

Zoltán Korpás
WARFARE AT THE LIMITS OF EMPIRE:
CHARLES V, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE DEFENCE OF HUNGARY

MOHÁCS 1526–2026
RECONSTRUCTION AND REMEMBRANCE

Series editors:

Pál Fodor and Norbert Pap

WARFARE AT THE LIMITS OF EMPIRE:

CHARLES V, THE MEDITERRANEAN,
AND THE DEFENCE OF HUNGARY

Zoltán Korpás



ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities
Institute of History
Budapest
2026

The publication of this volume was made possible by the support of the Hungarian government, pursuant to Government Decree 1159/2023 (IV. 27.) Section 17(a) and under a licensing and contractual agreement concluded between the National Heritage Institute and the ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities (subject: “Zoltán Korpás: Charles V, Hungary and the Ottoman Expansion [1526–1556]”, reference numbers: NÖRI/1440-3/2025 and 745-3/2026)

Cover illustration: Franz Hogenberg, Die Belagerung von Tunis oder La Goulette durch Karl V. im Jahr 1535. Bibliothèque nationale de France, PET FOL-QE-64; Tabula Hungariae ad quatuor latera..., 1528. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Régi Nyomtatványok Tára, App. M 136.; The Capture of Tunis, 1535. Dirk Coornhert, ca. 1565/1575. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, Inv. 3986.

© ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities, 2026

© Author, 2026

ISBN 978-963-416-539-2

ISSN 2676-895X

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Published by the ELTE Research Centre for the Humanities

Institute of History

Director general: Balázs Balogh

Prepress preparation: RCH Institute of History,

Research Assistance Team; head: Éva Kovács

Cover design: Imre Horváth

Page layout: Andrea Hudecz

Printed in Hungary by Prime Rate Zrt.

for Ildikó, Janka, Diána – for your infinite support

CONTENTS

List of Maps	10
List of Tables	11
Acknowledgements	13
Introduction	17
Charles V in Hungarian Historiography	39
PART 1: POLITICAL HISTORY AND DIPLOMACY	55
Chapter 1: Hungary – a Difficult Inheritance (1490–1526)	57
The Habsburgs, the Jagiellons and Corvinus: Three Competing Dynasties	57
Final Countdown – Ottoman Military Power and Diplomatic Isolation	64
David versus Goliath – A Comparison of Financial and Military Capabilities	79
Chapter 2: The Battle of Mohács and Charles V (1526–1527)	85
The News about the Defeat in the Imperial Court	85
The Castilian State Council on the Battle of Mohács	92
Royal Letters to the Castilian Estates and Their Responses	100
Cortes of Valladolid	106
The Emergence of the Domestic Wars	110
The Impact of the Castilian Ducats on the Struggle for the Crown of St Stephen	115

Chapter 3: War or Peace? (1527–1529)	125
John I's Search for an Alliance in Christian Europe	125
Diplomatic Missions to the Sublime Porte	131
Rising Concerns – Ferdinand's Expansion in Hungary and its Consequences	135
The Peace of Cambrai and Hungary, 1529	143
Siege of Vienna, 1529	146
Chapter 4: Between the Campaigns against Vienna (1529–1532)	157
The Excommunication of John I and the Mission of István Brodarics to the Papal Court	157
Changes in Hungarian Politics and the Position of the Spanish Estates ...	159
Imperial Support during and after the Siege of Vienna (1529)	162
Golden Pesos from the Americas in the Fight against Ottoman Expansion in Hungary	168
Marquis del Vasto's Infantry Designated for Service in Hungary	172
Diets Without the Kings and the Negotiations between the Two Monarchs	176
John I's Embassy in Portugal and the Defence of Vienna	191
Ottoman Campaign against Vienna, 1532	195
Fiscal-military Aspects of the Imperial Army	197
Operations in the Field: The Imperial Commissioners in Hungary and the Ottoman Advance	205
Chapter 5: Opportunities for Convivence – Years of Negotiations (1532–1538)	217
Restarting Talks – The Mission of Schepper and Weeze in Hungary ...	217
The Route to the Crown of Hungary Leads through the Sublime Porte	220
Várád, Nice and Toledo – The European Context of the Hungarian Throne Wars	232
The Holy League of 1538 and Hungary – Grandiose Plans	251
Preveza and Castelnuovo – The Execution of the Holy League's Plans	258

