



Technological Innovation and Search for Consensus: the Italian Wars (1521-1559)

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The essay reconsiders the Military Revolution theory, in the light of the most recent studies dedicated to the exchange of favour and service between sovereign power and the elites, to the imperial systems and to the dynamics in the relations between centres of power and between interest groups within polycentric monarchies during the early modern age. In particular, the argumentation focuses on the attrition war between the Habsburgs and the Valois for hegemony on the Italian peninsula, confirming the validity of Geoffrey Parker's thesis. For the great monarchies struggling for supremacy in the Euro-Mediterranean area, the resort to new and expensive offensive and defensive technologies was a stimulus to seek their subjects' consensus, by encouraging great nobles to join the patronage network of the sovereign, and by strengthening and articulating those formal structures (the court and the financial and judicial bureaucracy) which made it possible to mediate internal conflicts and to coordinate elites' contribution to the war effort.

Keywords: Consensus, Mediation, Patronage, Attrition war, State-building, Renaissance, Political factions, Exiles

Geoffrey Parker's book *The Military Revolution* and the resulting animated debate have undoubtedly clarified the influence of technological innovation on European political structures in the Early modern age¹.

¹ Cf. C. J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate. Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Westview press, Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford 1995; L. Pezzolo, *La "rivoluzione militare": una prospettiva italiana 1400-1700*, in A. Dattero, S. Levati (a cura di), *Militari in età moderna. La centralità di un tema di confine*, Cisalpino, Milano 2006, pp. 15-62; L. Pezzolo, *Una rivoluzione militare europea?*,

An inescapable paradigm today, which in the empirical, mutual chase between the advances of offensive and defensive military science and practice² traces the origin of profound changes in the organization of political power, as well as the motive for the adoption of increasingly complex instruments and institutions, to manage both the war effort³ and, above all, the relationship between sovereign powers and their subjects.

A perspective, that introduced by Michael Roberts⁴ and Geoffrey Parker, which shows a persistent vitality in today's panorama of early modern studies, enriched by interdisciplinary research about the imperial systems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁵, about the relationships between sovereign power, elites and commoners⁶, about the coexistence of different powers by nature, origin and range of action within polycentric monarchies, and finally about the international balances that European dynasties and republics – committed to a permanent competition for supremacy – aim to preserve or to break⁷.

Starting from the first half of the sixteenth century, therefore, political, social and military factors generated the expansion of institutional

in P. Bianchi, P. Del Negro (a cura di), *Guerre ed eserciti nell'Età moderna*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018, pp. 19-49.

² Cf. G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare. Le innovazioni militari e il sorgere dell'Occidente*, il Mulino, Bologna 2007, p. 24.

³ Cf. Ch. Tilly, *L'oro e la spada. Capitale, guerra e potere nella formazione degli stati europei 990-1990*, Ponte alle Grazie, Città di Castello 1991, pp. 82-110; G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare*, cit., p. 288.

⁴ Cf. M. Roberts, *The Military Revolution, 1560-1660*, in C.J. Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate*, Routledge, London 1995, pp. 13-35.

⁵ Cf. A. Musi (a cura di), *Nel sistema imperiale. L'Italia spagnola*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Napoli 1994; G. Galasso, *Alla periferia dell'impero. Il Regno di Napoli nel periodo spagnolo, secc. XVI-XVII*, Einaudi, Torino 1994; G. Galasso, *Il sistema imperiale spagnolo da Filippo II a Filippo IV*, in P. Pissavino, G. Signorotto (a cura di), *Lombardia borromaica Lombardia spagnola, 1554-1559*, Bulzoni, Roma 1995, pp. 13-40; J.H. Elliott, *La Spagna imperiale 1469-1716*, il Mulino, Bologna 2017.

⁶ Cf. R.G. Asch, A.M. Birke (eds.), *Prince, Patronage, and the Nobility. The Court of the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450-1650*, The German Historical Institute-Oxford University Press, London-Oxford 1991; C. Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà in Italia. Secoli XIV-XVIII*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1995.

⁷ Cfr. G. Galasso, *Dalla "Libertà d'Italia" alle "preponderanze straniere"*, Editoriale scientifica, Napoli 1997, pp. 15-59; B. Anatra, F. Manconi (a cura di), *Sardegna, Spagna e Stati italiani nell'età di Carlo V*, Carocci, Roma 2001; P. Cardim, T. Herzog, J.J. Ruiz Ibañez, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Polycentric Monarchies: How Did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton - Portland 2012; R. Tamalio (a cura di), *L'impero di Carlo V e la geopolitica degli stati italiani. Nel quinto centenario dell'elezione imperiale (1519-2019)*, Accademia nazionale virgiliana di scienze, lettere e arti, Mantova 2021.

systems consisting of a sovereign court, a financial and administrative bureaucracy and a judicial apparatus. By no means these institutions' purpose was to ensure centralized management of prolonged conflicts⁸ – mostly costly wars of attrition⁹, by virtue of advances in firearms and in fortifying technique –, but to aggregate and manage the contribution to the war effort of those stakeholders admitted to the restricted sovereign's network of servants and friends: feudal families, high-ranking members of the clergy, city patriciates, companies of financiers, merchant guilds. It was precisely the continuous competition for hegemony on the continent – along with the increasing costs associated with the introduction of new offensive and defensive technologies¹⁰ – to encourage the European dynastic leaders to search for consensus in their respective territories and to seek the cooperation of their own subjects (and of the enemy's subjects), claiming to the sovereign power the monopoly of political opportunities and the role of internal conflicts' supreme mediator. Political opportunities – feudal jurisdictions, high ranks in the royal courts, bureaucracies and armies, benefices, legal and material support in local confrontations against personal enemies¹¹ – granted by the sovereign to his most powerful supporters according to the same dynamics that governed at every level of society the relationship between superiors (patrons) and subordinates (clients): the exchange of favours and protection, from above, and services, from below. In the case of sovereign patronage, the subjects closest to the throne were requested above all to provide services useful to support the war effort: that is, the mobilization of individual and family economic resources, and of the extensive patronage networks headed by the great nobles, through which the consensus to the dynastic leadership spread throughout the society of the subjects up to the lowest ranks, as well as in the enemy society¹².

⁸ Cf. G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare*, cit., pp. 112-3.

⁹ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (henceforth BNF), *Département des manuscrits*, Dupuy 486, ff. 23r-23v. Cf. C. Marchand, *Charles 1er de Cossé comte de Brissac et maréchal de France (1507-1563). Étude sur la fin de guerres d'Italie et sur la première guerre de religion*, Champion, Paris 1889, p. VII; G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare*, cit., pp. 109-10.

¹⁰ Cf. G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare*, cit., pp. 294-306.

¹¹ Cf. M.N. Covini, *Political and Military Bonds in the Italian State System, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, in Ph. Contamine (ed.), *War and Competition between States*, Clarendon press, Oxford 2000, pp. 9-36.

¹² Cf. D. Frigo, *Governo della casa, nobiltà e "repubblica": l'"economica" in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, in M. Bianchini, D. Frigo, C. Mozzarelli (a cura di), *Governo della casa, governo della città*, in "Cheiron", 4, 1985, pp. 75-94, 86-7; A. Maćzak, *From Aristocratic Household to Princely Court. Restructuring Patronage in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth*

In this contribution, the persistent relevance of the interpretative perspective proposed by Geoffrey Parker in his volume *The Military Revolution* will be evidenced through the analysis of some aspects of the Franco-Habsburg conflict for hegemony in the central-northern Italian peninsula, with particular reference to the military operations in the State of Milan and in the Sabaudian Piedmont. The political and military struggle between the Habsburgs and the Valois in Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia and Tuscany (1521-1558) will be considered a magnifying glass on the link between technological progress and the strengthening of the involved territories' governance structures. Strengthening that in the considered period did coincide with the constant improvement of the sovereign power's capacity to establish profitable relations with the militarily, politically, economically and socially most relevant actors. The consequences – political, social and economic, as well as strictly military – of innovations in defensive technology will be taken into particular consideration.

As is well known, starting from Geoffrey Parker's work, the historiographical literature has made it clear that in the sixteenth century the modernization of fortresses did not follow a single and standard procedure. Rather, the commanders and their engineers were offered a range of possible solutions between a basic option, relatively cheap and relatively quick to execute, and a much more expensive one, much more invasive on an environmental level and achievable only through the mobilization of many workers, and for a long time.

Summing up the matter in generic terms, the first option consisted in lowering the pre-existing medieval towers and walls, reinforced by sloping earthworks that enclosed the defences within a kind of artificial hill surrounded by a moat. Earthworks could absorb the shock of incoming cannonballs, and also created a difference in height between defenders and attackers (the so-called *tagliata*) that forced the latter to attack uphill.

