The Hungarian Borderlands and Crisis in the Ottoman Empire in the Late Sixteenth Century

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The sixteenth century in the Ottoman Empire was a period of immense military success followed by years of significant realignment in the social, political, and martial spheres of society. Global environmental changes in the latter half of the 1500s compounded existing problems within the empire. Ottoman expansion and warfare in Hungary during this period offers a case study in some of the particular issues occurring in the empire, and how they came to a head during the Long War against the Habsburgs from 1592-1606. The conquest of Hungary, a resource rich area, under Suleiman the Magnificent brought about the development of a lucrative frontier economy that the salaried military could exploit to gain personal wealth and status. This was necessary as the *askeri* class could no longer afford to maintain their lifestyle on the salary alone, and had to enter into private business ventures. The janissaries and the *sipahi* cavalry also began to riot due to lack of pay during this time, and one group was pitted against the other to end revolts. This contributed to the lack of cohesion among the branches of the Ottoman military and by extension impeded their ability to project force. The frontier zone also allowed for local commanders and governors to conduct operations without oversight from the central government, who could not enforce peace treaties. This factor was one of the main causes of the war at the turn of the century with the Habsburgs. The conflict was ultimately indecisive for both sides in terms of territory gained or lost, yet it showed that the Ottoman state was forced to cope with systemic problems and that the pyramid of order imposed by Mehmed II was no longer tenable. East-Central Europe was the theatre of war in which the crisis at the end of the sixteenth century manifested, and had long-term implications for the empire's trajectory into the 1600s.

Hungary was a lucrative province for the Ottomans to control, and supplied a high volume of supplies to both troops in the provinces controlled by the empire, and the household forces in the capital. Provincial governors had built up the gunpowder works in Buda starting in

1565/66, and produced enough of a surplus by the next decade to export supplies to other fortresses in the Hungarian provinces, to Istanbul, and to Ottoman navy fighting in the Mediterranean. Another center of gunpowder manufacture was in Temesvar. The city was situated in a position to keep Transylvania under Ottoman control, while also supplying the armies fighting the Habsburgs and Poland. These powder works were intended to satisfy the needs of the province, neighboring bodies of troops, and imperial armies if they were in the region.[1] As for tax revenue, the Ottomans quickly consolidated their hold on Buda and surrounding provinces from 1542-46, accruing high levels of income and expanding the scope of their tax base.[2] Tax farming in the sixteenth century accounted for most of the revenue in Hungary, but there was a drastic decrease in by the time of the Long War, and troops had to be paid from taxes in other Balkan provinces.[3] Constant raiding and low level warfare, along with the accompanying population churn, made greater Hungary costly to hold for both the Habsburgs and Ottomans. Border conflicts gradually moved from the peripheries to the center of the country from the 1560s onward.[4]

Historians disagree with regard to the long-term implications of the crisis in the late sixteenth century. The "Second Empire" thesis put forth by Baki Teczan argues that the Ottoman Empire underwent a democratization as a result of the expansion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Second Empire replaced the "patrimonial empire" typified by Suleiman the Magnificent's reign from 1520-1566 with one that had elements of proto-democratization and a less stratified society. Mercantile, rather than military, elites began to

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[1] Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136-138.
[2] Geza David, *Studies*, 194-195.
[3] Pal Fodor, "Some Notes on Ottoman Tax Farming in Hungary," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientarum Hung.* 54, no. 4 (2001): 433.
[4] Geza Palffy, "The Impact of the Ottoman Rule on Hungary," *Hungarian Studies Review* 28, no. 1-2 (2001): 116.

dominate society. This thesis places the turning point of the empire during the period of 1617-1622, when the janissaries deposed Sultan Osman II.[5] Pal Fodor argues against this school of thought, writing that it is "nonsensical" to label the seventeenth century in Ottoman history as a period of democratization. According to this interpretation, the 1600s were "a period of unbridled lawlessness and arbitrary rule."[6] A long-term view of the crisis in the wider empire is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the reconfigurations and crises experienced by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, culminating with the Long War of the 1590s, provides insight into how the court and frontiers interacted with one another. The stabilization of the borders with the Habsburgs allowed for a kind of democratization on a small scale with local military commanders and governors acting with a large degree of autonomy. At the same time, this decentralization was viewed as lawlessness by Ottoman court officials.