The Treaty of Várad in Imperial Diplomacy and Its Ratification at Toledo	261
Chapter 6: Buda – Algiers – Buda (1541–1542)	273
Interconnections in the Broader Conflict – Buda and Algiers (1541–1542)	273
Chapter 7: Reconciliation at Any Cost (1542–1547)	291
From Buda to the Peace of Edirne (1542–1547)	291
Chapter 8: The Twilight of the Universal Monarchy and the Anti-Ottoman Fronts	311
The Twilight of the Universal Monarchy (1547–1551)	311
The Separation of the Hungarian and Mediterranean Anti-Ottoman Fronts (1551–1553)	326
PART 2: MILITARY HISTORY AND SPANISH OLD TERCIOS IN HUNGARY	343
Chapter 9: Spanish Old Tercios in Hungary (1526–1556)	345
An Evaluation of Charles V's Contributions to the Defence of Hungary	345
Spaniards at Ferdinand I's Court	351
The Deployment and Composition of Spanish Troops in Hungary	356
Spanish Old Tercios Fighting in the Hungarian Theatre of War	363
Spanish Soldiers in the Hungarian Castles and Battlefields	373
The Mutiny of the First Old Tercio of Naples in Hungary, 1553	402
The Convivence between the Spanish Soldiers and the Hungarians	409
<i>Pecunia nervus belli</i> – Financing the Spanish Tercios in Hungary	418
Overlaps in Personnel between the Two Wings of the Anti-Ottoman Struggle	427
Chapter 10: List of Spaniards in Hungary (1526–1556)	445
Summary	445
List of Spaniards in Hungary (1526–1556)	446
Bibliography	517
Index of Personal Names	545
Index of Place Names	561

LIST OF MAPS

General map: Central Europe and the Mediterranean in the First Half of the 16th century	flyleaf, front & rear
Map 1: Hungary as Seen from the Kingdom of Castile	53
Map 2: Ottoman–Hungarian Wars, 1490–1526.	66
Map 3: Ottoman Conquests in Hungary, 1521–1556.	87
Map 4: The 1529 Campaign against Vienna and Civil War in Hungary	155
Map 5: The 1532 Campaign against Vienna.	204
Map 6: The Battle of Preveza Based on Guilmartin’s Work, 23–27 September 1538	271
Map 7: The Siege of Buda, 1541	289
Map 8: Spanish Tercios in Hungary, 1529–1545	357
Map 9: Spanish Tercios in Hungary, 1549–1553	443

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Events in Hungary and in the Mediterranean, 1526–1556	30
Table 2: Territorial Comparison of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire	80
Table 3: Revenues of Hungary.	80
Table 4: Revenues of the Ottoman Empire	82
Table 5: Donations (<i>cédula de los depósitos</i>)	103
Table 6: Donations Offered by Subjects of the Castilian Crown, and Presumably Collected	104

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A defining characteristic of my professional journey as a historian has been its parallel development alongside a career in the business sector, specifically in human resources consulting – a path I have pursued since my doctoral studies. Both vocations – historical scholarship and business consultancy – have demanded full commitment; neither could be approached with partial dedication. This dual trajectory is less a testament to personal stamina than to the unwavering support, tolerance, and encouragement I have received from those closest to me. Foremost among them are my beloved wife, Ildikó, and our daughters, Janka and Diána, whose infinite patience and understanding allowed me to devote time and energy to historical inquiry, even at the expense of shared moments.

The memory of my father, Dr. László Korpás DSc, remains a profound source of inspiration. A distinguished geologist-cartographer and, in the truest sense, a polyhistor, he followed my early steps as a historian until his passing in 2007. Though his expertise lay in the natural sciences, his intellectual breadth and critical acumen often illuminated inconsistencies in my work and prompted deeper reflection.

