesaid Marc Antonio Barbaro, by the authority given me by the most serene Doge and Signoria of Venice, do swear and promise to Almighty God, to Jesus Christ and on the holy Gospels that the most serene Signoria will observe inviolably and completely the aforesaid Capitulations, and in pledge of the truth herein I shall with my own hand sign and seal with the seal of St. Mark this Capitulations.³²

Despite some few remaining disagreements, the bailo was relieved to close the affair. The ratification process appeared underway after he had transmitted his draft and he was informed by Sokollu that everything was fine at that stage (*facendomi intendere stava bene*).³³ The exact chronology is uncertain, but most probably, on March 9, the grand vizier must have sent Barbaro's draft to the chancery where, in that penultimate stage, the text was to be transformed into the official treaty. The text was prepared on the same day. Here are the conditions of the peace as they are specified later in the 'ahd-nâme: The negotiations resulted in a truce costing Venice 300000 ducats, a cost equivalent to that of the capitulations given during the reign of late Süleyman I.³⁴ The Republic was exempted from paying 8000 ducats annually for the Island of Cyprus since the island now entirely became part of the 'Well-Protected Dominions'.³⁵ Venice shall surrender the castle of Sopotò (today, Borsh in Albania) with its artillery. Its inhabitants were granted the liberty to either remain within or to leave without any hindrance, with their families and movable properties.³⁶ The annual tribute owed by Venice for the island of Zante rose from 500 to 1500 ducats and had to be paid

³² Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. It VII (391) 8873, fol. 409 r. (7 mars 1572 mv). He further precises that "*la scrittura fatta in nome mio io ha solamente sottoscritta questa che è scritta nella nostra lingue, et non la Turca*".

³³ Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni*, 407.

³⁴ ASVe, Documenti turchi, 818. *Venedik begleri merbûm ve mağfûrun leh babam sultân Süleymân Han tâbe serabü zemânında vérdükleri üçyüz bin filôrîyi eski 'ahd-nâmelerde mukayyed olduğı üslûb üzere véreler*. On this matter, Özgür Oral makes a strong case that the sum in question was not a war indemnity, which is anachronistic for the time. Indeed, both the Ottomans and the Venetians preferred to refer to this sum simply as a "payment". Özgür Oral, "«Zaferin Ardından Gelen Onur Kırıcı Bir Antlaşma»: II. Selim'in Venedik'e Verdiğı 1573 Ahidnamesi", *Tarih Dergisi* (2022), 145-160: 149-152.

³⁵ ASVe, Documenti turchi, 818. *Venedik begleri Kıbrıs ceşresünden ötüri sâl-be-sâl vérdükleri sekiz biñ altun min ba'd vérmeyeler*.

³⁶ İvi. *Sopót nâm hisârı dabı bile alman toblarıyla véreler içinde olan re'âyâdan isteyen kala ve istemeyen esbâb ve emvâl ve evlâd ve ensâlî ile murâd édindikleri yere gideler kimesne mâni' olmaya*.

according to the old usage through a special envoy.³⁷ As for Albania and the province of Bosnia, both the Ottomans and the Venetians maintained their sway in their *ante bellum* possession according to the borders of the fortresses.³⁸ Both sides also agreed to release the captives. Finally, the merchants could claim compensation if any of their properties had been sold or lost.³⁹ These conditions aside, the ‘*abd-nâme*’ of 1567 and other relevant imperial orders remained in effect.⁴⁰

However, Barbaro’s tribulations were about to begin on the eve of Tuesday the 11th, as he relates both in his second *relazione* as well as in his *dispacci* written on March 13 and 14, one completing the other with the account of anonymous author residing in the Venetian embassy building. When the anticipated guests, the official dragoman of the Sublime Porte and Salomon Ashkenazi, showed up with the treaty’s version in Ottoman Turkish, they started to scrutinize it carefully before the chancellery officialized it with the monogramme of the sultan. But, as he started to examine it, he found that everything had been changed (*ogni cose mutate*), *i. e.* not only the order and formulation of the articles, but also the substance (*sostantia*) of the document.⁴¹ And, indeed, it was a matter of substance because, according to Barbaro, the document in hands was not a treaty. It was neither a diplomatic act between two parties but rather a letter from the sultan to the Republic in which he exalted himself and used numerous inappropriate expressions to belittle Venice. Additionally, the process was portrayed as though Barbaro had obsequiously pleaded with the sultan for the treaty and the latter had been gracious enough to grant it.⁴² This had been his fear and objection from the outset, and it was for this reason that Noailles had to intervene and present the petition as if it were France, not Venice, requesting peace. Here is the relevant passage in the ‘*abdnâme*’:

Marc Antonio Barbaro, their approved emissary, petitioned for the Signoria’s demand for the restoration of peace and truce by presenting a letter bearing his own handwriting and seal to my Threshold of Felicity. Since our Sublime Porte is wide open to all, whether they seek our friendship or our animosity, his request is accepted in accordance with our imperial habitude. I have thus accepted the peace and given my august treaty, which brings happiness, in accordance with the clauses contained

