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# **The Greek merchant fleet as a national navy during the war of independence 1800-1830**

**Emmanouil M.L. Economou, Nicholas C. Kyriazis and Annita Prassa**

**Abstract** We analyse the emergence of the Greek merchant navy in the wider European context after the Treaty of Vienna, in particular that of the maritime islands - Hydra, Spetsai and Psara - during the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century, when Greece was still a part of the Ottoman Empire. We examine the structure of the merchant fleet and the impetus it received after they could raise mainly the Russian flag as a flag of opportunity. We trace its history as blockade runners for France during the Napoleonic wars and the necessity to be armed in order to face the challenge of the Barbary corsairs (from Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli). These armed merchantmen and their crews, who had gained valuable experience during the Napoleonic Wars and by fighting against the Barbary corsairs, formed the nucleus of Greece's navy during the War of Independence of 1821-1830. Combining superior naval skill and "terror weapons" as, for example, fireships, the Greek armed merchantmen achieved a number of astonishing victories against the Ottoman navy which was superior in numbers and tonnage (including dedicated ships of the line), thus contributing crucially to Greece's independence.

Keywords: Greek merchant fleet, war of independence, merchantmen under a nation's service

## **1. The status of Greek maritime activities before and after the Congress of Vienna (1776-1815)**

In this paper section we analyse the organization of the Greek maritime industry during the 1800 – 1831 period. This is the era of the Napoleonic wars (1799-1815), the French continental blockade and the English naval blockade taken as a countermeasure (1806-1814) and the period of the struggle for Greek independence (1821-1831).

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Greek shipping benefited greatly during the period 1776-1787 and afterwards. This was largely related to the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty signed between the Ottoman Empire and Czarist Russia in 1774, as a result of the Russian-Turkish War of 1768–1774. Under this treaty, the Christian constituents of the Ottoman Empire gained the privilege of undertaking commercial action without being obstructed by the Ottoman authorities, provided that they were flying the Russian flag on their ships, as a flag of opportunity (Kremmidas 1985, vol. 1, p. 22; Charlafti 2001, p. 82).

This privilege was interrupted during the new Russian-Turkish war of 1787-1792. Greek merchants were not only flying the Russian flag as a flag of opportunity, but also the flags of Malta, Austria, Great Britain and Sardinia. After the French Revolution, in 1790, the Greek merchant fleet transported cereals in large quantities to the large French ports. This was forbidden by the Ottoman authorities till 1794. To avoid this prohibition, the Greek merchants adopted the Maltese flag as a flag of opportunity (Charlafti 2001, p. 76). This shows that Greek merchantmen became very flexible and adaptive to new situations, limitations or opportunities in order to make sure that their commercial activities survived.

The Greek merchant fleet made an increasingly important contribution to commerce in the eastern Mediterranean, transporting mostly cereals and wheat to a variety of destinations. Furthermore, Greek ships carried crude linen and coffee from the major port of Alexandria to the Ottoman Empire and the west. In return they transported tobacco, soap, coffee and skull cups from the eastern ports of the Levant to other destinations (Kremmidas 1985, Vol. 1 pp. 136-137). Cereals were also being produced in mainland Greece, primarily in the Peloponnese and Thessaly, as well as other regions and were exported in large quantities to Europe and mainly to France. During 1794-1795 Greek merchants sold 4 million *okkas*<sup>1</sup> to European states, 10 million *okkas* during 1798-1801 and 17 million during the period of the blockade, 1806-1814 (Charlafti 1996, 2001, pp. 76-77).

Cereals and other products were transported from Alexandria and Odessa, two of the largest commercial centers in the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant, as well as from some ports of the Danube, from Istanbul and Asia Minor (such as Smyrna), from Salonica, Chania and Patras and other ports of Greece, as well as to Syrian and

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<sup>1</sup> *Okka* or *oka* was an Ottoman weight measurement. It was analogous to 1,282 Kg.

Egyptian ports. These products were shipped to Malta, Ancona, Messene, Livorno and Trieste, Marseille and other French ports, as well as to Lisbon and some large Spanish ports, such as Alicante, Barcelona, Mallorca, Minorca, Tarragona, Gibraltar and Cadiz. In some cases, Greek merchant ships were travelling as far as Amsterdam and Great Britain (Kremmidas 1985, vol. 1, p 21, 38).