During the editing of this book, I suffered the loss of my mother, Dr. Margit Hódi, a distinguished paleontologist. Together with my father, she devoted her professional life to the Hungarian Geological Institute, where they worked side by side for decades. The values they imparted – intellectual rigour, scientific curiosity, and an unwavering openness toward people and ideas – have profoundly shaped my worldview. Their legacy continues to serve as a moral compass in both my scholarly and personal life.

My formation as a historian was shaped by exceptional educators throughout my primary, secondary, and university years. I recall with particular fondness my doctoral advisor, Ágnes R. Várkonyi (†2014), whose mentorship was foundational. I began my doctoral studies in 1996 alongside András Giró-Szász, and although I ultimately completed my dissertation on the Hungarian policy of Charles V independently in 2003 – after András transitioned into political science and later

public service – our joint lectures, collaborative research in Madrid, and shared dialogues with Professor Várkonyi were formative experiences.

It remains something of a personal miracle that I have continued to receive professional recognition despite existing largely outside institutional frameworks. For over two decades, I have operated as a freelance historian embedded in the business world – an identity that defies conventional academic categorization. Yet, colleagues in both Hungarian and international historiography have not only acknowledged my work but have actively encouraged me to persevere. Their generosity ensured that I never felt like an outsider and that my contributions were integrated into mainstream scholarly discourse. I am deeply indebted to them.

I am profoundly grateful to the colleagues whose support has shaped my scholarly path in essential ways. Above all, I owe special thanks to the Ottomanist Pál Fodor, former Director General of the Research Centre for the Humanities at the ELTE University. His intellectual precision and critical perspective were invaluable during my doctoral defence, and over the years, he has reviewed several of my studies with extraordinary patience and care. This volume, too, could not have come to light without his unwavering support and scholarly friendship, for which I am deeply thankful. I also warmly acknowledge the encouragement and friendship of János B. Szabó, a distinguished military historian; István Kenyeres, Director General of the Budapest City Archives and a leading expert in early modern governance and economic history; Tibor Martí and Tibor Monostori, fellow Hispanists whose insights have enriched my work; and Géza Pálffy, an internationally recognized authority on the Habsburg period, whose mentorship and collaboration have been of lasting significance.

I also warmly acknowledge the support of János Poór, former head of the Department of Early Modern History at Eötvös Loránd University, who generously enabled me to teach there for many years. Together with András Gerő (†2023) and Géza Pálffy, he played a pivotal role in the Habsburg Foundation in Hungary, whose scholarly workshops were instrumental in my development. I am equally grateful to Gábor Ágoston and István Hiller, whose seminars at ELTE and the doctoral school were intellectually enriching. Although Gábor, well-known Ottomanist, later joined Georgetown University in the United States, our professional friendship has endured. I also thank Teréz Oborni, a former mentor, whose work on Transylvanian history intersected meaningfully with my own research on Charles V.

My research in Spain was greatly enriched by the support of Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro, Research Professor at the CSIC, who has encouraged my work since the 2003 conference in Alcalá de Henares commemorating the 500th anniversary of Ferdinand I's birth. He graciously authored the foreword to my 2008 Hungarian-language monograph, and our exchanges at international conferences throughout the 2010s were invaluable. I am also indebted to Professors Enrique Martínez Ruiz and Magdalena de Pazzis Pi Corrales of the Complutense University of Madrid for including me in their military history conferences and facilitating my engagement with the Spanish scholarly community. Isabel Aguirre Landa, with

her warmth and attentiveness, supported my archival work in the General Archive of Simancas. I am especially grateful to Roberto Quirós Rosado and Rubén González Cuerva for their assistance in publishing my studies in Spanish, also to Carlos Valenzuela Cordero and Juan Luis Sánchez for their insights into the activities of the Spanish tercios in Hungary.

In the business sphere, I owe a special debt of gratitude to András Sághy – once my superior, now a family friend and professional peer. Through his example and the high standards of Kienbaum Executive Consultants, I learned that business excellence can – and should – coexist with intellectual integrity and humanism.

Finally, I extend heartfelt thanks to the many individuals – colleagues, friends, and family – whose names do not appear here but whose presence has been essential. They have accepted the idiosyncrasies of a historian navigating the business world, and they have tolerated the linguistic dissonances that sometimes emerged from my dual professional identity. Their patience, encouragement, and editorial guidance have helped me bridge these worlds. Though unnamed, they remain ever present in my thoughts and gratitude.