³⁷ İvi. *Zâklise cezâresinden ötüri mukaddemâ besyüz filôrî vérirler-idi hâliyâ bin filôrî ziyâde édiib kadîmden vérdükleri üslûb üzere biñ besyüz filôrîyi südde-i sa’adet-meâbîmuza irsâl eyleyeler.*

³⁸ İvi. *Arnâvudlukda ve Bôsna vilâyetinde olan yerler ki hâliyâ ba’z-ısı bu cânîbüñ tasarrufına girüb ve ba’z-ısı dahı Venedik begleriniñ ellerinde-dür iki cânîbüñ ellerinde olan hisârların kadîmî sinûrları ve karyeleri vére bozulmadın ne vecble zâbt olunelmîş ise min ba’d géri ol vecbile zâbt olına.*

³⁹ İvi. *Vére bozulduğı zemânda iki cânîbde bulunub mabhûs ve girift olunan bâzergânlara esbâb ve metâ’ları ve gemileri vérilüb itlâk olınalar eger mezbûr bâzergânların metâ’ları satılub yahûd zâyî’ olmış ise ki sâbit ve zâhir ola satılanlarınuñ niçeye bey’ olunmış ise akçeleri ve zâyî’ olanların kıymetleri ne ise behâları vérele*

⁴⁰ İvi. *Ol ‘abd-nâmelerde ve eger vérlen evâmîr-i ‘aliyyede muqayyed olan huşûşları ke-mâ-kâne muqarrer tutdum.*

⁴¹ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 334 r^o, (13 March 1572, mv).

⁴² İvi: *Non era capitulatione ma una lettera del Signore per V. S^{ta} nella quale narrava con molte indegne parole aggrondosi et abbassando lei...et che io havea pregato et con ossequio supplicato in nome di Ser^{mo} P^o per ottener la pace et che lui concedava per gratia.* Cf. Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni*, 408.

in the letter presented by the aforementioned bailo on behalf of the Doge and Signoria of Venice, and have consequently ordered the following.⁴³

There were also some alterations in the articles, aside from humiliating phrases reflecting the Ottoman ideology of superiority. An Ottoman treaty or “Capitulation” was construed as a gracious concession from the sultan and by no means as an agreement between equals. As if it was inappropriate for the Sultan to dive into minute detail, matters concerning boundaries were left to subsequent negotiations, except a brief clause – no matter how hard he attempted to specify them. The vagueness of the terms rendered them susceptible to misuse by the opposing party.⁴⁴ Barbaro summoned the dragoman, who was trying to evade (*cacciare*) his fury, and asked him why the Italian document he had prepared had been altered so drastically. The dragoman's response was all the more intriguing. He had indeed delivered the document to the chancellor Feridûn Ağa as it was formulated and concluded, but the latter had the charge to restyle it in ‘authentic form’ (*autentica forma*). In other words, the chancellor had rewritten the document according to the Ottoman chancery style and phraseology.⁴⁵ Feridûn Ağa was a close client of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, if not his right-hand man.⁴⁶ Therefore, on March 11, Barbaro came to visit the Pasha to inquire about the situation. The latter assured him that he was sympathetic to his disappointment but was too tired to make further changes in the document, which already satisfied the sultan and did not cause any prejudice to Signoria. Furthermore, he bluntly stated that the peace had already been made public (*già s'era pubblicata la pace*).⁴⁷ Confronted with this *fait accompli*, at that point, Barbaro realised that the further insisting on the changes was meaningless and decided to send the document anyway as it was.⁴⁸

On the following day the dragoman and Ashkenazi came to the embassy to compose the official translation of the document on which they kept working for the entire night. Early in the morning of March 13, they headed to the Pasha's palace with the bailo's son Francesco, and came back with two copies of the capitulations, each

⁴³ ASVe, Documenti turchi, 818: *Mârkântónyó Bârbârô nâm mu'teber âdemleri müşarünileyhim begleri cânibünden gerü sulh ve salâh bususun i'lâm ve iş'âr edüb bu bâbda kendü hattı ve mübrizle mektûbun âsitân-i sa'âdet-âşiyânûm <a> getürüb istid'â-i 'inâyet eyledükde yüce dergâhımız eger dostluk ve eger düşmenlik dileyenlere 'inâyet ile meftûh ve mekşûf olduğı ecilden 'âdet-i bâ- sa'âdet-i şâhânemüze üzere hayyız-i kabûlde vâkı' oldı... Eyle olsa mezbur bâylôsuiñ Venedik döji ve begleri cânibinden verdüğı mektubunda münderic olan şurût üzere sulhı kabûl edüb bu 'abdnâme-i hümayûn-ı meserret makrûm vârdüm ve buyurdum ki.*

⁴⁴ *Supra* note 38.