Table 1 offers numerical data regarding the total number of ships that were involved in Alexandria's commerce, both Greek and as a total. One notices that after 1816, when the Napoleonic Wars had ended, participation in commerce with the Levant through Alexandria skyrocketed for both Greek and foreign ships<sup>2</sup>. Greek shipping activity in Alexandria accounted for approximately 40% of the total during 1786-1790 and rose to 60% during 1810-1832.

**Table 1** Commercial activity in Alexandria's port

Year	Greek commercial ships	Total number of ships	(%) of Greek commercial ships	Medium capacity of ships (tonnage)	
				Greek	Foreign
1789	314	925	34		
1790	170	713	24		
1810	456	692	66	144.17	183
1811	495	729	68	135.99	176.68
1812	365	528	69	123.51	156.18
1815	416	644	65		
1816	262	522	48		
1822	?	1797	-		
1823	?	1534	-		
1829	?	2340	-		
1830	1070	1545	69	154.09	240.97
1831	1173	2049	57	238.56	101.50
1832	798	1493	33	239.30	97.60

Source: Kremmidas (1985a, vol. 1, p. 38).

Table 2 offers numerical data for Greek shipping activity in Odessa. No data are available for the period 1812-1815 because of the general chaos prevailing in Russia after Napoleon launched his campaign in 1812 in order to force Czar Alexander I to implement again the continental blockade against Great Britain. What is clear in both tables is the gradual rise of Greek shipping activity. This does not have to do with only these two large entrepôts, but also with the eastern Mediterranean as a whole,

<sup>2</sup> There are no reliable numerical data for Greek commercial activity in Alexandria for the period 1822-1829, which can be attributed to the partial disorganization of commerce in the eastern Mediterranean due to the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire.

both in terms of the numbers of ships that were involved in commerce and the tonnage availability of ships.

**Table 2** Commercial activity in Odessa's port (arrivals and departures of ships)

Year	Greek commercial ships	Total number of ships	(% of Greek commercial ships	Medium capacity of ships (tonnage)	
				Greek	Foreign
1809	203	235	86.38	69.30	176.93
1810	352	398	88.44	56.86	175.00
1811	400	622	64.30	61.18	197.80
1812	-	-	-	60.45	247.28
1813	-	-	-	120.71	158.00
1814	-	-	-	142.92	205.29
1815	-	-	-	159.09	186.83
1816	862	1680	51.30	192.20	203.38
1817	1002	1946	51.49	192.20	196.85
1818	762	1371	55.57	175.28	203.13
1819	807	1572	51.33	195.11	205.32
1820	653	1300	50.23	185.60	192.72
1821	270	999	27.02	103.14	222.54
1822	139	638	21.78	230.70	191.97
1823	276	853	32.35	260.18	195.72
1824	283	792	35.73	234.72	153.54
1825	336	978	34.55	233.86	274.36
1826	454	1187	38.29	193.42	277.92
1827	373	1645	22.67	187.90	254.55
1828	81	218	37.15	118.57	289.48
1829	214	538	39.77	181.55	238.39
1830	566	1826	30.99	23.19	245.98
1831	391	860	45.46	256.63	266.78
1832	342	1216	28.12	244.00	251.72

Source: Kremmidas (1985a, vol. 1, p. 71, 84).

Greek shipping expanded in Europe as well. As many argue, this was strongly related to the European blockades of the 1806-1814 period. Since Napoleon launched the continental blockade, the British, in retaliation, reacted with a naval blockade of any kind of commercial activity related with the French. Supplying Europe with goods became extremely difficult. Thus smuggling rose rapidly and the disorganization of commercial activity lead also to the rise of piracy, not only by the Barbary States but also by Greek and European pirates (Kyriazis and Vliamos 2006).

Greek shipping benefited from the blockades since Greek ship owners, in many cases captains of their own ships, defied the British naval blockades and supplied French ports, mainly Marseille, with cereals and wheat. These activities offered huge profits to both the owners of those ships and their crews. Greeks benefited since, after

Venice's navy was annihilated by Napoleon, there was no other navy capable enough to offer reliable commercial services to the French.