Military commanders on the frontier possessed a great deal of autonomy by the early 1590s, causing a breakdown of coordination between the court and the local commanders. As the conflict continued through the sixteenth century, policy was no longer decided just by Istanbul or Vienna, with divided Hungary as a passive actor, but the actions of Ottoman officials within the frontier had significant effects on imperial grand strategy. Following the Ottoman capture of Buda in 1541, the empire established administrative divisions in its portion of Hungary, and assigned governors to them. The Porte sent orders to the *sancak* (smaller districts) and *beylerbeyilik* (larger provinces). Taxes collected by the provincial administration were used to

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[5] Baki Teczan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10; Baki Teczan, "The Second Ottoman Empire: The Transformation of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Era," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 29, no. 3 (2009): 557.

[6] Pal Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire: The Ottomans in Central Europe—A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390-1566)* (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2016), 18

pay and feed the troops in that region.[7] Even at the fortress level, garrison commanders on both sides of the border operated on unwritten customary law, as that was what governed the ransom-slave trade.[8] Local governors had a great deal of autonomy in the sixteenth century, and were required to fund and build their own armies. Volunteers to the fortifications often used them to acquire weapons and training, and then move on.[9] Most of these troops came from the empire's Balkan provinces, with few actual Hungarians serving in the forts in Ottoman Hungary.[10] Suleiman the Magnificent had refined the hierarchical military machine established by Mehmed II, but the changes in the administration of the military frontier at the turn of the seventeenth century showed that the empire was facing strain and began a process of transformation.[11] Military governors in the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier had access to a significant tax base and population of potential soldiers that were not tied to the *devshirme* recruits of the palace. Officials in the capital not only had to respond to the Habsburgs, but also to the actions of their own administrators. These changes serve to explain the initial causes of the Long Turkish War in the 1590s.

Suleiman the Magnificent had realized by 1545 that he would not be able to reach Western Hungary or Vienna, and the imperial treasury became over-burdened, yet the military elite of Rumelia wanted further expansion.[12] The beginning of hostilities at the end of the sixteenth century ended a period of détente following the 1566-68 peace treaty between the

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[7] Gabor Agoston, "Defending and Administering the Frontier: The Case of Ottoman Hungary," in *The Ottoman World* ed. Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge, 2012), 223-224, 226

[8] Geza Palffy, "Ransom Slavery Along the Ottoman-Hungarian Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, Geza David and Pal Fodor, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 36.

[9] Pal Fodor, "Making a Living on the Frontiers: Volunteers in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Army," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, Geza David and Pal Fodor, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 236-237.

[10] Klara Hegyi, "Freed Slaves as Soldiers in the Ottoman Fortresses in Hungary," in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Late Eighteenth Centuries)*, Geza David and Pal Fodor, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 86.

[11] Baki Teczan, "The Second Empire: Transformation of the Ottoman Polity in the Early Modern Era," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29/3 (2009): 567.

[12] Pal Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire*, 87.

Ottomans and Habsburgs, which had made an attempt to end open warfare in the borderlands and use diplomacy to negotiate between the two powers. Capture of territory was prohibited, war captives were to be returned, slave traders were forbidden from Buda to enter and buy Christian slaves. Fortification building on both sides of the frontier was permitted. The Habsburgs, however, were still required to pay a 30,000 ducat tribute to the Sultan each year, and Transylvania was formally separated from Habsburg Royal Hungary. This agreement was renewed three times: in 1574, 1583, and 1590. Given the great deal of autonomy the Ottoman border garrisons and their governors possessed, trying to maintain this agreement was difficult.[13] The court lacked the ability to dictate the actions of lower-level actors in the borderlands, which was how these local or regional officials were able to dictate the policy of the Porte, and impact the grand strategy of the empire. The frontier existed in a semi-lawless state where order was dependent on local authorities, making enforcement of central authority difficult.