Century, in R.G. Asch, A.M. Birke (eds.), *Prince, Patronage*, cit., pp. 315-327; D. García Hernán, *La nobleza en la España moderna*, Istmo, Madrid 1992, pp. 131-2; S. Kettering, *Patronage in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France*, Routledge, Burlington 2002, p. VII; J.M. Imízcoz Beunza, *Familia y redes sociales en la España Moderna*, in F.J. Lorenzo Pinar (ed.), *La familia en la historia*, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca 2009, pp. 135-7, 152-3, 140, 180; D. Maffi, *L'Italia militare dalla metà del XVI secolo alla metà del XVIII: crisi o continuità? Un tentativo di approccio*, in P. Bianchi, N. Labanca (a cura di), *L'Italia e il 'Militare'. Guerre, nazione, rappresentazioni dal Rinascimento alla Repubblica*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma 2014, pp. 31-55; M. Rizzo, *Il mestiere delle armi nell'Italia moderna fra esercizio del potere, creazione del consenso, formazione e impiego del capitale umano (secc. XVI-XVIII)*, ivi, pp. 75-101.

The embankments had to be covered with bricks or stones, and provided with a further defence, by building the necessary structures (*cavalieri* and bastions) to deploy the heavy artillery on the walls, starting from the simplest ones. In just a few weeks a small town or village could be provided with defences able to resist even for months any infantry or artillery attack¹³: according to Guillaume and Martin Du Bellay, during the emperor Charles V's invasion of Provence (summer 1536), a fortified camp was built close to Avignon in two weeks, defended by moats and earthworks, provided with platforms to deploy defensive artillery. During this campaign, the city walls of Arles were provided with earthworks in thirteen days¹⁴. In August the king of France ordered to encircle even more strictly the invader army, by strengthening the defensive perimeter of the city of Valence, hoping to complete the operation in just twelve days¹⁵. Large stone bastions were usually built only later, when possible and convenient: such further operations could take years and very often available archival sources do not distinguish them from repairs¹⁶. As observed by David Eltis,

A new fortification could be constructed of stone or brick at great expense, replete with bastions, geometrically arranged walls, ditch and glacis and counterscarp, or much the same effect could be achieved by using wood and earth to create an ad hoc fortification which would show off the besieger's artillery and firearms to good advantage. Earth served as well against cannon shots as stone and brick and its cost could be ten times less. The town of Ghent was given ravelins, ditches and counterscarps for less than 300,000 florins, despite the enormous circuit of its walls, which compared to that of Paris. This was a perishable defence using earth and wood. But if, as François de La Noue pointed out, "the King of Spain should have made this fortification according to the written rules, he must have spent above six millions and twenty years at the least"¹⁷.

¹³ Archivio di Stato di Milano (henceforth ASMi), *Carteggio delle Cancellerie dello Stato* (henceforth *Carteggio*), c. 191, *La qualità del sito et muraglia di Robio* [a small village close to Pavia], 1554. Cfr. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires de mess. Martin Du Bellay Seigneur de Langey*, A l'Olivier de P. l'Huillier, rue S. Jacques, Paris 1569, pp. 208, 211.

¹⁴ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 216, 226, 229.

¹⁵ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 60r.

¹⁶ Cf. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires d'estat des roys, princes, ambassadeurs et autres Ministres, sous les Regnes de François premier, Henry II, & François II*, 2 voll., chez Cour du Palais, Paris 1666, vol. II, p. 68.

¹⁷ Cf. D. Eltis, *The Military Revolution in Sixteenth Century Europe*, Tauris Academic Studies, London-New York 1995, p. 76.

In fact, the archival documentation and the chronicles relating to the last decades of the Italian Wars clarify how at the dawn of the Military Revolution it was above all the simplest option that produced the most significant consequences from a strategic point of view, conferring further complexity to the management of the war effort, as a political, economic and social operation¹⁸.

The race for the modernization of medieval fortifications – which from the 1520s to 1530s shaped the north-west of the Italian peninsula as an immense integrated fortified system – responded to the political and strategic purposes of the great powers fighting for hegemony, but also to concerns deeply and widespread felt from commoners. The subjects of the State of Milan, acquired by the Habsburgs in 1535, and those of the Savoy States, occupied by French and imperial troops in the spring 1536, agreed to cooperate with the political and military authorities in their respective territories in the construction of modern fortified defensive perimeters, firstly, to defend properties and people from friend or enemy moving armies¹⁹. Besides, the Habsburg Monarchy and the kings of France were able to maintain large standing armies and therefore to impose on their subjects heavy fiscal burdens and the billeting of large garrisons, with all the inconveniences that these garrisons generated in civilians' daily life²⁰. The commitment to build, maintain and autonomously guard assault-proof and cannon-proof walls was therefore usually

¹⁸ Cf. Ch. Shaw, M. Mallett, *The Italian Wars. War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, p. 292.

¹⁹ Archivio di Stato di Torino (henceforth ASTo), *Corte, Storia della real casa*, Mz. 10, *Sommario della Guerra di Piemonte dall'anno 1536 all'anno 1539 compilato da Stefano Rugerio di Barges*. Cfr. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., pp. 184-5.

²⁰ Cf. G. Miolo, *Cronaca di Gianbernardo Miolo di Lombriasco notaio*, in *Miscellanea di Storia Italiana*, I, Stamperia reale, Torino 1862, pp. 149-247, 208; G.B. Adriani, *Le guerre e la dominazione dei francesi in Piemonte dall'anno 1536 al 1559*, Stamperia reale, Torino 1867, pp. 90, 114-5; A. Segre, *Carlo II di Savoia. Le sue relazioni con Francia e Spagna e le guerre piemontesi dal 1536 al 1545*, Carlo Clausen, Torino 1902, p. 8; P. Merlin, *Torino durante l'occupazione francese*, in G. Ricuperati (a cura di), *Storia di Torino*, III, *Dalla dominazione francese alla ricomposizione dello Stato (1536-1630)*, Einaudi, Torino 1998, pp. 7-55, 41-6; M.M. Rabà, *Fisco, coercizione militare e mediazione dei conflitti tributari. Le entrate del ducato di Milano sotto Carlo V e Filippo II (1536-1558)*, in "Storia Economica", XV, 2, 2012, pp. 291-342; M. Di Tullio, L. Fois, *Stati di guerra. I bilanci della Lombardia francese del primo Cinquecento*, prefazione di Ph. Hamon, École française de Rome, Rome 2014, pp. 58-61; M. Di Tullio, *Le finanze pubbliche milanesi al servizio del re di Francia*, in J.C. D'Amico, J.-L. Fournel (sous la direction de), *François I^{er} et l'espace politique italien. États, domaines et territoires*, École Française de Rome, Rome 2018, pp. 67-84; Luca Fois, *Gli stati delle finanze del Ducato di Milano sotto Francesco I*, ivi, pp. 85-103.

ensured by cities and rural communities also to be granted both fiscal exemptions and the decrease of garrison troops not directly recruited by local authorities²¹.

More specifically, the country villages sought exemption from contributions to the defence of the larger cities, whose jurisdiction they fell within: sending men for the maintenance of walls and moats, participation in the city guards, and sending part of the crops to the cities' warehouses. The contribution given to the garrison of their fortified villages could become for the countryside inhabitants an instrument to free themselves from political and administrative subordination imposed by cities. It should be emphasized, however, that both in Piedmont and in Lombardy the smaller centres' requests were accepted by the high military spheres especially when supported by powerful local feudal lords, capable to assure coordination and political coverage to the war effort of fortified villages²².

On the contrary, the major cities accepted the sacrifices required by the bastion-defended perimeters' construction – including palaces' and churches' demolition – in exchange for the guarantee provided by the superior authorities that the rural communities under their jurisdiction would have contributed to the expenses and to the patrolling of the new structures. Besides, in the considered period, city councils were authorized to meet defence costs by introducing new local duties and other taxes, and by resorting to public debt: the rights to collect the new revenues were thus sold to the wealthiest local patricians – who sat in those same councils – or to people they were bound to. This way, the authority of the large cities over the countryside, the local government bodies' prestige and the administrative autonomy of the main centres were implemented²³.

²¹ Archivo General de Simancas (henceforth AGS), *Estado*, legajo 1186, doc. 49. Cf. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., p. 208.

²² Cf. M.M. Rabà, *Alloggiamenti militari e difesa territoriale autogestita: le comunità rurali del ducato di Milano. Ripartizione del carico fiscale e dinamiche contrattuali nella seconda fase delle Guerre d'Italia*, in "Rivista di studi militari", 4, 2015, pp. 59-104.