⁴⁵ Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni*, 408: *Ma che l'Agâ gran cancelliero, il quale, per il grado che teneva, aveva carico di ridurre le capitolazioni in autentica forma, l'aveva scritta in quel modo.*

⁴⁶ Cf. Nicolas Vatin, *Feridûn Bey. Les plaisants secrets de la campagne de Szigetvár. Édition, traduction et commentaire des folios 1 à 147 du Nüzhetü-l-esrârî-l-ahbâr der sefer-i-Sigetvár* (Vienne, Münster : LIT Verlag, 2010), 63-68.

⁴⁷ Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni*, 409-410. In his dispaccio (ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 334 v° [13 March 1572, mv) he specifies further: *Per la natura del Signore et per molti rispetti era impossibile far altro; essendo massime la capitulation stata già solenemente espedita et signata, promettendo Sua Mag.^{cia} nella esecuzione di essa capitulation.*

⁴⁸ ASVe, Secreta, Archivio Proprio, Costantinopoli, 6-7, fol. 335 v°, (13 March 1572, mv): *Ma per non allongar più l'espeditone ... ma lasciarla venir in quel modo.*

one duly placed in an embroidered silk bag sealed with a golden capsule.⁴⁹ A letter from Sokollu and the Ottoman version of the treaty were sent to Venice on the same day with Francesco Barbaro.⁵⁰ Sokollu Mehmed, in his letter, grieved the injury and loss of life caused by the struggle for both the Ottomans and the Venetians, but except for the paragraph quoted at the opening of the article, he provided no information about the circumstances of the treaty preparation. In early April, Francesco Barbaro, *bailo's* son, arrived in Venice, in seventeen days. The terms of the peace treaty were not so unacceptable to the Doge and the Senate that without asking for any modification from the Sublime Porte, they promptly announced it and alerted their League partners. This was to cause serious trouble in as much as on the very day of March 7, they had signed the renewal of the Holy League in Rome. If the peace between Venice and the Ottomans came as a shock to the Pope, Philip II received it with a faint smile and with a “slight ironical twist of his lips”.⁵¹ *He either had prior knowledge of these confidential negotiations or he had arrived at the same conclusion as the Venetians through a similar analysis of costs and benefits.*⁵²

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On April 6, 1573, the Republic responded sincerely to the peace agreement by sending a confirmation letter to Selîm II and a letter of appreciation to Sokollu for his services.⁵³ The Senate appointed Andrea Badoer as the extraordinary ambassador in charge of the treaty's confirmation and to begin discussions on the specific details of the peace.⁵⁴ This time, in even shorter duration, Francesco returned back with these documents to Istanbul, on April 17, to join his father and report the news from Venice. The new bailo was announced as Antonio Tiepolo in May 1573. Barbaro was tasked with anticipating his arrival and introducing him to intricacies of dealing with the Ottomans.⁵⁵ In May 1574, he left Istanbul for Corfu.⁵⁶ His mission was finally over.

In the aftermath of the Saint-Bartholomew massacres and the naval operations of 1572, the balance of power in the Mediterranean was prone to sudden changes. The negotiations that took place during the first months of 1573 between a converted Orthodox, who later rose to the position of prime minister of the sultan, a Catholic with a strong humanistic background, a Jewish physician-cum-tradesman, and finally a Catholic bishop with reformist leanings, were not only fascinating in and of themselves. The delicate internal political balances of their countries had to be taken

⁴⁹ Pedani (ed.), *Relazioni, 174-175*. For the infoldments of documents, cf. Işıksel, *La diplomatie ottomane*, 45-46.

⁵⁰ ASVe, *Dispacci* Filza 6, 1 r-11 r.

⁵¹ Mario Brunetti and Eligio Vitale, *La corrispondenza da Madrid dell'ambasciatore Leonardo Donà (1570-1573)*, Florence: Olschki, 1964, vol. II, p. 679.

⁵² Claudia Pingaro, “A Complex Diplomatic Mission. Leonardo Donà at the Spanish Court of Philip II (1570-1573)”, *Cultura Latinoamericana*. 30 (2) (2019), 268-310.

⁵³ As they write in their letter to the sultan they've accepted “*le condizioni...con ogni sincerità*” and affirmed them. ASVe, *Deliberazione Constantinopoli*, filza 4, fol. 31 r°.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 34r°.

⁵⁵ ASVe, *Dispacci Constantinopoli*, filza 7, fol. 95 r°.

⁵⁶ ASVe, *Dispacci Costantinopoli*, filza 7, fol. 103 r°.

into consideration by each negotiator as well. While Noailles sought to ensure that Charles IX would not approach the pro-Spanish Guise group, Sokollu had to persuade the partisans of war of the need for peace. At the same time, Barbaro had to find a compromise between the Ten and the Senate.

Returning to Barbaro's *palla di vetro* metaphor, there seem to be more than one exceptionally fragile balls, and throughout the peace discussions, not only the *bailo* but also Noailles and notably Sokollu had to play the game with the required dexterity and finesse. Although the peace treaty may still be read to mean that the Ottomans had won the Battle of Lepanto, a deeper reading results in a different conclusion. If one of these glass balls were to fall and crack, the possibilities seem to be, if not infinite, quite unpredictable in any case. All parties concerned, namely France, but especially the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire, must have embraced it unreservedly for that reason.

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