It was the ability of Ottoman frontier commanders to raise armies and build a power base that caused the proliferation of war in Hungary, which placed the court in a difficult position trying to balance the need for new lands. At the same time, the empire could not risk a wider scale war. Telli Hasan Pasha was a Bosnian-born Ottoman commander who led incursions into Habsburg Croatia. He besieged the fortress at Bihacs in June 1592 and took it, and then in the next month invaded Croatia and broke the combined Croatian-Transylvanian forces, seizing their artillery and their fortifications.[14] Escalation of the conflict continued with Mustafa Pasha, the *sanjak-bey* (commander) of the Klis fortress conducted constant raids into Habsburg lands in

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[13] Gustav Bayerle, *Ottoman Diplomacy in Hungary: Letters from the Pashas of Buda 1590-1593* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1972), 3-5

[14] Mustafa Naima, *Annals of the Turkish Empire, from 1591 to 1659 of the Christian Era*, vol.1, trans. Charles Fraser (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1832), 4-5. Naima himself was a beneficiary of the dislocation and transformation within the empire during the seventeenth century, which colored his perception of events. As the son of a janissary family, he saw the cavalry as a threat to social order. He lived and wrote during the seventeenth century, and was shaped by the consequences of the crisis at the turn of the century See Lewis V. Thomas, *A Study of Naima*, ed. Norman Itzkowtiz (New York: New York University Press, 1972).

Croatia, causing retaliations by the Europeans. The invasion of Croatia by Hasan Pasha and ensuing construction of two fortresses caused him to request the capital for more troops in case of a larger counter-offensive by the Croatian and Austrian armies, yet there was enmity between him and the Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha, as Hasan had wanted a house in Constantinople he had given as an apparent gift to Sinan returned.[15]

Teli Hasan Pasha was denounced by both Archduke Ernest of Austria and the Pasha of Buda in August 1592 for violating the peace, and for turning artillery on the enemy during the siege of Bittye.[16] Several weeks later, the Mehmed Pasha notified Ernest that the court had issued a decree against Hasan Pasha and the Pasha of Temesvar for attacking Habsburg lands, under penalty of death if they continue hostilities. At the same time, Mehmed informed the Austrian archduke that the Habsburg army en-route to Bittye had to be turned back, as a mosque was established in the city and that Mehmed Pasha would have to respond to the Christian invasion with force.[17] The Ottomans had to balance keeping the peace with maintaining steady conquests of lands in east-central Europe, as Mehmed Pasha's warning to the Habsburgs shows. Despite the issues with coordinating strategy between the capital and the frontier, the overriding impulse of the Ottoman Empire was to expand by an "avalanche" process of pillaging raids, integration of the area into the empire followed by economic restoration, and then maintain the flow of resources from the frontier back to the capital.[18]

The Ottoman military that had been a well maintained machine in the fifteenth century was becoming increasingly factional in the sixteenth century, beyond the personal conflict between Sinan Pasha and Hasan Pasha. The janissaries and *spahis*, the cavalry branch of the

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[15] Naima, *Annals*, 13-14.
[16] Mehmed Pasha to Archduke Ernest of Austria, August 30 1592, in *Ottoman Diplomacy in Hungary: Letters from the Pashas of Buda 1590-1593* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1972), 153.
[17] Mehmed Pasha to Archduke Ernest, September 17, 1592, in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 154-155.
[18] Fodor, *Unbearable Weight of Empire*, 38.

military, began to compete and come into conflict. While this rivalry had existed for some time, the cavalry rioted in the capital in December 1592, when they were not paid in full. The treasurer Emir Pasha attempted to quell the uprising by offering an advance payment, and the commander of the household troops tried to put down the disturbance, but they were unable to end the rioting. Sufi leaders and *Seids* (descendants of Muhammad) also attempted to negotiate with the cavalrymen, but were unsuccessful. Two of the *Seids* were wounded by the rocks thrown by the *spahis*. The janissaries were tasked with putting down the uprising, and were successful.[19] The conflict with the Habsburgs followed soon after this riot in the capital. While it is not clear if there was a connection between the onset of war and the rioting in Constantinople, it portended the problems of command and discipline among the Ottoman armies as the campaigning in Hungary began.