²³ Cf. T. Lancellotti, *Cronaca modenese di Tommasino de' Bianchi detto de' Lancellotti*, 12 voll., P. Fiaccadori, Parma 1862-1884, vol. VII, pp. 188, 191-4, 223; A. Tallone, *Ivrea e Piemonte al tempo della prima dominazione francese (1536-1559)*, Chiantore-Mascarelli, Pinerolo 1900, pp. 134-5; M.J. Rodríguez Salgado, *Metamorfosi di un impero. La politica asburgica da Carlo V a Filippo II (1551-1559)*, Vita e pensiero, Milano 1994, p. 82; P. Merlin, *Il Cinquecento*, in P. Merlin, C. Rosso, G. Symcox, G. Ricuperati, *Il Piemonte sabauda. Stato e territori in età moderna*, UTET, Torino 1994, pp. 3-173, 12-20, 47-54;

The collective effort to build modern integrated defensive systems in the disputed areas and the conflict between the city and the countryside, therefore, mutually implemented each other for the entire considered period.

In the spring of '36, French garrison's commander, Claude d'Annebault, imposed on the city of Turin the quick construction of a new defensive perimeter provided with earthworks. As a compensation, the following summer his men stormed the surrounding countryside clumsily defended by the imperial army, imposing to the prominent locals the alternative between being looted or paying heavy ransoms, and therefore forcing them to sell their estates to the Turin patricians at bargain prices in order to get cash²⁴. At the end of the 1540s, the modernization of the walls of Novara, in the State of Milan, requested the destruction of the suburbs, the most economically productive part of the city. But in return the local Novara authorities could count on the support of the general governor of the State, Ferrante Gonzaga, and of the governor of the city, Giovanni Pietro Cicogna, to impose on the villages of the surrounding countryside heavy contributions to expenses, in money and kind²⁵.

As a further complication, sovereign powers in Italy sought to establish strict control over the main urban centres precisely through the construction of mighty fortresses, often aimed at preventing or repressing riots, rather than granting defence from external attacks²⁶. At the begin-

M.M. Rabà, *Potere e poteri. "Stati", "privati" e comunità nel conflitto per l'egemonia in Italia settentrionale (1536-1558)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2016, pp. 206-8.

²⁴ ASTo, *Corte, Storia della real casa*, Mz. 10, *Sommario*. Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 206, 219-21; Anonimo, *Memorie di un terrazzano di Rivoli dal 1535 al 1586*, in *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, VI, Stamperia Reale, Torino 1865, pp. 581-2; G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., pp. 208-9; C. Promis, *Gli ingegneri militari italiani che operarono o scrissero in Piemonte dall'anno 1300 all'anno 1650*, in *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, XII, Stamperia Reale, Torino 1871, pp. 411-646, 432-4; P. Merlin, *Il Cinquecento*, cit., p. 41; P. Merlin, *Torino durante l'occupazione francese*, cit., p. 48.

²⁵ ASMi, *Carteggio*, c. 156: Petition of the Novara county inhabitants to the general governor of the State of Milan, February 21st 1553; the governor of Novara, Giovanni Pietro Cicogna to the Gran Cancelliere of the State of Milan, Francesco Taverna, February 24th 1553; c. 157, Memorial about the legal dispute between the city of Novara and the county inhabitants, March 25th 1553; c. 159, Francesco Taverna to Ferrante Gonzaga, May 9th 1553; c. 161: Giovanni Pietro Cicogna to Ferrante Gonzaga, June 26th 1553; Petition of the Novara county inhabitants to the general governor of the State of Milan, June 1553. Cf. V. Cirio, *La dominazione spagnola nel contado di Novara*, in S. Monferrini (a cura di), *Una terra tra due fiumi, la provincia di Novara nella storia. Età moderna (secoli XV-XVIII)*, Provincia di Novara, Novara 2003, pp. 153-222.

²⁶ Cf. A. Buono, *Esercito, istituzioni, territorio. Alloggiamenti militari e «case herme» nello Stato di Milano (secoli XVI e XVII)*, Firenze University Press, Firenze 2009, pp. 19-20; E.

ning of 1548, pope Paul III's attempt to fortify Bologna met with strong resistance by the prominent locals, who saw in the pope's initiative most of all an attempt to strengthen his own control on the city and local institutions: as reported by the noble Claude d'Urfé in a letter to the king of France, local authorities were afraid the city would have been "bridled" (*bridé*) by the new modern defences²⁷. This very name, 'bridle' (*la Briglia*), had been given by the Genoese people to the fortress built by the occupying French forces in 1507, to guard the city and secure the Republic's allegiance to the Valois²⁸. In Siena, in order to discourage pro-French plots, emperor Charles V's ministers improvidently decided to build a fortress (*rocca*), generating a general discontent that eventually unified local factions in successful riot against the Habsburg Spanish garrison (1552)²⁹.

During the last decades of the Italian Wars, spreading bastion fort contributed to putting an end to a long theory of wars of annihilation and gave the dynastic clash the features of an attrition war: in such a war, the artillery fortress itself – in its basic form, relatively cheaper and faster to execute – became the main tool both of defense and of attack.

Certainly, the total defeats that occurred to many indigenous and foreign Peninsula leaderships during the first phase of the Italian Wars were largely due to purely political factors. Nevertheless, rulers and generals could not ignore that during those decades of war large cities protected by mighty fortresses had been literally strangled by an enemy capable of cutting off every supply line to the besieged and blocking the paths to rescue armies. And that was precisely because the attackers could easily breach the outdated walls of the minor fortresses in the countryside, thanks to the new cannons.

Parker has pointed out that at the dawn of the Military Revolution very few fortresses were provided with brick or stone-faced earthworks and an adequate number of bastions. The widespread diffusion of the *alla moderna* form allowed the two competing powers to guard all the strategically relevant spots in the disputed areas, avoiding the prohibitive costs of bastioned fortifications. As it has been also pointed out, very few of

Molteni, *Le architetture militari*, in P. Bianchi, P. Del Negro (a cura di), *Guerre ed eserciti nell'età moderna*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018, pp. 173-209, 185-6.

²⁷ Cf. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, cit., vol. II, p. 105.

²⁸ Cf. G.L. Gorse, *A question of sovereignty: France and Genoa*, in C. Shaw (ed.), *Italy and the European powers. The impact of war, 1500-1530*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2006, pp. 187-203, 201-2.

²⁹ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1192, docc. 38-42; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 80v. Cfr. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, cit., vol. II, pp. 169, 181.

the fortresses built in Italy during the Italian Wars resulted to be perfectly done³⁰. The point is that none of them, not even the most expensive defensive perimeters, were ever conceived to resist for an indefinite time: in May 1536, leaving part of his army in Piedmont to defend Turin and a couple of other strongholds – in order to weak Habsburg effort against Provence –, king of France's resolution was to deploy an army to rescue the garrisons, whenever put under siege by the emperor. And eventually, he did³¹. In 1547, the construction of a modern fortress to guard the city of Piacenza – started two years earlier by the newly invested duke of Piacenza and Parma Pierluigi Farnese – suggested to emperor Charles V that the son of pope Paolo III Farnese was ready to enter into an alliance with the king of France: and that just because the only threat to Pierluigi's domain was the nearby Habsburg Milan, but even a perfectly done fortress would have been totally useless without a large army, like that deployed by the Valois in Piedmont, ready to intervene in case of siege³².

Starting from the 1530s, in northern Italy earthworks and stone bastions fulfilled three functions: to protect the strategically and politically most important positions until the arrival of a rescue army; to host within larger defensive perimeters – as less expensive to fortify – medium-sized armies that could disturb the advance of the enemy, preventing him from bypassing the possible bases of raids against its supply lines³³; to exhaust the enemy's forces in long and costly sieges, weakening attackers' offensive effort and conditioning their movements.

Early modern age armies' movements obeyed firstly the need to supply the troops by pillaging or requisitioning food for men and animals in the

³⁰ Cf. P. Del Negro, *Stato moderno e guerra*, in L. Barletta, G. Galasso (a cura di), *Lo Stato moderno di ancien régime*, Aiep, Repubblica di San Marino 2007, pp. 97-108, 102-3; S. Duc, *Pavie en état de siège (octobre 1524 - février 1525)*, in G. Alfani, M. Rizzo (a cura di), *Nella morsa della guerra. Assedi, occupazioni militari e saccheggi in età preindustriale*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2013, pp. 47-73, 47; M.M. Rabà, *Potere e poteri*, cit., pp. 69, 84; M.C. Giannini, *Per difesa comune. Fisco, clero e comunità nello Stato di Milano (1535-1659)*, 1, *Dalle guerre d'Italia alla pax hispanica (1535-1592)*, Sette Città, Viterbo 2017, p. 44.

³¹ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 94r.