Dunakeszi, 10 November 2025

INTRODUCTION

LECTORI SALUTEM!

Although his royal titles included “King of Hungary, Croatia and Dalmatia”, and his great coat of arms displayed the red-silver stripes of the Kingdom of Hungary beside the double cross of Jerusalem, Emperor Charles V of Habsburg (Ghent, 24 February 1500 – Yuste, 21 September 1558) was never, in fact, king of Hungary, nor did he ever set foot within the realm. Yet, as the elder brother of Ferdinand I of Habsburg (Alcalá de Henares, 10 March 1503 – Vienna, 25 July 1564), king of Hungary and Bohemia and later Holy Roman Emperor, Charles exerted a considerable – if often indirect – influence upon the history of the Hungarian Kingdom. Many historians over the past century and a half, in Hungary as well as in Europe more broadly, have tended to argue schematically that Charles V abandoned both Ferdinand I and the Hungarians in their existential struggle against an expanding Ottoman Empire. The present study seeks to challenge that reductionist view, offering instead a more nuanced interpretation that situates Hungary’s fortunes within the wider framework of Charles’s intricate dynastic and imperial system. When referring, therefore, to the significant imperial influence upon Hungarian affairs in the decades following 1526, it is essential to clarify the methodological premise underlying this inquiry. Earlier historiography has largely constructed the image of Charles V as a passive or indifferent actor in Hungarian matters on the basis of family and diplomatic correspondence, often highlighting selected statements that appear to convey detachment, even cynicism, towards the Hungarians’ anti-Ottoman struggles. In some instances, such texts were deliberately misinterpreted – occasionally for ideological purposes. More commonly, however, the problem lay in the historian’s own subjectivity: correspondence was analysed without a fuller examination of the contextual data that might elucidate its intent and implications. Consequently, a distorted picture emerged, in which Charles’s repeated injunctions to Ferdinand to proceed with caution and adopt a defensive posture vis-à-vis the Ottomans were taken as proof of abandonment. In reality, the Emperor’s diplomatic, financial, and military contributions were substantial, though long neglected in both Western and Hungarian historiography until the early twenty-first century. The methodological innovation of this study lies in its integration of these dimensions – diplomatic,

military, financial, and political – demonstrating that Charles V's support, both direct and indirect, was crucial to Ferdinand's consolidation of power in Hungary against so formidable an adversary as the Ottoman Empire. In so doing, the Emperor played an active role in ensuring the very survival of the Kingdom of Hungary in its long and arduous contest with the Sublime Porte.

The decades immediately following the Battle of Mohács (29 August 1526) were arguably the most critical for the preservation of the Kingdom of Hungary during the century and a half of Ottoman expansion, for in the aftermath of that calamity – marked by the destruction of the royal army, the collapse of central authority, and the onset of civil war – the realm was left virtually defenceless before Ottoman ascendancy. In these tragic circumstances, it proved particularly fortuitous that Sultan Suleiman I failed to exploit the immense strategic advantage he had gained in the years after Mohács. At moments when the Ottomans might easily have occupied the entire kingdom, the sultan's inaction allowed his adversaries, the Habsburgs, precious time to consolidate their power in Hungary. One may, indeed, express a certain retrospective "gratitude" to the Habsburg Empire for a single achievement of paramount historical consequence: between 1526 and 1918, it ensured that the Kingdom of Hungary – struggling for survival on the shifting frontier between Christendom and Islam – remained an integral part of Europe. Yet this relationship was far from one-sided. The Habsburgs themselves derived immense benefit from their association with Hungary, for the emergence of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Danube region would have been inconceivable without the political, military, economic, and legitimizing weight of the Hungarian crown lands, which comprised between a third and a half of the monarchy's total extent. During those precarious early decades, Ferdinand I and his brother Charles V were instrumental in securing this mutual consolidation, a foundational success that shaped the long-term endurance of both the Hungarian Kingdom and the Habsburg imperial order.