There are recorded cases concerning the fares of those journeys. For example, in 1810, fares from Greek ships started from 16.66% increasing to 38.64% and even as high as 44.87% of the value of the cargo during the blockade. But in general, Greek ship owners or captains offered relatively low prices during normal (peace) periods in order to attract merchants and to increase their activities<sup>3</sup> (Fotiades 1960, pp. 22-23; Kremmidas 1985a, vol. 1, p. 23, 81; Charlafti 2001, pp. 76-80). But it needed great skill to manage to perform an efficient blockade break against the British who dominated the seas in Europe and worldwide (Black, 2004). The restoration of peace in 1815 led to the reduction of fares of 18 to 20% and lower (Papathasiou 1983).

Table 3 offers a detailed structure of the strength and origin of the Greek commercial ships. It shows that although Greek shipping was based mainly on the maritime strength of the three islands of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara in the Aegean sea and Kefallinia in the Ionian Sea, however, less than half the total number of Greek commercial ships were actually related to these four islands, which again proves that the Greeks were actually a decentralised maritime nation as a whole and many other islands had a maritime commerce potential as well.

**Table 3** The structure of the Greek commercial fleet in 1810 (number of ships in parentheses)

	<b>Ionian island (Western Greece)</b>	<b>Western Aegean sea</b>	<b>Cyclades (Central Aegean sea)</b>	<b>Eastern Aegean sea</b>
The islands	Kefallinia (118)	Hydra (120)	Andros (25)	Psara (60)
	Ithaca (38)	Spetsai (60)	Mykonos (22)	Ainos
	Zakynthos (19)	Skopelos (35)	Tenos (10)	Lemnos (15)
	Corfu (5)	Skiros (12)	Santorini (32)	Patmos (13)
	Leukas (5)	Kyme (12)	Kea (7)	Mytilene (2)
	Paxoi (5)	Trikkeri (12)	Ios (1)	Chios (6)
	Kithira (3)	Salonica (4)	Naxos (2)	Kasterorizo (30)
	Galaxidi (50)		Sifnos (2)	Leros (4)
				Rhodes (2)
<b>Sub- Total:</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>40</b>

<sup>3</sup> For example, a case has been recorded where an "internal" voyage in Greece, from the island of Hydra and the island of Syros performed with a fare of 2.75% (which is low if we consider that Greece was still in the midst of war with the Ottoman Empire, see Kremmidas (1980, pp. 256-257).

## 2. The institutional organization of Greek commercial shipping activities

Greek shipping was based on “internal” means. This is related to both its ship building industry and its institutional organization. The shipyards in Hydra, Spetsai and Psara were the most effective and well-organised in Greece throughout the 1776-1835 period. Other smaller shipyards existed as well in Galaxidi, Parga, Trikeri, Skiathos, Kassos and Kyme but they did not have the technical expertise of the three large shipyards of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara.

The three islands could build ships of more than 50 tonnes. During the 1801-1815 period the islands of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara were producing even three-masted ships of approximately 200 tonnes (table 4) and even bigger ships, such as brigs of 200-350 tonnes displacement equipped with 12 or 18 canons each, such as the famous “Ares” under captain Tsamados and “Agamemnon”, the ship of Laskarina Bouboulina, a female captain, which had a displacement of approximately 400 tonnes and 18 guns of 12 litres (Fotiades 1960, pp. 52-54). Although the Greek shipyards had the technical expertise to build larger ships, this was forbidden by the Ottoman authorities so as to avoid increasing the strength of a fleet which potentially could be converted into warships in extreme circumstances by the Greeks, as it happened during the Greek rebellion of 1821 (ibid. p. 43).