³² Cf. D. Parrott, *The role of fortifications in the defence of State: the Farnese and the security of Parma and Piacenza*, in A. Bilotto, P. Del Negro, C. Mozzarelli (a cura di), *I Farnese. Corti, Guerra e nobiltà in antico regime*, Bulzoni, Roma 1997, pp. 509-560; R. Oresko, D. Parrott, *The sovereignty of Monferrato and the citadel of Casale*, in D. Ferrari (a cura di), *Stefano Guazzo e Casale tra Cinque e Seicento*, Bulzoni, Roma 1997, pp. 11-86.

³³ Cf. P. Giovio, *La seconda parte dell'Istorie del suo tempo*, Giovan Maria Bonelli, Venezia 1560, pp. 402-3; M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 193, 215.

territories crossed by their route³⁴: as a consequence, the large standing armies often had to attack not to fall apart. In fact, it was far more convenient to live at the enemy's expense, sparing friendly territories, where hungry and underpaid soldiers raised discontent and rebellion among the subjects. An army engaged in a siege usually consumed quickly the supplies available on the spot and could not detach large contingents far from its target to find others. As a result, the troops in search of food equally quickly began to disband, if the supplies were not transferred from the rear: an operation that involved the cost of purchasing food and even greater costs of transport. Yet, however expensive, the siege was often the only effective option to overcome an up-to-date defence. But as mentioned, the relatively low costs of the basic stage of modernization had encouraged the reinforcement of defences in all the key points of the disputed territories, and since these fortified posts could not be bypassed, an attacking army would have to besiege them one by one to be able to push forward.

But the stalemate created by bastioned forts was partly overcome by the very basic *alla moderna* form itself. The quick advances through the enemy territory belonged to the past, as the disastrous expedition led by Charles V to Provence in the summer of '36 had demonstrated³⁵, along with the equally unfortunate duke of Guise's expedition against Naples in '56³⁶: "With so many strongholds" – argued the commander of the French army in Provence, Anne de Montmorency in 1536 – "a single battle cannot conquer the country of the enemy" (*ayant tant de places fortes, [...] une bataille gagnée ne peut conquérir le país à l'ennemy*), who could "gain victory without engaging in combat" (*avoir victoire sans coup ferir*), but just "stalling and delaying" (*temporisant & delayant*), waiting that the exhausted invader army disintegrated (*deffaire de luy-mesme*)³⁷. It should be added that the two powers competing for hegemony over Italy, the Habsburgs and the Valois, could count on a strong legitimization to rule and widespread consensus among their subjects – compared to the Aragonese kings of Naples, the Sforzas and the Republic of Florence –, and most of all on massive resources to practice wide range patronage. Their struggle, therefore, took on the characters of an

³⁴ Cf. M.N. Covini, «Studiando el mappamondo»: trasferimenti di genti d'arme tra logiche statali e relazioni con le realtà locali', in S. Gensini (a cura di), *Viaggiare nel Medioevo*, Pacini editore, Roma 2000, pp. 227-266.

³⁵ Cf. M.M. Rabà, *Potere e poteri*, cit., pp. 25-42.

³⁶ Cf. P. Nores, *Storia della guerra di Paolo IV sommo pontefice contro gli spagnuoli*, Vieusseux, Firenze 1847.

³⁷ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 207, 234.

economic war and a war of relations: a war measuring the ability of each competitor to exhaust the opponent's resources and to acquire the loyalty of the enemy's most powerful subjects.

These closely related aspects elected the sudden attack, as the privileged instrument of the offensive action, that is the assault against weakly defended enemy positions, by light detachments without heavy artillery.

The weakness of a fortress could derive from the failure to update the defensive perimeter, from the dissatisfaction of poorly paid garrisons, from the mistreatment of the inhabitants by the garrisons themselves, or from internal conflicts within the population. When the sudden attack was supported from the inside it was called *trattato*, the most common way to gain or lose ground in the considered period³⁸. Common because the scarce monetary resources available to both monarchies were generally reserved for field troops, increasing tensions between inhabitants and garrisons' soldiers, pushed to get by force that food they could not purchase³⁹. In addition, the frequent passage of discontented Italian troops from one flag to another fuelled ambiguous linkage between the imperial and French armies' ranks⁴⁰. Those armies, moreover, usually enlisted many foreigners banished from their countries, for political reasons or for common crimes: a detachment committed against a fortress, therefore, could often count on its own soldiers' relationships inside the enemy walls to breach the defences. Finally, enduring and endemic conflicts within every Italian village or city fuelled rivalries that the sovereign justice was not always able to resolve to the full satisfaction of all the parties involved: the discontent of the defeated ones could acquire a decisive military value when the enemy moved to the gates, eager to grant honours and revenge to all his supporters inside⁴¹.

³⁸ Cf. M.M. Rabà, *Conflitto dinastico e guerre di relazioni. Colpi di mano, 'trattati' e congiure nell'Italia contesa tra Asburgo e Valois*, in "Rivista di studi militari", 7, 2018, pp. 199-214.

³⁹ About these dynamics in the State of Milan, starting from 1536, see AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1181, docc. 8, 11, 93, 138, 145. Cf. M. Rizzo, *Sulle implicazioni economiche della politica di potenza nel XVI secolo: gli alloggiamenti militari in Lombardia*, in J.M. Usunáriz Garayoa (coords.), *Historia y Umanismo. Estudios en honor del profesor Dr. D. Valentín Vázquez de Prada, II, Historia Económica*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2000, pp. 265-276, 271.

⁴⁰ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 38r.

⁴¹ Cf. Ch. Shaw, *The politics of exile in Renaissance Italy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000; M. Gentile, *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Viella, Roma 2005; M. Gentile, *Factions and Parties: Problems and Perspectives*, in A. Gamberini, I. Lazzarini (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance State*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2014, pp. 304-322; L. Arcangeli, *Cambiamenti di dominio nello stato di Milano durante le prime Guerre d'Italia (1495-1516). Dinamiche istituzionali e movimenti collettivi*, in M.

An easily seized post – if soon provided with a large earthwork-made defensive perimeter, and with basic structures to deploy artillery – was to become an ideal base to raid the surrounding countryside and to cut the opposing army's supply lines, forcing the enemy to exhaust human and financial resources in a long siege, in order to restore the strategic balance. This could involve an increase in the tax burden on enemy subjects, engendering discontent and rebellions, or the transfer of resources from one front to another, the interruption of powerful offensives, or still worse the exposure of the enemy to a mightier and decisive attack in another sector⁴².

Military operations in the considered period offer many suitable examples. In March 1536 the people of Turin opened their gates to the French troops of Admiral Philippe de Chabot. In just two months the invaders managed to reinforce with earthworks and a few stone bastions the walls of Turin, Pinerolo and Centallo⁴³, supplied by the king of France through Val di Susa⁴⁴. At the same time the French commander of the garrison in Fossano was sure he could strengthen an “absolutely weak” (*merveilleusement faibles*) defensive perimeter in a short time (*en ayant quelque espace de temps*), just by completing some earthworks he had just start to build⁴⁵: eventually, the garrison of Fossano surrendered, but just after a long and costly siege⁴⁶, while the attack moved in the following summer against the Piedmont capital, Turin, by the imperial army – after having exhausted Charles V's

Bonazza, S. Seidel Menchi (a cura di), *Dal Leone all'Aquila. Comunità, territori e cambi di regime nell'età di Massimiliano I*, Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati-Edizioni Osiride, Rovereto 2014, pp. 27-74, 51-5; L. Arcangeli, *Marignano, una svolta? Governare Milano dopo la “battaglia dei giganti” (1515-1521). Note a margine di studi recenti*, in “Archivio storico lombardo”, 141, 2015, pp. 33-6.

⁴² Archivio di Stato di Firenze (henceforth ASFi), *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 110v-111r. Cfr. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, cit., vol. I, pp. 596, 629.

⁴³ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1183, doc. 12; ASTo, *Corte, Storia della real casa*, Mz. 10, *Sommario*. Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 160, 166, 181; G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., pp. 184, 208-9, 444, 466; G.B. Adriani, *Le guerre e la dominazione*, cit., pp. 33-5; A. Minucci, *Descrizione di un viaggio fatto nel 1549 da Venezia a Parigi*, in *Miscellanea di Storia Italiana*, I, Stamperia reale, Torino 1862, pp. 47-103, 73-4.

⁴⁴ AGS, *Estado*, 1181, doc. 106; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 92r. Cfr. Anonimo, *Memorie di un terrazzano di Rivoli dal 1535 al 1586*, in *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, VI, Stamperia Reale, Torino 1865, pp. 559-674: 581; Anonimo, *De Gestis Antonii Torresani Brevis Narratio*, in *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, XII, Fratelli Bocca Librai, Torino 1871, pp. 397-409.