A major factor in shaping the negative historiographical perception of Charles V has been the tendency, from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards, for scholars to judge the emperor's policy towards Hungary and the Ottoman Empire primarily through the lens of diplomatic and familial correspondence. Rarely have they undertaken the necessary research to ascertain what financial, military, or diplomatic measures were actually pursued (or indeed neglected) behind the scenes. The extent to which certain historians have written of the emperor's supposed indifference towards his brother, and by extension towards the Kingdom of Hungary, often reveals expectations projected retrospectively from modern sensibilities onto the sixteenth century. This invites a legitimate question: what form of support could reasonably be deemed appropriate or realistic from a historian's retrospective vantage point? Considering the political dynamics of the early sixteenth century, would it truly have been plausible to expect Christendom to unite in expelling the Ottomans from Hungarian territory? Equally, can one demand that Charles V – though ruler of a vast and wealthy empire – should have diverted greater resources to a major reconquest campaign in Hungary, when he was simultaneously constrained by formidable pressures

from the Ottomans, the Protestants, and the French, and beset by chronic fiscal and logistical limitations? Within such a context, might not a policy of strategic restraint, aimed at safeguarding Habsburg dynastic interests through a defensive posture in Hungary, appear both rational and necessary? Moreover, can imperial support for such a defensive policy truly be dismissed as negligible, when Ferdinand of Habsburg ultimately succeeded in laying the institutional foundations of a Danubian monarchy that not only withstood the Ottoman advance but endured until 1918? Finally, would Ferdinand I – hampered by limited resources – have been capable of establishing a Habsburg Monarchy resilient to Ottoman power without the financial, political, and moral support of his brother, the Emperor Charles V?

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and significance of the support provided by Emperor Charles V to the Kingdom of Hungary in its struggle against the Ottoman Empire, and to assess the extent to which that support contributed to the consolidation of Habsburg sovereignty within the realm. It seeks, in particular, to explain how the Kingdom of Hungary managed to endure through the most perilous years of its conflict with the Ottomans, when, in the decades immediately following 1526, it stood on the brink of full annexation by the mighty empire of Sultan Suleiman.

THE OTTOMAN EXPANSION AS A LARGE-SCALE CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIAN EUROPE

The accurate assessment of Charles V's policy in Hungary has also been hindered by shifts in geopolitical perspective. In the sixteenth century, the emperor ruled a composite imperial structure encompassing roughly a quarter of the entire territory of contemporary Christian Europe, within which the management of financial, military, and diplomatic resources often transcended the geographical boundaries of individual kingdoms and principalities, assuming a distinctly supranational character. By this is meant that the emperor and his close circle of confidants – principally members of the Council of State – were able, in formulating specific political decisions, to take into account the needs and possibilities of vast and distant territories, from which they sought to draw resources on an empire-wide scale. Such resources might be secured through complex systems of credit, negotiations with estates and provincial assemblies, the mobilization of royal treasuries, or even the exploitation of colonial revenues. In many cases, the decisive factor was the immediate availability of funds, while implementation remained highly intricate, requiring sustained coordination and negotiation with the estates and institutions of the various kingdoms and provinces. One may recall, for example, the protracted deliberations with the Castilian cortes over taxation and subsidies; the often heated disputes with the governors of the Low Countries – Margaret of Austria and later Mary of Hungary – concerning financial and military support; or the recurrent loan negotiations with the great banking houses of Genoa, Augsburg, and elsewhere. Why, one might ask, is this broader

framework so essential? Because the most consequential and indeed the only coherent aspect of Charles V's policy in Hungary was his engagement in the struggle against Ottoman expansion – regarding which the rival king, John I Szapolyai, was perceived as little more than an Ottoman client. Yet that struggle cannot be understood solely as a continental enterprise: it was interwoven by countless threads with the European and Mediterranean theatres and, in rare and exceptional cases, even with the colonial affairs of the Habsburg monarchy, particularly around 1530, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. The Ottoman advance thus constituted a central element of the wider Habsburg dynastic grand strategy, one which frequently took precedence over, or conversely suffered disadvantage in relation to, other pressing concerns – whether the Protestant challenge within the empire, the rivalry with the French Crown, or the maintenance of Habsburg predominance in Italy. At the same time, it could also conflict with the more immediate interests of particular estates and provinces. A telling example is provided by the Castilian estates, who resisted imperial financial demands by insisting that His Majesty ought to defend Castilian interests against the Ottomans not in Central Europe, but in North Africa. This supranational dimension is a crucial factor which scholars operating within the national frameworks and intellectual boundaries of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have too often underestimated when interpreting Charles V's life and political system through the lens of modern, local realities.