**Table 4** Annual number of ships production (of more than 200 tonnes) in Hydra and Spetsai.

Year	Production	
	Hydra	Spetsai
1812	4	4
1813	5	4
1818	6	4
1819	?	6
1811-1820	34	32

As to the institutional organisation of shipping, the funding of the production of a ship was undertaken through the creation of a partnership company. A group of

members raised the initial amount of money in order to build the ship. Usually there were approximately five to eight partners but on rare occasions the number could increase even to 12. It was common for partners to have family connections with each other. They could form a partnership company, where each partner was responsible for the amount of money he/she contributed. Profit shares were determined in the same way. The sale of one's share could be feasible. Such companies were created because it was very difficult for a single investor to undertake the entire cost of building a new ship alone. Gradually, this process was expanded. It was common practice for someone to invest money as a partner in more than one ship building activity. Funds could be accepted by anyone, without limitation concerning his/her origin and women had the same commercial rights as men.

Investors had the same rights and profit shares were formulated under an egalitarian philosophy. Sometimes such profits were as high as 100%, in cases of extreme risk of loss of the ship and the cargo, such as during the era of the European blockades. Hydra introduced the "Hydra Maritime Law" of 1818, under which local authorities offered legal and *de jure* judicial coverage to all these commercial activities, such as verifying the validity of the shares between shareholders, or offering local judicial intervention in cases of disputes among the shareholders. (Kremmidas 1985, vol. 2, pp. 20, 22, 54, 136-137).

Thus, the institutional organization of Greek shipping before and after the Congress of Vienna was organized in a "capitalist" way. Apparently, extra institutional practices which accompanied the rise of commercial capitalism in Europe after the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Kyriazis, Metaxas and Economou 2015) such as the importance of property rights protection and the insurance of cargos and ships, could not be present in the case of Greek shipping because of the backwardness of the Ottoman non-capitalist economy.

### **3. Operations**

In this section we analyse in brief the composition of the opposing fleets, their strategy and tactics and some operational aspects. The Greek fleet, composed mainly of armed merchantmen of the three naval islands of Hydra, Spetsai and Psara, had a nominal maximum strength of 170 ships. The biggest among them were brigs and

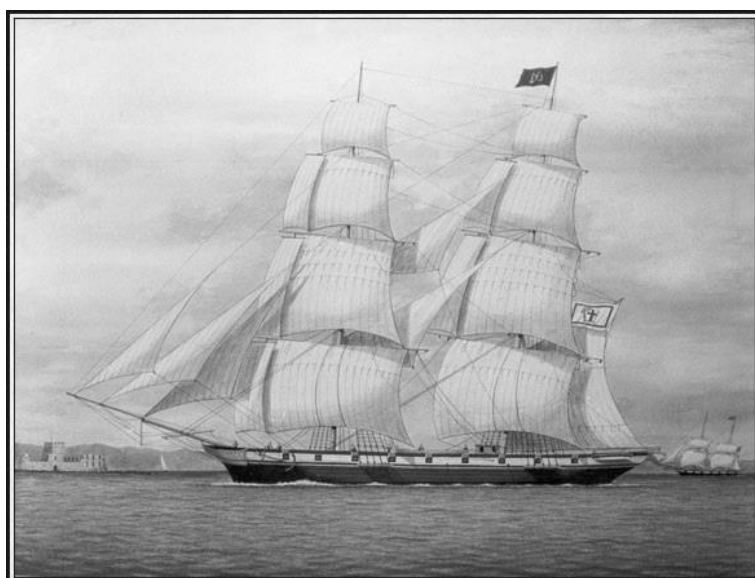


corvettes but many lighter types of ships were also included, such as brigantines, polacres (polaccas), etc. Brigs had two masts and corvettes had three masts. Although we call them corvettes (three-masted ships) we must underline that they were not dedicated ships.

Greek ships were maneuverable and very fast because, as mentioned above, they were used as blockade runners during the Napoleonic Wars and had to be fast in order to evade British patrol ships. Their crews were highly skilled, having gained experience in blockade running and battle experience fighting the Barbary corsairs. This was the reason they were armed, as was the case with almost all merchant vessels of the period. On the other hand, they were relatively small and lightly armed compared to dedicated warships like ships of the line and frigates. Average displacement was around 200-250 tonnes, the biggest displacing as much as 350-450 tonnes. Armament (classified according to the weight of shot, in British pounds) consisted of 10 to 20 guns, usually light ones, of 6 to 12 pounds. The corvette “Panagia” of Hydra, displaced 420 tonnes and was armed with 12 guns, the brig “Themistocles” of Hydra displaced 400 tonnes, was armed with 12 guns and had a crew of 70, the brig “Epaminondas” of Hydra displaced 420 tonnes and was armed with 14 guns.