⁴⁵ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 181, 182.

⁴⁶ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 105r. Cfr. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 199-200.

resources for his war in Italy, as the king of France had hoped⁴⁷ – ended up with a failure⁴⁸, also because the imperials had been forced to divide their troops⁴⁹. Three years earlier, the pro-French count of Concordia Galeotto Pico had stolen the fortress of Mirandola from his uncle, the pro-imperial Giovanni Francesco, with a coup⁵⁰. The attack delivered to the French a post of great strategic value, located in Emilia not far from the borders of the State of Milan, the Duchy of Mantua, the Venice *Terraferma*, the States of the duke of Este and the State of the Church⁵¹. Aided by Francis I of Valois, Galeotto quickly reinforced and garrisoned the fortress, thanks to money supplies granted by the French king's bankers operating in Venice⁵².

In the spring of 1536, Francis I's Italian generals assembled in Mirandola 12,000 infantry: a modest size army without artillery, but potentially capable of threatening the entire Habsburg sphere of influence in northern Italy, thanks to the position of the recruiting base and to the large followers' and agents' networks of the commanders, almost all political exiles, in their respective homelands: Cesare Fregoso in Genoa, Rodolfo Gonzaga in Mantua, Piero Strozzi in Florence⁵³. The imperial authorities had to transfer troops from the siege of Turin, to guard Genoa and the State of Milan's southern borders⁵⁴.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 167, 174.

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 245.

⁴⁹ Cf. ivi, p. 206.

⁵⁰ ASMi, *Autografi*, c. 61, Galeotto Pico della Mirandola to the duke of Milan, December 13th 1533; c. 62, Giovanni Tommaso della Mirandola to the duke of Milan, October 21st 1533; Archivio di Stato di Mantova (henceforth ASMn), *Archivio Gonzaga, Corrispondenza estera*, c. 589, docc. 25, 26. Cf. Anonimo, *Cronaca della Nobilissima Famiglia Pica*, a cura della Commissione di storia patria e di arti belle della Mirandola, Tipografia di Gaetano Cagarelli, Mirandola 1874, pp. 79-80.

⁵¹ ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 135, the duke of Florence to his commissioner in Pistoia, May 29th 1551; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 346, ff. 229r, 238r.

⁵² ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie V, Filza 1210, c. 10, docc. 77, 103, 121, 123, 124, 133, 145, 202; c. 11, doc. 49; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, ff. 23r-23v, 74r. Cf. G. Pellicier, *Correspondance politique de Guillaume Pellicier, ambassadeur de France à Venise 1540-1542*, publiée par A. Tausserant-Radel, Alcan, Paris 1899, vol. I, pp. 360-1, 403; vol. II, pp. 575-6; M. Simonetta, *Caterina de' Medici. Storia segreta di una faida famigliare*, Rizzoli, Milano 2018, p. 180.

⁵³ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1312, docc. 30, 76-79, 81-82, 143-146, 157; ASFi, *Mediceo del Principato*, Filza 333, ff. 225r-225v. Cfr. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 218, 244; A. Albizzi, *Vita di Piero Strozzi*, in *Vite di uomini d'arme e d'affari del secolo XVI narrate da contemporanei*, Barbera, Firenze 1866, pp. 509-601: 518; P. Simoncelli, *Fuoriuscitisimo repubblicano fiorentino 1530-1554, I, 1530-1537*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006, p. 152.

⁵⁴ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1181, docc. 1, 8.

In November 1543 a poorly guarded and defended town in Piedmont, Carignano, placed in a strategic position on the river Po, was easily seized by the imperial troops under the command of Alfonso D'Avalos, then general governor of the State of Milan. In less than five weeks the town was fortified enough to resist for months a massive French attack led the next year by the count of Enghien⁵⁵. In order to supply the surrounded garrison, the imperial army engaged the enemy in a field battle near Ceresole d'Alba (April 14th 1544), resulting heavily defeated, and Carignano eventually fell, but the long siege exhausted the king of France's offensive effort on that front⁵⁶. In January 1548 the French diplomatic cardinal Jean Du Bellay proposed to the Grand Constable of France Anne de Montmorency a plan to seize "by a sudden attack" (*à la barbe de l'ennemy*) the town of Tortona in the State of Milan: once easily captured with the support of some inhabitants, that still incomplete fortified position (*demy fortifiée*) could have been "made in a little time one of the best defended and more important stronghold of Lombardy" (*la rendant en peu de temps [...] une des plus belles & importantes places de Lombardie*)⁵⁷. A very similar plan was proposed in the spring of the same year by a French nobleman very well connected in Italy, Claude d'Urfé, this time targeting the small town of Soncino, close to the east border of the State of Milan⁵⁸.

In June 1551, Piero Strozzi's Italian and French troops assembled in Mirandola and raided the Bologna countryside, forcing pope Julius III – ally of Charles V against Ottavio Farnese – to withdraw the army sent to the blockade of Parma, in order to siege Count Pico's fortress and eliminate the threat to his Emilian subjects. The imperial troops under the command of Ferrante Gonzaga were left alone around Parma⁵⁹. But in September the French army in Piedmont was driven into the posts of Chieri and San Damiano d'Asti by the inhabitants themselves and a part of Gonzaga's army

⁵⁵ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 317, 318.

⁵⁶ Cf. G. Parker, *Emperor. A new life of Charles V*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London 2019, pp. 298-9.

⁵⁷ Cf. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. II, cit., p. 100.

⁵⁸ Cf. *ivi*, pp. 117-9.

⁵⁹ Cf. Anonimo, *Cronaca della nobilissima famiglia Pica*, cit., Gerolamo Dandino, bishop of Imola, to the duke of Florence, Cosimo Medici, June 15th, 16th and 20th 1551; Guidotto Pizzaglia da Pistoia to Cosimo Medici, June 18th 1551, pp. 251-2, 254-7. G. Adriani, *Istoria dei suoi tempi*, 8 voll., Fratelli Giachetti, Prato 1822, t. III, p. 152; T. Lancillotti, *Cronaca modenese*, vol. X, pp. 416-24; vol. XI, p. 25.

had to be moved westward to block the enemy advance⁶⁰. Soon the French fortified San Damiano, making of it the bulwark against which Gonzaga's offensive in Piedmont broke up the following year⁶¹.

In the spring of 1554, the commander of the French army in the war of Siena, the Florentine exile Piero Strozzi, conceived a plan to annihilate the imperial forces under the command of Gian Giacomo Medici, marquis de Marignano, by easily seizing some poorly defended strategic spots in the Florentine State, through the cooperation of his network of clients in the area. From those places he intended to pillage the duke of Florence's domain, forcing Marignano to attack at all costs, even under very disadvantageous conditions⁶².

Even the alliance of the king of France with the Florentine republican exiles – enemies of the first duke of Florence Alessandro de' Medici, an ally of the Habsburgs – was aimed in the French strategy at opening a new Tuscan front, forcing Charles V to transfer toward central Italy a part of the forces detached to the defence of Piedmont, Lombardy and Flanders⁶³. A strategic vision also shared by the military and political leader of the Florentine exiles, Piero Strozzi: since the very beginning of his rebellion against the Medici, in 1536, Strozzi set out to acquire a strategic stronghold inside or close to the Florentine domain, making use of his relations in the State of the Church, in Tuscany and in the Duchy of Urbino⁶⁴. The long-awaited opportunity came with the French conquest of Siena in 1552, thanks to a sudden attack launched from Mirandola, supported by an internal rebellion that forced the imperials to take refuge in the citadel and, subsequently to retreat: thanks to its geographical position, the State of Siena gave the enemies of Charles V the ideal base for a lasting resistance, that the French could easily provide with troops, money,

⁶⁰ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1198, docc. 7, 7/1, 9/1, 11, 12; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Français 3118, ff. 20r-20v.

⁶¹ ASMi, *Miscellanea storica*, c. 58, Dispatch from the imperial siege camp close to San Damiano, September 12th 1552. Cf. G. Adriani, *Istoria dei suoi tempi*, t. III, pp. 283-5; G. Gosellini, *Compendio storico della guerra di Parma e Piemonte*, Paravia, Torino 1878, pp. 139-41; B. Monduc, *Commentari di stato e di guerra del signor Biagio di Monluc maresciallo di Francia, nuovamente tradotti dalla lingua francese nell'italiana per Giulio Ferrari, cremonese*, per Marc'Antonio Belpieri, Cremona 1628, p. 157.

⁶² ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 17r, 157v, 188v, 225r-227v; Filza 52, ff. 1v-8v.

⁶³ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 25r; ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie I, Filza 95, ff. 361v-362r.