The Habsburg Empire of Charles V's time was the first truly global empire in world history.¹ Within such a vast polity, issues as ostensibly local as the Ottoman invasion of the Kingdom of Hungary could never remain confined to a regional context. It is at this point that we must again return to the question of geopolitical perspective. The national historiographies that developed over the past century and a half – each framed by its own linguistic and territorial boundaries – have tended to assess the historical achievements of Charles V's empire not from a supranational but, in many instances, from a narrowly local point of view. From this vantage, the emperor's anti-Ottoman activity appeared to have been concentrated primarily in the Mediterranean, with scholarly reconstructions focusing on maritime campaigns and only rarely addressing events on the continental front. It was as though the Hungarian theatre of war had been forgotten, or regarded as the exclusive responsibility of Ferdinand I. Yet sixteenth-century contemporaries inhabited a different reality. For them – as may be discerned, for example, in contemporary chronicles and in certain dramatic works of the Spanish Golden Age – the Ottoman threat extended along the entire southern frontier of Christian Europe, from the eastern mainland to the southwestern Mediterranean, spanning thousands of miles and crossing diverse political and cultural frontiers. From the Spanish presidios of North Africa, through the Andalusian and Valencian coasts, the Balearic settlements ravaged

1 Agustín Jiménez Moreno, 'El primer imperio mundial de la Historia. La monarquía de España en los siglos modernos (1492–1796)', in Ricardo Martín de la Guardia – Guillermo A. Pérez Sánchez (eds.), *España en la era global (1492–1898)*. Madrid, 2017, 13–90.

by Barbary corsairs, the Christian galley squadrons based in Genoa, the Sicilian and Neapolitan viceroyalties, and the stronghold of the Knights of Malta, the line of resistance reached along the Adriatic littoral to the Croatian–Slavonian borderlands of the Kingdom of Hungary, and thence into its interior provinces, including Transylvania and the two Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. A symbolic illustration may be found in the seemingly futile sacrifice of the Spanish *tercio* commanded by *Maestre de campo* Francisco de Sarmiento in 1538–1539, during the defence of the fortress of Castelnuovo (today Herceg Novi, Montenegro), which Spanish historiography has long celebrated as an emblem of national heroism. Yet why was one of the few permanent, costly, and early professional units expended so recklessly? The broader strategic context has yet to be fully explored: how this episode formed part of a wider plan of operations, and how it was linked to another front in the struggle against the Ottomans. At precisely that time, only a few hundred kilometres to the north, Hungarian magnates loyal respectively to John I Szapolyai and Ferdinand I – together with envoys of Charles V – were negotiating the Peace of Várad (today Oradea,² 24 February 1538, coincidentally the emperor's birthday) and the terms for uniting the two Christian-ruled portions of the Hungarian realm: Transylvania under John I Szapolyai and Royal Hungary under Habsburg rule. These discussions likewise addressed the coordination of anti-Ottoman efforts in accordance with the plans of the Holy League of 1538. While the wider context will be examined in detail later, these examples already suggest the deep interconnections between the Mediterranean and Central European theatres of war. Bridging this gap serves a dual purpose: Western European scholarship remains largely Mediterranean in focus, with scant attention to Hungarian affairs, whereas Hungarian and other Central European historiographies, conversely, have tended to concentrate on the continental struggle, seldom recognizing the extent to which events in the Mediterranean affected developments in Hungary. Of particular significance is the Ottomanist perspective: few modern studies have attempted to interpret Ottoman expansionism in an integrated manner that encompasses the campaigns in the Mediterranean, the conflicts in Central Europe, the wars against the Safavids in Persia, and even the Portuguese expansion in India – arenas of engagement too often studied in isolation. Moreover, Ottomanist scholarship itself frequently reflects the linguistic and institutional orientations of its practitioners: those versed in Spanish or Italian tend to emphasize the Mediterranean, relegating Central Europe to the periphery, while scholars familiar with German, Hungarian, or Slavic sources more often privilege the Central European dimension.