The biggest ship was the “Agamemnon” of Spetsai belonging to Lascarina Bouboulina, the only woman in the Greek fleet to command a warship, and was in fact built as a dedicated warship shortly after the outbreak of the Greek revolution. The “Agamemnon” was actually a brig (which in fact had a tonnage of corvette type of ship) built in a Greek shipyard in the island of Spetsai. Later, she was bought by the Greek state and was renamed the “Island of Spetsai” in 1828. She had a length of 34 meters and probably displaced at about 400 tonnes (considered as small “sixth-rate vessels”, somewhat larger than a sloop) and she had 18 long range guns.

**Fig 1** The brig Agamemnon, the famous ship of the female captain Bouboulina



According to one estimate (Deligiannis 2009, p. 19) the Greek fleet was manned by about 18,000. It is clear that Greek ships could not stand a chance fighting in a traditional way against the larger Ottoman ones, their guns being too light to do substantial damage to Ottoman ships of the line and frigates. But the Greeks fielded a secret “terror” weapon which they used to devastating effect: fireships.

In fact, fireships were nothing new, having been used with great effect by the English and the Dutch against the Spanish during the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Konstam 2001). The Greeks reintroduced them, as an equalizer against the superior Ottoman fleet and handled them with great skill. What was perhaps innovative was that they were used not only in surprise attacks against stationary targets, but also in open sea battles. During the war, Greek fireships undertook a total of 59 attacks, of which 38 were successful, leading to the destruction or serious damage of the enemy ships, a high proportion of 64% (Deligiannis 2009, p. 25).

The Ottoman navy consisted of the dedicated Ottoman battle fleet, which included some ships of the line, frigates, and smaller warships and the fleets of their nominally subordinated (but in fact independent) states of Egypt, Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli, the last being the Barbary corsair states. Their fleet, except for a few frigates, consisted of smaller corsair ships, similar to the Greek ones, corvettes, brigs, etc. The Ottoman ships of the line, the biggest ones being second rate, displaced up to 3000 tonnes, carried 84 guns, of 32 pounds on the lower deck and had a crew of up to 600 (although it seems that they were in part undermanned, since they had lost their Greek sailor contingents).

Frigates displaced up to 1200 tonnes, carried about 40 to 44 guns (the main battery usually 18 pounders) and had crews of up to 300. This makes clear the enormous disparity in nominal strength of displacement, guns and crews. But nominal strength tells only one part of the story. The Ottoman navy suffered in having inadequately trained crews and being in part undermanned. The Turks were not themselves a naval people (as other older Asian empires covering the same geographical area, like the Persian) and thus relied for their navy on subordinated peoples from Asia Minor, the coast of today’s Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, the Dalmatian coast (like Ragusa) etc. During normal periods, an important percentage of sailors were Greeks, doing their

obligatory “military service” aboard Ottoman vessels. At the outbreak of the revolution, the Turks arrested Greek sailors then serving in the Ottoman navy and had them executed. The Ottoman fleet was commanded by Turkish admirals, had Turks serving as marines and gunners serving afloat, and non-Turkish sailors.

The Greek navy’s main task was to support land operations and blockade Turkish garrisons in cities like Nauplion and Patras that were under siege by Greek land forces thus forcing them to surrender. In order to succeed, they had to repulse the Ottoman navy’s attempts to bring relief to the Turkish garrisons. In this, the Greek navy was in general successful, repulsing for example, the Ottoman fleet’s attempt to relieve the garrison of Nauplion, at the Battle of Spetsai, on 8 September 1822. Shortly after, the Turkish garrison of Nauplion capitulated. A second task during the entire war was to protect the many islands that had revolted against Ottoman landings. In this, the results were mixed: The Greek fleet did not succeed in avoiding landings by the Ottoman fleet on Chios, Kassos and Psara, which led to the destruction of these islands and the deaths and slavery of their population (which led to an outcry of sentiment among the European populations, putting pressure on their governments to intervene in favour of the Greeks).