⁶⁴ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1189, doc. 6. Cf. P. Simoncelli, *Fuoriuscittismo repubblicano fiorentino*, cit., pp. 140, 252, 256, 265; G. Adriani, *Istoria dei suoi tempi*, t. I, pp. 56-7, 85.

equipment and food from the Papal States, from Ferrara, from Mirandola and finally from the sea.

As the newly liberated Republic's protector, the King of France Henry II could have ensured the recognition of Siena's new leadership at least by the new duke of Florence Cosimo Medici, just by maintaining as French governor in the city cardinal Ippolito d'Este, personal friend of Cosimo. But the first goal of the Valois was not to defend the freedom of Siena and the cardinal was replaced by Piero Strozzi. The Valois knew that the appointment of the exiles' charismatic leader would have ensured France the financial support of the republican Florentine bankers operating in Lyon, Venice and Rome⁶⁵. Moreover, as it was later testified by the cardinal Ippolito d'Este himself, king Henry II knew that the presence of a bitter enemy, eager to attack Florence, at the head of an army set up to defend a neighbouring State would have urged Cosimo Medici to mobilize all the human and financial resources available to annihilate Strozzi and the Republic of Siena⁶⁶. At that time the Kingdom of France was in

⁶⁵ Cf. G. Adriani, *Istoria dei suoi tempi*, cit., t. IV, p. 97; Ph. Hamon, *L'argent du roi. Les finances sous François Ier*, Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, Paris 1994, <https://books.openedition.org/igpde/108> (accessed January 22, 2023), cap. III, sec. 17; Ph. Hamon, "Messieurs des finances". *Les grands officiers de finance dans la France de la Renaissance*, Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, Vincennes 1999, <https://books.openedition.org/igpde/1612> (accessed January 22, 2023), cap. I, sec. 201; E. Picot *Les italiens en France au XVIe siècle*, Vecchiarelli, Manziana 1995, pp. 6-7; R.J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610*, Blackwell, Oxford 2001, p. 151; E. Ferretti, *Between Bindo Altoviti and Cosimo I: Averardo Serristori, Medici Ambassador in Rome*, in A. Chong, D. Pegazzano, D. Zikos (eds.), *Raphael Cellini & a Renaissance Banker. The Patronage of Bindo Altoviti*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston 2003, pp. 456-61; P. Simoncelli, *La Repubblica fiorentina in esilio. Una storia segreta, I, La speranza della restaurazione della Repubblica*, Nuova cultura, Roma 2018, pp. 66-8, 76-9, 96-7, 120, 133-4, 180.

⁶⁶ Archivio di Stato di Modena (henceforth ASMo), *Casa e Stato*, c. 390, *Capitolazione pertinente alla causa clusina mandata al Signor Cornelio Bentivoglio per haverne il suo certificato*. Cf. A. Serristori, *Legazioni di Averardo Serristori, ambasciatore di Cosimo I a Carlo V e in corte di Roma*, a cura di G. Canestrini, L. Serristori, Le Monnier, Firenze 1853, pp. 328-9; D. Du Gabre, *Correspondance politique*, par A. Vitalis, Alcan, Paris 1903, pp. 90, 105; *Correspondance politique de M. de Lansac (Louis de Saint-Gelais), 1548-1557*, publiée par C. Sauzé de Lhoumeau, Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, Poitiers 1904, pp. 313, 427; L. Romier, *Les origines politiques des Guerres de Religion, I, Henri II et l'Italie*, Perrin, Paris 1913, p. 425; R. von Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato. Storia e coscienza politica*, Einaudi, Torino 1970, pp. 144-5, 164, 172-4; R. Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena (1552-1559). I termini della questione senese nella lotta tra Francia e Asburgo nel '500 e il suo risolversi nell'ambito del Principato mediceo*, Accademia Senese degli Intronati, Siena 1962, pp. 479-82; M. Simonetta, *Caterina de' Medici*, cit., pp. 250, 253.

serious financial difficulty. The war in Tuscany, in fact, forced emperor Charles V to transfer troops from other fronts to central Italy and, that is even more important, exhausted the finances of duke Cosimo Medici, the richest and most faithful emperor's Italian ally⁶⁷. In 1555 Piero Strozzi could rightly claim to have given a valuable contribution, as commander of the Valois army in Tuscany, to the French advance in Piedmont and Lombardy, where the imperial effort had been deprived of soldiers and money, allocated to the attack against Siena⁶⁸.

Indeed, the widespread fortification of the disputed areas, transforming short conflicts of annihilation into long attrition wars, amplified the integration of the fronts of the struggle for hegemony in Europe. In such a war, fronts could not be ranked by relevance, since they were all linked by mutual influences, as proved by the strict integration of Habsburg and Valois war efforts in Piedmont and in Tuscany, during the 1550s⁶⁹. Similarly, in 1557 the disastrous defeat occurred to the French army in the battle of Saint-Quentin forced king Henry II of Valois to stop any further reinforcement to the duke of Guise, engaged in the expedition against Naples, and later to call back his army, in order to defend the Kingdom of France. The emergency also resulted in a severe cut to the available supplies to the war effort in northern Italy: as a consequence, the marquis of Sessa, then general governor of the State of Milan, could launch a new campaign in 1558 and lead a successful advance through French Piedmont⁷⁰.

In fact, since the most common way to advance was the sudden attack supported by internal opposition, there was not even a well-defined front line: the walls of each city or village were a front, and everything

⁶⁷ ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 90v, 170r, 181v, 186v-189r, 198r, 199v, 201r-201v, 206r-207v, 236r-236v; Filza 96, ff. 3r, 4r, 6r-6v, 12r; Filza 135, *Copia di una lettera che a scripta il Medichino alla republica di Siena e la risposta*, January 9th 1555; *Ristretto di notizie de fatti e vita di Piero Strozzi anno per anno di mano di Carlo di Tommaso Strozzi*, f. 401v; Serie V, Filza 1212, c. 15, Ascanio Bertini to Piero Strozzi, August 8th 1555. Cf. D. Du Gabre, *Correspondance politique*, cit., pp. 55, 125, 147-9, 312, 314; L. Romier, *Les origines politiques des Guerres de Religion*, I, cit., pp. 489-91; R. Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena*, cit., pp. 226, 384, 390-91, 405.

⁶⁸ ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 113v, 136v, 138r-139v, 156r, 169v. Cfr. M. Pellegrini, *Le guerre d'Italia 1494-1559*, il Mulino, Bologna 2017, pp. 221-222.

⁶⁹ ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 60r, 64r, 84r, 91v, 137v, 164v-165r.

⁷⁰ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1208, doc. 126; legajo 1209, docc. 3, 63, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80; ASMi, *Carteggio*, c. 228, the duke of Sessa to Francesco Taverna, August 31st 1558; c. 229, Francesco Taverna to the Tribunale di Provisione of the city of Milan, October 11th 1558; BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Cinq cents de Colbert 393, *Correspondance originale de Bernardin Bochetel, évêque de Rennes et abbé de Saint-Laurent, ambassadeur de France en Suisse et en Allemagne (1554-1566)*, p. 311.

within the walls – nobles' ambitions, personal enmities, collective dissatisfaction – was part of the front.

This kind of attrition war thus urged the struggling powers to seek the allegiance of the most powerful actors in northern Italy, starting with the great feudal nobles, landowners and city patricians. Thanks to the influence they exercised on their vassals – as well as on relatives and on their own servants of various social ranks – nobles, and prominent locals in general, became the natural leaders of the defense of their lands. Struggling monarchies required local magnates to mobilize their most skilled and above all faithful relatives and servants in the territorial defence and in the city guards: this way *loyalty*, the soldiers' most important quality at that time, was guaranteed by a personal relationship between the noble officer and his servant-at-arms, based on the exchange of service from below and protection from above. From these same networks, the nobles selected their best men to form the core of the regular companies of infantry and cavalry under their command: the standing component of their units, which noble officers were expected to maintain at their own expenses both as patrons and as commanders⁷¹.