Hasan Pasha's army laid siege to the city of Sisak in Croatia in June of 1593, but was defeated by the combined European forces and Hasan Pasha was killed. This stunning rout of Ottoman forces caused the sultan to have his "ocean like zeal" roused, and that he would wage war on the Habsburgs "with vigor and without delay."[20] By July, the Habsburgs refused to send tribute to the Pasha of Buda. An Ottoman army under command of Sinan Pasha, consisting of 15,000 janissaries, 100,000 light cavalry, and an equal number of Tatar auxiliaries was being mobilized. While the war had started in Croatia, the Hungarian front was of more strategic importance.[21] An ultimatum letter in August warned the Habsburgs again that peace or war was dependent on their payment of the tribute.[22] Mustafa Naima's chronicle of the war depicted a brave Ottoman army, led by a heroic general, making a last stand against their enemy. Irregular,

[19]Naima, *Annals*, 10-12.
[20] Naima, *Annals*, 13-15.
[21] Hasan Pasha to Archduke Mattias, July 30, 1593, in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 181.
[22] Hasan Pasha to Archduke Mattias, August 18, 159, in *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 188.

"small wars" along the frontier had become a way for warriors to gain status and wealth within the Ottoman system, yet this irregular fighting had done little to shift the strategic situation along the frontier, as sieges determined strategic victory.[23] Further, Hasan Pasha's pursuit of war had forced Habsburgs to defend their realm, and also forced the Ottomans into a war posture as a result. His actions as a border commander had directly impacted decision making at the imperial center.

Following the death of Hasan Pasha of Bosnia and the break in Ottoman-Habsburg diplomatic relations in late summer of 1593, Sinan Pasha was appointed to command in the borderlands at Belgrade, and had to reassess the Ottoman strategy and administration in the region. One court history demonstrates the court and the local Ottomans in the provinces were aware of the problems with military and civil administration in the region. After 1566, Ottoman concern had shifted to Cyprus and the Safavids, allowing the Habsburgs to make great improvements on their fortification networks in Hungary, where they had formerly been unable to do so without the Ottomans destroying them. The war council also recognized the toll that border raiding had taken on the troops in the Danube frontier region, as good soldiers had been killed and replaced with inferior replacements. Administrative standards had likewise lapsed and caused discontent among Ottoman subjects. This created a problem when it came time to feed the army, as their supplies were levied from local sources. Grain to feed the army had to be collected locally, and Suleiman had made a law providing for advance payment for crops to supply the army, but environmental strain had compounded administrative errors. Buda was the

[23] Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)*, 191.

center of Ottoman Hungary for strategic control, and had been under threat from Palota, Vesperem, and Tata.[24]

Koca Sinan Pasha was a controversial figure at the Ottoman court, and made enemies in part because of his Albanian origins, and his actions as Grand Vizier gave him a negative reputation among other officials in the capital, such as the chronicler Mustafa Ali. In 1579-1580 as Grand Vizier, Sinan Pasha had conducted a purge of his predecessor Lala Mustafa Pasha's supporters in the government. Lala Mustafa Pasha had not noticed, or acted against, the financial corruption of his subordinates, two of whom had taken control of the key military treasuries at Aleppo, Damascus, and Diyar Bakir.[25] Later on, Ali portrayed Sinan Pasha as an "anti-Christ figure,"[26] but the historian later tried to appease the commander after he had taken the fortress at Yanik (modern-day Gyor). Ali's portrayal of Sinan in his chronicles, however, displayed a clear hypocrisy as he accused the general of wasting money and men on the siege.[27] Other court historians, however, lauded his boldness and skill as a general, particularly in contrast to Sultan Murad III who had not led a campaign.[28] This personal feud between Sinan Pasha and Mustafa Ali highlighted the growing factionalism and infighting at the court, and Mustafa Ali himself was a client of Lala Mustafa Pasha. Ali's critique of the siege of Yanik must be viewed with some caution, as much of the issues faced by the Ottoman army on campaign were due to logistical problems related to the environment that were largely beyond the control of the army or the government.