On the positive side, the Greek fleet safeguarded the island of Samos as a result of the war’s biggest naval battle, Gerontas, and the two main naval islands, Hydra and Spetsai, were never invaded. During the second period of the war, after 1824, and Egypt’s involvement, the Greek navy had two main tasks: Interrupt as far as possible, the Egyptian expeditionary force in Greece, prohibiting Ottoman-Egyptian landings, and relieve the blockage of Greek cities under siege, the main one being Messolonghi, the linchpin of communications between western mainland Greece and the Peloponnese.

In this, results were again mixed. After 1825, Greek finances were deteriorating fast. The state could not raise enough taxes from the areas it controlled, and the merchant-captains of Hydra and Spetsai, who were bearing the major part of the expenses of the naval war from their private fortunes, had exhausted their own personal finances. Keeping a fleet was always very costly and by 1825, the Greek fleet had been fighting for four years. Depleted finances led to a diminishing number of ships in operation. While the Greek fleet comprised 80 ships at Samos-Gerontas in August 1824, it could field only 29 ships for the relief of Messolonghi in January

1826. Thus, although on some occasions the Greek navy managed to break the Ottoman-Egyptian naval blockade and bring supplies to the besieged city, it failed during its last attempt. This led to the city's fall due to starvation. But, on the positive side, it safeguarded the islands of Hydra and Spetsai and the capital, Nauplion, from invasion.

After 1827 Greece's financial situation improved, because it managed to secure a loan from British banks. This was a major diplomatic success because it meant *de facto* recognition of Greece as a legitimate country at war and no longer as a rebellion, as it had been under the provisions of the Treaty of Vienna. And, of course, the British banks gave the loan under the tacit agreement of the British government. Furthermore, Britain's now had a vested financial interest: were the Greeks to lose the war, Britain would lose its financial investment, since the loans would not have been repaid. The Greek government, in which the naval islands always had a strong representation, understood the importance of the navy. Thus, it used part of the loan to strengthen the navy by ordering new ships, the strong frigate "Hellas" and the steamship "Karteria".

"Karteria" was the first steamship ever to take part in naval battles with great success. During 1826-1827, "Karteria", under the command of the English captain Frank Abney Hastings, together with the "Hellas" and a flotilla of ships, fought a number of successful engagements notably at Itsea (where they sunk seven ships and captured another three) at the Bay of Pagasitikos (between Thessaly and Northern Euboea) sinking five brigs and capturing eight prizes). In addition, the "Hellas" sank an Egyptian corvette of 28 guns. Furthermore, the "Karteria", with her new guns firing explosive shells, gave fire support to Greek land forces on many occasions, notably in one which resulted in forcing the surrender of a 300 strong Turkish contingent occupying a fortified monastery on a coastal position in the harbor of Piraeus. During 1827 to the end of the war, with the introduction of the two new Greek ships, "Hellas" and "Karteria", it was the Greeks who now relied on gunfire in naval battle<sup>4</sup>. The super frigate with its 16 pounder main battery guns and 48 pound

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<sup>4</sup> The full specifications for the two ships were: 1) "Hellas" (corvette, three masts): displacement: 2.300 tonnes, armament: 32 guns and 32 carronades. 2) "Karteria" (steamboat): length: 38.4 meters, engine thrust: two steam propulsion engines producing each 85 horsepower, speed: 7 knots, crew: 17 officers, 22 lower officers, 32 personnel for gun batteries, 4 cooks, armament: 4 main large guns of 68 livres and

carronades was superior to any enemy frigate. “Karteria”, combining very heavy and modern shell firing guns with steam, making her independent of wind conditions, made her a dangerous opponent even for a ship of the line, although no such engagement took place.