By becoming the patron of his own main nobles, the sovereign acquired their relations with his own subjects and therefore the cooperation of their vassals and clients to the war effort, faithful garrisons in his fortresses and loyal agents in the enemy's ones. Public and private interests tended to intersect, which explains why in the French and Habsburg armies the highest ranks were conferred on the nobles placed at the top of vast networks of relations: that is, on those nobles – both as holders of government and command roles and as patrons of a large clientage – capable of aggregating the military contribution of their subordinates to the sovereign war effort. In the first years of the Spanish military commitment in Italy, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba could achieve the victory over the French and finally the rank of viceroy, thanks to his ability to secure the support of the Neapolitan nobles and to the wide network of relations he entertained in his own country. The prestige of the Florentine pro-French commander Giovanni de Medici dalle Bande Nere

⁷¹ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 80r. Cf. S.E. Finer, *La formazione dello Stato e della Nazione in Europa: la funzione del 'militare'*, in Ch. Tilly (a cura di), *La formazione degli stati nazionali nell'Europa occidentale*, il Mulino, Bologna 1984, pp. 79-152: 92-4; G. Parker, *La rivoluzione militare*, cit., p. 93; M.M. Rabà, *Mobilizzare risorse per la guerra*, in *Guerre ed eserciti*, cit., pp. 211-238; M.M. Rabà, *Al servizio dell'Impero. Grandi signorie feudali e difesa della supremazia asburgica in Italia settentrionale. Il caso emiliano (1547-1559)*, in "Rivista di studi militari", 2, 2013, pp. 75-118.

also depended on his connections among the central-northern Italian warrior nobility. During the considered period, the leaders of the main factions in the French court, the Grand Constable Anne de Montmorncy and the house of Guise, entertained close relations of protection with the anti-Habsburg exiles, Neapolitans, Florentines, Genoese and Milanese, encouraged in doing so by the king of France himself. In the State of Milan, the Habsburg general governors and their subordinates in command of the main fortified cities were able (and had) to create vast patronage networks among the prominent locals residing or bearers of interests in the territories under the respective jurisdictions – also through the undue concession of tax privileges and by conferring prestigious commands –, in order to obtain their contribution, and that of their vassals, to territorial defence and in the enlistment of regular field army units⁷².

In conclusion, thanks to nobles' authority at local level, dissent or consensus could spread throughout societies in which the part of the population involved in war effort increased numerically along with the armies' size.

But behind the soldiers posted in the garrisons, and their patron-commanders, a population was needed ready to support the garrison itself, firmly loyal to the sovereign and pacified by an effective administrative structure and a trustworthy judicial system⁷³. An aspect underlined by the progress of operations on the Piedmontese front in the considered period. Occupied by the army of the king of France in 1536, central Piedmont was officially declared part of the Kingdom three years later. Detached in a territory under the rule of their own sovereign, French troops and officers often behaved accordingly, established personal relationships with prominent locals and sometimes integrated in the local society through marriage ties or gaining fiefs confiscated from nobles loyal to the emperor⁷⁴. In Sabaudian Piedmont – ruled *de facto*

⁷² BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Français 3015, ff. 30r-30v, 33r-33v, 63r, 65r, 102r, 106r-108r. Cf. A. Ulloa, *Vita dell'invittissimo, e sacratissimo imperator Carlo V*, Appresso Vincenzo Valgrisio, Venezia 1566, pp. 17-9; M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., p. 66; G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. II, cit., pp. 73-4, 80-2, 100; M.M. Rabà, *Clienti, patroni e patroni di patroni. La rilevanza militare dello scambio di "servizi" e "favori": la Lombardia degli Austrias (1536-1558)*, in "Società e storia", XXXVIII, 150, ottobre-dicembre 2015, pp. 657-688; M.M. Rabà, *Un nobile di frontiera da Malaga al Lario. Rodrigo de Arce y Beltrán, governatore di Como (1536-1563)*, in "Mediterranea - ricerche storiche", XIX, 55, agosto 2022, pp. 335-358.

⁷³ Ch. Shaw, M. Mallett, *The Italian Wars*, cit., p. 291.

⁷⁴ ASMi, *Carteggio*, c. 164, *Supplica di Tommaso e Galeazzo del Carretto*, July 1553. Cf. C. Marchand, *Charles 1er de Cossé*, cit., p. 320.

from the imperial governor of Milan –, on the contrary, the Habsburg troops operated in the territory of the duke of Savoy, just an ally of their lord, with no troops, nor money, nor any real authority over his most powerful subjects. In order to maintain the cohesion of their units despite the recurrent delays of wages, imperial officers, therefore, allowed their men to live at the expense of the locals with no restraint, rejecting the mediation of Sabaudian bureaucracy and often distributing to the soldiers the very money paid by Piedmontese subjects to provide cities' and villages' defensive perimeters with earthwork and bastions⁷⁵. As a result, the French regular army of Piedmont was able to advance into enemy territory backed by the loyal local subjects of the king of France, who defended autonomously their own well-fortified towns and villages⁷⁶. The imperial garrisons, on the contrary, often remained prisoners of their own totally inadequate defensive structures, and were attacked

⁷⁵ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1186, docc. 73, 74, 76; ASTo, *Storia della real casa*, Mz. 10, *Ricordi dati al Duca Emanuele Filiberto da un Anonimo, a quel che pare da Nicolò Balbo di Avigliana, in occasione che il prelodato Duca prendeva il possesso de' suoi Stati*, f. 4; *Corte, Lettere di Ministri-Milano, 1535-1575*, mz. 1, the duke Charles II of Savoy to the marquisse del Vasto, August 10th 1545; *Lettere di Ministri-Vienna*, mz. 2, Giovanni Tommaso Langosco di Stroppiana to the prince of Piedmont, February 16th, June 6th 1552; Giovanni Tommaso Langosco di Stroppiana to the duke Charles II of Savoy, December 2nd, 16th, 19th 1551; Giovanni Tommaso Langosco di Stroppiana to the bishop of Arras, December 13th 1552. Cf. G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., pp. 256-7; G.B. Adriani, *Le guerre e la dominazione*, cit., pp. 59-60; A. Segre, *Una questione tra Carlo III e Don Ferrante Gonzaga luogotenente imperiale in Italia nel 1550*, Carlo Clausen, Torino 1896; A. Segre, *Un gentiluomo piemontese della prima metà del secolo XVI. Giacomo Provana di Leyni*, Tipografia Regio Istituto sordo-muti, Genova 1897, pp. 20-5, 36-8; A. Segre, *Appunti sul Ducato di Carlo II di Savoia tra il 1546 ed il 1550*, Tipografia della Regia Accademia dei Lincei, Roma 1900, pp. 19-20; A. Segre, *Emanuele Filiberto in Germania e le ultime relazioni del duca Carlo II di Savoia con Alfonso d'Avalos, marchese del Vasto (1544-1546)*, Carlo Clausen, Torino 1903, pp. 17-8; A. Segre, *La campagna del duca d'Alba in Piemonte nel 1555*, E. Voghera, Roma 1905, p. 16; A. Tallone, *Ivrea e Piemonte*, cit., pp. 153-4, 165-8, 172-3, 178-9, 181; P. Merlin, *Il Cinquecento*, cit., p. 59; A. Barbero, *Il Ducato di Savoia: amministrazione e corte di uno stato franco-italiano, 1416-1536*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2002, p. 92.

⁷⁶ AGS, *Estado*, legajo 1181, docc. 91-92, 93, 95, 106; legajo 1183, doc. 12; ASTo, *Storia della real casa*, mz. 10, *Sommario*. Cf. E. Ricotti, *Storia della monarchia piemontese*, 6 voll., Barbera, Firenze 1861-1869, vol. I, pp. 243-4; G.B. Adriani, *Le guerre e la dominazione*, cit., pp. 14, 125; A. Tallone, *Ivrea e Piemonte*, cit., p. 137; L. Romier, *Les Institutions Françaises en Piémont sous Henry II*, in "Revue Historique" 106, 1911, pp. 1-26, 7-14; L. Romier, *Les origines politiques des Guerres de Religion*, 1, cit., pp. 58, 531-2; P. Merlin, *Torino durante l'occupazione francese*, cit., pp. 10-1, 13-5, 17-9, 25, 26-32, 36, 38, 42; M. Houllémare, *Le parlement de Savoie (1536-1559), un outil politique au service du roi de France, entre occupation pragmatique et intégration au royaume*, in "Revue historique", 665, 2013, pp. 89, 91-2, 94-5, 98-9, 110.

from behind by populations exasperated by the abuses and eager to open the gates to the Valois' troops⁷⁷.