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[24] Christine Woodhead, *Ta'līḳī-zāde's Sehnāme-i hümäyün : A History of the Ottoman Campaign into Hungary, 1593-94* (Berlin: K. Schwartz, 1983), 28-29.
[25] Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali 1541-1600* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 85-86.
[26] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 135.
[27] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 150-151.
[28] Woodhead, *History of the Ottoman Campaign*, 61.

The frontier economy was lucrative, and the nature of the janissaries in the sixteenth century as self-interested businessmen in addition to being soldiers allowed them to capitalize on the provinces. This trend, however, had consequences on Ottoman administration and the Long War. "Merchants and rich men of Constantinople" advanced money to new princes of Wallachia, in return for the region's abundant supplies of sheep, cattle, honey, and salt. Often, these obligations could not be fulfilled by the prince and they pressured the peasants to give up more as a tax; Michael the Brave of Wallachia was characterized in this way by Ottoman sources. His creditors, themselves janissaries, assaulted the palace in order to collect on the debt. Following the negotiation, an army marched toward the city and killed the prince's creditors as well as Muslims living there, causing an exodus from the principalities.[29] The economic reasons for Ottoman instability during this period were not entirely human created, however, as environmental changes played a significant role as well.

Ecological crisis in the late sixteenth century was partially to blame for the lack of resources in the Danubian principalities. In the 1570s the empire had already faced a population increase, combined with decreasing surpluses, contributed to the inability for Michael's janissary creditors to pay back what they were owed.[30] Throughout 1580s, the capital had faced severe shortages of food. In response, the Porte requisitioned a large sum of 2500 tons of grain, cheese, and honey from the Danubian principalities in 1586.[31] The incident in the principalities reveals that there were multiple points of pressure straining the Ottoman frontier lands in the latter half of the sixteenth century, with both official government taxation and the private business ventures of the *askeri* military class. By the 1590s, the Sultan was no longer in total control of his

[29] Naima, *Annals*, 37-39.
[30] Sam White, *The Climate Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 78.
[31] White, *Climate Rebellion*, 101.

ostensible slave officials, and they were operating with a large amount of autonomy both militarily and economically. This allowed elites in Ottoman subject regions to take advantage of the destabilization, which had immediate implications for the Long War.

The crisis in the Danubian principalities and the war in Hungary resulted in further loss of control of the region for the Ottomans when the Pope, along with Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II organized an international coalition against the empire. Transylvanians, Wallachians, and Moldovans entered into a confederacy against the Ottomans and attacked Muslims living along the Danube. The Ottomans organized an additional army to respond, commanded in part by "military aghas, of whom the grand vizier wished to get rid." An Ottoman army was surprised by the confederate forces at Rusjuk while trying to transport artillery and supplies across the frozen Danube, and the Christian army routed the Ottoman army.[32] The coalition assembled by the Europeans against the Ottomans brought in mercenaries and nobility from across the continent to fight.[33] English soldier and later explorer John Smith was one example, and he was granted a coat of arms by Prince of Transylvania Sigmisund Bathory as thanks for his service in 1603.[34] The Europeans were able to capitalize on the empire's crisis in Hungary to win battles and gain personal status, similar to how their Ottoman counterparts had used the border fortresses and raiding to accumulate military prestige and wealth.

During Sinan Pasha's 1594 campaign, supply and manpower problems facing the Ottoman army were apparent, and affected the overall ability for the empire to take advantage of Hungary's resources. The commander undertook the siege of Gyor that year in part to seize the

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[32] Naima, *Annals*, 36-37.
[33] Geza Palffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century* (Wayne: The Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, Inc., 2009), 111.
[34] John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith* in *The Complete Works of John Smith (1580-1631) in Three Volumes* vol. 3, ed. Philip L. Barbour (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 178.