**Fig. 2** The steamship “Karteria”(front left) and the corvette “Hellas” (rear right)

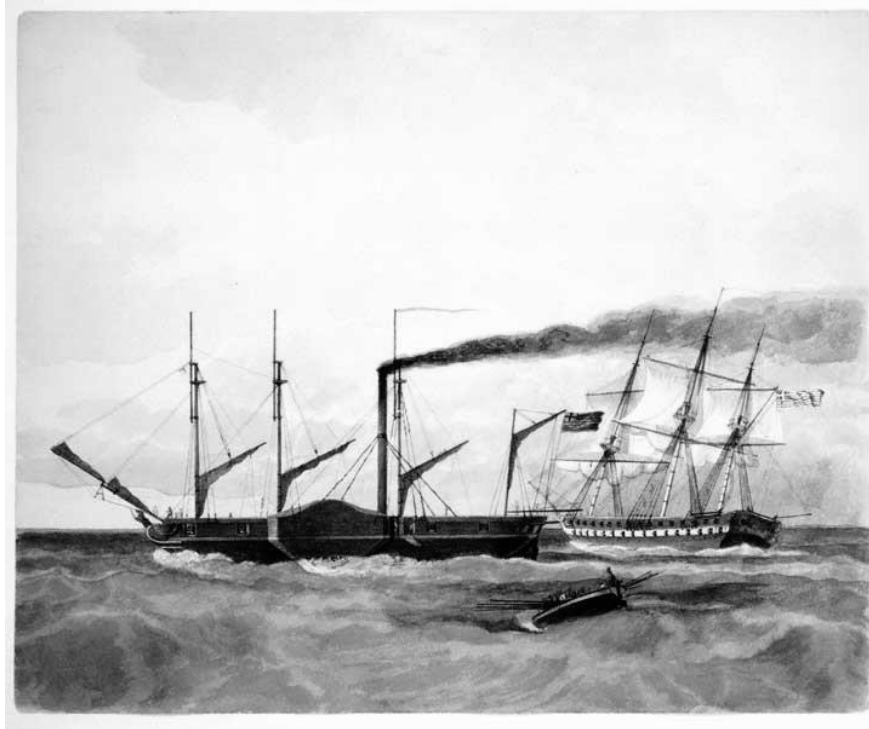


Table 4 summarizes losses of the two sides during the war. Table 4 needs a more elaboration. By “prizes” we refer to those enemy warships, cargo ships or in general, enemy vessels that were being captured during the war by either Greeks or the Ottomans. By (f) we denote those ships that they were lost as a result of a Greek fireship attack, while by (g) we denote those ships that they were lost by both sides through naval battles and exchange of gun fighting. With the parenthesis we denote the number of guns where each ship had.

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4 carronades of 68 livres. Carronades were short barreled heavy caliber guns, very efficient for close combats, introduced by the British navy in the Napoleonic Wars.

**Table 5** Ottoman and Greek naval war losses

<b>Ottoman navy losses:</b>			
Year	Type of ship	Place	Cause of loss
1821	Battleship (84) (Bektas Kapitan)	Eressos	(f) (Papanikolis)
	3 brigs (1 Algerian)	-	(g)
1822	Battleship Mansuriye (84) (Ottoman flagship)	Chios	(g) (C. Kanaris)
	4 small ships, prizes	Tenedos	(g)
	13 small prizes*	Damietta	(g)
1824	Frigate (54) (Brudot Korkmaz)	Samos and Kafireas	(f) (C. Kanaris)
	Brig (28) – (Egyptian)		(f) (Lebessis)
	Frigate (48)	Tripoli	(f) (Rafalias and Matrosos)
	Frigate (44) – (egyptian)		(f) (Vatikiotis and Papantoniou)
	3 corvettes, 1 brig (1 Egyptian)		(f) many captains
	10 small transport ships (Egyptian)		(g)
	11 transport ships, and prizes*	Karpathos	(g)
1825	Gullet	Sphacteria- Pylos	(g)
	Brig		Brig Ares
	1 frigate “Asia” (54) - (Egyptian) 1 frigate (36) (Egyptian) 2 corvettes, (26 each) 6 transports	Methone	All (f)
	1 frigate (66) 1 frigate (36) 1 corvette (28) 30 transports, prizes	kafireus	(f) Matrosos and Moussouris (f) Baitis (f) guns
	1 frigate (44) (Egyptian)	Souda (Crete)	(f) (Theofanis and Demaras)
	1 polacre (Egyptian)	Aegian	(f)
	2 brigs	Messolonghi	?
1826	5 brigs	Pagasseticos	(g)
	8 transport prizes	Gulf	(g) “Karteria”
1827	Corvette (28) (Egyptian) Gullet (10) (Egyptian)		(g) (“Hellas”) (g) (“Soter”)
	2 transport prizes	Itea gulf	(g) (“Aspasia”)
1827	7 small ships 3 transport prizes	Itea gulf	(g) “Karteria”, “Soter” and gunboats
TOTAL:	3 battleships, 7 frigates, 7 corvettes, 21 brigs other, 59 prizes = 64 warships and 59 transports		