In order to establish a collaborative relationship with the locals, garrisons and mobile troops had to be paid as regularly as possible. Growing expenses for the field armies and for the fortresses in the Italian fronts forced the two monarchies to resort massively to public debt: even the great bankers, mostly Genoese and Florentine, involved in the purchase of the tax revenues were linked to the Habsburgs and to the Valois and to their high-ranked ministers through a personal relationship, and therefore rewarded for their financial services with the same privileges granted to the army officers. Bankers' involvement moderated the discontent of the subjects by avoiding further increases in tax burdens, and also accelerated the introduction of the organizational know-how of private finance into the state administration, by granting high-ranking positions in the bureaucracy to the bankers themselves, as a part of their reward. Resorting to public debt also increased the consensus among subjects of all social ranks: indeed, the bankers financed the war effort by mobilizing in the purchase of tax revenues large sums of money, provided by many small and medium account-holders, whose small profit resulted to be linked to their trusted bankers' large profit, and therefore to the stability of the sovereign leadership, on which bankers themselves depended. The massive resort by the European dynasties to loans, guaranteed by present and future tax revenues, allows us to recognize another main protagonist of the long-time process called Military Revolution: the high-level financial expertise provided by widespread networks of bankers scattered throughout Europe, all connected to each other by continuous business relationships, all familiar with financial instruments like the transfer of the debt and the letter of credit, and all capable, therefore, to quickly move large amounts of money from its main sources – Kingdom of France's tax

⁷⁷ ASFi, *Carte Strozziiane*, Serie III, Filza 51, ff. 164v-165r; ASTo, *Storia della real casa*, mz. 10, *Sommario*; *Corte, Lettere di Ministri-Vienna*, mz. 2, Giovanni Tommaso Langosco di Stroppiana to the duke Charles II of Savoy, June 8th 1552. Cf. E. Alberi (a cura di), *L'Italia nel secolo decimosesto, ossia le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti presso gli Stati italiani nel XVI secolo*, V, Società Editrice Fiorentina, Firenze 1858, pp. 350-1; E. Ricotti, *Storia della monarchia piemontese*, vol. I, cit., pp. 239, 247-8, 268; G.B. Adriani, *Le guerre e la dominazione*, cit., pp. 40-1; A. Segre, *Un gentiluomo piemontese*, cit., p. 51; A. Segre, *Un episodio della lotta tra Francia e Spagna a mezzo il Cinquecento: Carlo duca di Savoia e le sue discordie con Ferrante Gonzaga*, Tipografia P. Favero di P. Confalonieri, Milano 1900, pp. 16-7, 20-9; A. Segre, *Carlo II di Savoia. Le sue relazioni con Francia e Spagna e le guerre piemontesi dal 1536 al 1545*, Carlo Clausen, Torino 1902, pp. 4, 56; A. Tallone, *Ivrea e Piemonte*, cit., pp. 157-63, 170-71, 178-80.

revenues from Lyon, the church revenues from Rome, Mediterranean commerce incomes from Genoa and Venice – to the Italian war fronts, where money was converted in military assets⁷⁸.

Finally, since each of the competing dynasties pursued an incessant research of new supporters among the discontented subjects of the other⁷⁹ – the case of the Constable Charles of Bourbon provides a very good example of that⁸⁰ –, to fight the attrition war meant also to end the local internal conflicts that in Italy divided the inhabitants of almost every city and village into opposing factions, as well as the members of many noble lineages. During the last years of the Italian Wars, in the disputed areas of northern Italy, this urgency did result first in strengthening the prerogatives of the administrative and judicial bodies. Truly an example was the good administration of justice guaranteed in French Piedmont by the Parliament of Turin⁸¹. But prestige and prerogatives of the Senate of Milan

⁷⁸ Cf. L. Ceriotti, *Forme antidorali di costruzione del potere nella Milano di Carlo V. L'esperienza dei fratelli Marino*, in M. Fantoni (a cura di), *Carlo V e l'Italia*, Bulzoni, Roma 2000, pp. 167-196; A. Pacini, *I mercanti-banchieri genovesi tra la Repubblica di San Giorgio e il sistema imperiale ispano-asburgico*, in F. Cantù, M.A. Visceglia (a cura di), *L'Italia di Carlo V. Guerra, religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento*, Viella, Roma 2003, pp. 581-596; G. De Luca, *Entre mercado financiero y economía: la deuda pública en el Estado de Milán bajo los Austrias*, in "Hispania", 73, 2013, no. 243, pp. 105-132; H. Lang, *La pratica contabile come gestione del tempo e dello spazio. La rete transalpina tra i Salviati di Firenze e i Welser d'Augusta dal 1507 al 1555*, in "Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines", 125, 2013, 1, <https://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/1217> (accessed January 22, 2023), secc. 14-21; M.M. Rabà, *La difesa del Ducato di Milano agli albori della dominazione asburgica. Contributo e 'remunerazioni' degli hombres de negocios italiani al servizio dell'Impero*, in "Storia economica", 19, 1, 2016, pp. 159-186; J.H. Elliott, *La Spagna imperiale*, cit., pp. 190-2; M.M. Rabà, *Relations, Money, and Financial Skills to Fight an Attrition War. The Strozzi Brothers, Bankers and Commanders*, in "The Journal of European Economic History", 51, 2, 2022, pp. 9-44.

⁷⁹ BNF, *Département des manuscrits*, Clairambault 335, f. 54r. Cfr. M.M. Rabà, *Il giglio e la mezzaluna. Strategia di logoramento. 'Infedeli' e fuoriusciti al servizio della Francia nelle Guerre d'Italia (1536-1558)*, in "Rivista di studi militari", 3, 2014, pp. 71-97; M.M. Rabà, *Croci rosse e croci bianche tra Asburgo e Valois. La nobiltà guerriera di Piemonte durante l'occupazione franco-imperiale del Ducato*, in G. Mola di Nomaglio (a cura di), *1416: Savoie bonnes nouvelles. Studi di storia sabauda nel 600° anniversario del Ducato di Savoia*, Centro Studi Piemontesi, Torino 2021, pp. 331-355.

⁸⁰ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 48-51.

⁸¹ Cf. M. du Bellay, G. du Bellay, *Les memoires*, cit., pp. 272-3; G. Ribier, *Lettres et memoires*, vol. I, cit., p. 466; A. Tallone, *Il viaggio di Enrico II in Piemonte nel 1548*, in "Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino", 4, 1-2, 1899, pp. 69, 87-8, 113; L. Romier, *Les origines politiques des Guerres de Religion*, I, cit., p. 535; P. Merlin, *Il Cinquecento*, cit., pp. 10, 18-9, 24; P. Merlin, *Torino durante l'occupazione francese*, cit., pp. 16-7, 20-1, 35, 38, 41-2, 49; G. Mombello, *Lingua e cultura francese durante l'occupazione*, in G. Ricuperati (a cura di), *Storia di Torino*, cit., pp. 57, 88, 91-2, 106; M. Houllémaré, *Le parlement de Savoie*,

also grew⁸². Also in the time frame considered, in Tuscany and Lombardy the first steps were moved towards the overcoming of the age-old political, legal and administrative inequality between capital cities and other cities, and between the larger centres and the countryside communities under their jurisdiction⁸³.

The relationship highlighted by the Military Revolution theory between growing innovation in defensive technology and long-term phenomena affecting early modern Italy and Europe appears therefore confirmed: first of these phenomena is the increasing importance of the royal courts' and State bureaucracies' role in solving conflicts among the subjects and in stimulating, rewarding and coordinating the contribution lent to the war effort by the dynasties' most high-ranked servants. Servants who do not lose, but increase and transform their own power and prestige, as main providers of financial and human resources useful to achieve their own sovereigns' political goals, and also as the main brokers between sovereigns themselves and the rest of society.

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cit., p. 95; E. Stumpo, *Dall'Europa all'Italia. Studi sul Piemonte in età moderna*, a cura di P. Bianchi, Silvio Zamorani Editore, Torino 2015, pp. 140-52, 187-8, 200-2.

⁸² Cf. F. Arese, *Le supreme cariche del ducato di Milano da Francesco II Sforza a Filippo V*, Società Storica Lombarda, Milano 1972, pp. 67-9; U. Petronio, *Il Senato di Milano. Istituzioni giuridiche ed esercizio del potere nel Ducato di Milano da Carlo V a Giuseppe II*, Giuffrè, Milano 1972; G. Vigo, *Uno stato nell'impero. La difficile transizione al moderno nella Milano spagnola*, Guerini e Associati, Milano 1994; S. Meschini, *Il governo del Ducato di Milano negli anni di Luigi XII e Francesco I*, in *François I^{er} et l'espace politique italien*, cit., pp. 33-47.

⁸³ Cf. M. Rizzo, *Competizione politico-militare, geopolitica e mobilitazione delle risorse nell'Europa cinquecentesca. Lo stato di Milano nell'età di Filippo II*, in E. Brambilla, G. Muto (a cura di), *La Lombardia spagnola. Nuovi indirizzi di ricerca*, Unicopli, Milano 1997, pp. 371-387, 377-9; M. Rizzo, *Sulle implicazioni economiche*, cit., pp. 271-2; M. Rizzo, *Rivoluzione dei consumi, 'State building' e 'rivoluzione militare'. La domanda e l'offerta di servizi strategici nella Lombardia spagnola, 1535-1659*, in I. Lopane, E. Ritrovato (a cura di), *Tra vecchi e nuovi equilibri. Domanda e offerta di servizi in Italia in età moderna e contemporanea*, Cacucci, Bari 2007, pp. 447-474: 458-61.