abundant supplies within the fortress. This was also why the coalition fighting Sinan Pasha's army did not make an effort to relieve the city, believing that the oncoming winter would cut short the empire's efforts to take it. The Ottoman army under the Pasha's command was drawn from around the empire, with contingents from the Balkans, Anatolia, Syria, and janissaries.[35] Equipping and paying this army was resource intensive for the Ottomans, especially given the protracted sieges that dominated the major engagements of the war. Campaigning in Hungary also damaged the Ottoman's ability to accumulate wealth from the provinces, an issue that worsened as the Long War continued. Devastations brought on mostly by the Ottomans' Tatar auxiliaries and other Turkic light cavalry formations, ruined the agricultural lands of Hungary and brought famine to both civilians and soldiers fighting. Habsburg mercenaries and regular troops likewise made conditions in the region worse.[36] The population in Ottoman Hungarian provinces either stagnated or declined.[37]

Following the death of Murad III in January 1595, Vienna was once again the Ottoman objective for the following year. Sinan Pasha began to make preparations for the new offensive. Court officials believed the accession of Mehmed III to the throne would bring an end to the chaos and instability within the empire. Ta'liki-zade wrote that he wished the new Sultan would bring an end to the striving for wealth and power that had taken root within the government and *askeri* class.[38] There was discord between the vezirs and military officers during the interim period between Murad and Mehmed, and the new Sultan had nineteen of his brothers strangled in order to take power. The new Sultan was a sharp contrast to his palace-secluded predecessor. Mehmed III was much more committed as a military commander and administrator, something

[35] Woodhead, *History of the Ottoman Campaign*, 41-43.
[36] Palffy, "Impact of the Ottoman Rule," 117-118.
[37] Geza David, *Studies in Demographic and Administrative History of Ottoman Hungary* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1997), 86.
[38] Woodhead, *History of the Ottoman Campaign*, 61-62.

the empire needed during the ongoing war.[39] The reassertion of authority by the Sultan bolstered the morale of the court, as shown by the chronicle of Ta'liki-zade. The crisis facing the empire, however, may have been beyond the ability of a single ruler to solve them.

The Ottomans faced another *sipahi* riot in early April 1595 when the troops garrisoned at the fortress of Ganje, as they had not been paid in three years. Pay was negotiated to come from the treasury at the garrison city as well as the one in Tabriz. Ottoman chronicler Naima blamed some of the discontent on the "sycophants of Sinan Pasha" in the ranks of the cavalrymen, who wanted newly appointed Grand Vizier Ferhad Pasha executed before they accepted any payment. The janissaries were again called to put down this revolt of the cavalry.[40] This strain on the Ottoman command structure and infighting in different branches of the military was a crisis the empire could not afford, especially as the Transylvanian front of the Long War continued to deteriorate for the Ottomans, as Michael the Brave continued to resist the empire. Chroniclers referred to the prince's army as a band of "insurgents" collected from Hungary and the Danube principalities. This force, however, had artillery and was able to lay siege to Ottoman fortresses and commenced with on at Ibrail on the Black Sea coast of the empire in 1595; the melted Danube prevented the Tatar relief force from reaching the garrison. Michael and his army then killed an Ottoman governor and his provincial forces, and pushed into Silistria, causing widespread devastation.[41] Both the rioting of the cavalry and the fighting against Michael showed that the Ottomans had difficulty managing the wide front of the conflict. In addition, the taking of fortresses was costly and associated local devastation meant that whoever held the provinces at the end of the war would have to invest significant resources to rebuild the economies in those provinces.

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[39] Naima, *Annals*, 40-42.
[40] Naima, *Annals*, 51-53.
[41] Naima, *Annals*, 49-50.

In September 1595, the Christian coalition took the fortress of Estergon back from the Ottomans, a victory Ta'liki-zade credited to Sinan Pasha's absence as commander of Ottoman forces in Hungary. The general had been reassigned to operations in Wallachia, and the empire was attempting to install a loyal client prince to the country. There, the imperial army faced an insurgency that avoided open confrontation and hid in the mountains, only harassing the flanks of the Ottoman forces. Sultan Mehmed III made preparations for the next campaigning season on the central front with the onset of winter, as the empire defeated a Hungarian rebel force at Temesvar.[42] Sinan Pasha would not campaign in Hungary again, as he died in April 1596, putting an end to what Naima called a "blemished life."[43] The front in the Danubian principalities put further strain on the Ottoman war effort in Hungary. Yet, Ta'liki-zade's chronicle of the war concluded with forward looking optimism, given the sultan was leading the army again. The chronicler held to the view that war was necessary for the Ottoman state to live on, and that it had grown weak because pitched battle had been less frequent in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and because the sultans had delegated military affairs to grand viziers.[44]