<b>Greek navy losses:</b>			
1821	70 small vessels and fishing boats	Galaxidi	prizes
	1 brig	?	?
1822	14 small vessels	Kassos	Prizes
1825	2 brigs (“Achilles”, “Athina”)		(g)
	1 brig “Nereus”		Internal explosion
1828	1 brig	Chios	Storm

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TOTAL:	5 brigs and 84 small ships captured
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Source: Own compilation based on Photiades (1960), Adamopolou and Prassa (2003), Stamelos (2003) and Deligiannis (2009)

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Greek Revolution was a serious challenge to the established order after the Vienna Congress. The fact that the Ottomans were unable to quickly quell the revolt, coupled with Greek successes on land and sea and Ottoman atrocities in Chios, Kassos, Psarra, led to increasing public opinion pressure in European countries to intervene on behalf of the Greeks.

Diplomatic considerations by their governments, especially in Great Britain, France and Russia concluded that it might be to their advantage to help the Greeks to achieve their independence. This was finally achieved by the intervention of the three navies and the annihilation of the Ottoman fleet at Navarino (Pylos) and the expedition of a French corps to help repel the Ottomans on land. The Greek navy's contribution was crucial during the first two decisive years of the revolution in two ways. First, by implementing an effective blockade of and repulsing the Ottoman relieving fleets of Nauplion and some other Ottoman fortresses, it brought about their capitulation. Nauplion became the Greek capital and the Ottomans were unable to recapture it. It also succeeded in safeguarding some islands such as Samos, Hydra, Spetsai, Mykonos, etc. from Ottoman invasion, during the second part of the war.

Second, it managed, during the first period, to deny sea communications and support to the invading Ottoman land forces that followed a north-south route. This made their logistics precarious. The greatest Ottoman force, led by Dramalis Pasha in 1822 to invade the Peloponnese, having no supplies by sea, had to rely on land transport, always difficult and slow on the rudimentary roads and tracks of Greece. The result was that 30.000 strong force faced starvation and had to retreat after reaching the Argolis plain, devastated by the Greeks so as to deny food and fodder. One part of the army was ambushed and annihilated at the pass of Dervenakia and many more died from starvation and decease during their retreat.

During the second period of the war, the weakened Greek navy did not manage to thwart the Egyptian seaborne invasion. However, it constantly harried their communications, inflicting some losses, and binding substantial parts of the Egyptian fleet in convoy duties. The Greek navy successfully supplied Messolonghi on a

number of occasions while it was under siege, although in the end it failed and the city fell. Still, during the longest siege of the war (June 1825 - April 1826) the defense of the city, which would not have lasted so long without the Greek navy's bringing in supplies, the totality of the Egyptian-Ottoman army was bound in the siege. Therefore, it was not able to operate in other parts that were under Greek control, buying precious time for the Greeks. During the last period of the war, revitalized with its first dedicated warships, the Greek navy fought a number of successful operations and effectively supported land forces operations in evicting Ottoman garrisons, notably from Piraeus. As a side act, it stamped out the Greek pirates' nests in the Sporades group of islands (Skiathos and Skopelos).

The Greek navy's successes demonstrated once again that superior seamanship and innovative tactics overcome numerical superiority. On the whole, the Greek navy of converted merchant ships successfully withstood the assault of five navies (those of Turkey, Egypt, Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli) which included numerous dedicated warships. It was a sea David's victory against sea Goliaths.

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