The 1596 campaign of Sultan Mehmed III received lavish praise in Naima's chronicle of events, and presenting the events of the offensive against the fortress at Eger with great praise, while criticizing the apparent neglect of the frontiers by the sons of Sinan Pasha. In September, the army marched on the city. The Sultan informed the defenders of the fortress that they would be spared if they converted, but commenced with the siege when the defenders refused. The Ottomans dug in with trenches to attack with muskets, artillery, and mortars.[45] The siege concluded after less than a month of continuous attack by the Ottomans, and they took it. The

[42] Woodhead, *History of the Ottoman Campaign*, 64-65.
[43] Naima, *Annals*, 69.
[44] Woodhead, *History of the Ottoman Campaign*, 68-70.
[45] Naima, *Annals*, 72, 74-75.

sultan promised the survivors security, but the "men of the borders and the Tatar military" slaughtered the 5000 remaining troops.[46] While this was a tactical victory for the Ottomans, Naima's account of the lead up and battle suggests that the siege was resource intensive for the Ottomans. In addition, the army had a somewhat substantial number of irregular frontier troops, as well as Tatar auxiliaries, that even the sultan could not keep disciplined. Arming volunteers of the *re'aya* taxpaying class had been prohibited out of fear of upsetting the order of society, yet by the latter half of the sixteenth century it was not feasible to prohibit them from entering military service. Some of these men could later gain a *timar*.[47] The ecological issues and ensuing logistical problems accelerated breaking down the class rigidity idealized by the *askeri*. Declining harvest yields from poor environmental conditions were compounded by the population churn from warfare in East-Central Europe, which meant that there were fewer peasants to work fields or herd animals. The Ottomans also needed the additional men during the Long War, which allowed them to win battles, yet at the same time this did not fill the underlying strategic needs of the empire. Adding more men to the *askeri* placed additional strain on the finances of the empire.

The conflict in Hungary and Danube principalities continued for another ten years, with Michael the Brave continuing his war against the Ottomans until he lost support from his allies. The Hungarians rose up against their overlords from 1604-1606. Ultimately, the Long War proved inconclusive for both the Ottomans and Habsburgs in the immediate military sense. Some fortresses were changed hands, with the Ottomans taking Eger, Esztergom, and Kanisza, while Vác went to the Habsburgs. As far as the long-term implications of the conflict, the chroniclers praise the Sultan taking to the battlefield and playing a more active role. Yet the Ottoman Empire

[46] Naima, *Annals*, 76-77.
[47] Fodor, "Making a Living," 239-241.

still faced significant internal issues that prevented them from projecting power beyond their established borders. Following Lepanto just twenty years prior, an Ottoman official had boasted that the wealth of the empire was such that they could refit the fleet entirely anew with "silver anchors, silken rigging, and satin sails"[48] despite the rout by the Christian navy. There was much less certainty of rebuilding after the long, expensive sieges of the war in Hungary at the turn of the century. The Ottomans had recovered from the preceding two decades of famine by the time of the war, but their logistical problems had not been fully resolved. The length of the fighting and wide operational area of Hungary and the principalities exacerbated the existing challenges, and there was little sign of resolution.[49] The military state machinery of the Ottoman Empire was unraveling from the perspective of men like Mustafa Ali and Naima, who derided their factional enemies and the breakdown of the old order. For the *askeri* and *re'aya that* took advantage in the economic and political changes of the empire, what can be viewd as lawlessness and disorder opened up opportunities to gain wealth and status. For the empire as a whole, however, the crisis of the 1590s demonstrated that the Ottomans faced serious difficulties of provisioning, order, and military cohesion.

[48] Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1982; repr., New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 44.
[49] White, *Climate Rebellion*, 103.

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