Nevertheless, in recent decades Hungarian historiography – and indeed that of Central Europe as a whole – has undergone a marked transformation. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 replaced the imperial perspective with that of a constellation of smaller nation-states, and with it the

2 In the case of historical toponyms and personal names pertaining to the Kingdom of Hungary, the Hungarian forms are preferentially employed, while any non-Hungarian equivalents are indicated in the name and place index at the end of the volume.

interpretative framework of historical writing was profoundly altered. A historiography driven by national self-assertion gradually took shape, often seeking retrospective justification for the emerging national narratives. The communist regimes of 1945–1990 further entrenched this tendency, fostering ideologically inflected and inward-looking scholarship that elevated the national ethos above comparative analysis. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the historiographies of the Central European nations functioned as isolated entities – pieces of a fragmented puzzle that rarely interacted. Yet in the past few decades, these traditions have become increasingly interconnected and mutually illuminating. A genuine paradigm shift has taken place: early modern history is now approached in a broader European frame, enriched by the collaborative efforts of Czech, Polish, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Croatian, Serbian, Austrian, and German scholars, among others. Current debates focus on fundamental questions that challenge long-standing assumptions. What, for instance, was the true historical performance of the Jagiellon dynasty before 1526? Were the Bohemian-Hungarian kings Vladislaus II and Louis II genuinely as ineffectual as nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography has often portrayed them? And did the rule of Ferdinand I and his successors truly usher in what was later denounced – particularly between 1945 and 1990 in Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Belgrade, Zagreb, and Bucharest – as a “prison of nations”? Or, conversely, was the dynastic conglomerate fashioned by the Habsburgs in fact the only viable framework through which the Kingdom of Hungary could preserve its political and cultural existence in the face of Ottoman expansion?

The foregoing discussion, though extensive, serves to highlight one of the central aims of this study: to connect the distant regions of the anti-Ottoman struggle between 1526 and 1556 within a transnational framework. At the core of this supranational perspective lies the recognition that the Habsburgs – and, in geostrategic terms, one of their principal adversaries, the Valois monarchy of France, as well as, to a lesser extent, the Republic of Venice – occupied a uniquely global position within Christian Europe. They were among the few powers capable of conceiving and managing the anti-Ottoman contest in comprehensive, interconnected arcs extending from the Maghreb to Transylvania. I am, of course, aware that I cannot entirely transcend my own national context: ultimately, this study seeks to situate Hungarian history within the broader currents of European development. Yet it is perhaps precisely in this attempt that its distinctive value may lie. By viewing Hungarian affairs through a transnational and comparative lens, one may discern patterns and connections that illuminate the complexity and multifaceted nature of the imperial conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Western Christendom in the early modern period.

OTTOMAN EXPANSION AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE KINGDOM OF HUNGARY: A CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Kingdom of Hungary was engaged in a protracted struggle for survival against the Ottoman conquest. This confrontation shaped the course of Hungarian history decisively and brought about transformations that remain discernible today in the demography, national development, and interethnic relations of the peoples of the Carpathian Basin. It is therefore no exaggeration to state that the decades following 1526 proved crucial not only for the Hungarians but also for the other nations of the region. To offer a single illustration: around 1500, the population of the Kingdom of Hungary was approximately 3.5–4 million – roughly equivalent to that of the Kingdom of Castile, which possessed a similar territorial extent. Yet after the Ottoman occupation and the subsequent series of wars – including Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703–1711) and the Habsburg–Ottoman conflicts of 1716–1718 and 1735–1739 – the population of the Hungarian Kingdom, following nearly two centuries of devastation, again stood at about 3.5–4 million. Certain scholars even estimate that, immediately after the cessation of the War of Independence in 1711, the figure may have fallen as low as 3–3.3 million. This apparent stagnation, however, conceals a far more complex demographic reality. Under the continuous strain of warfare during the Ottoman period, the population grew slowly but steadily until the turn of the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the Long Turkish War (1593–1606), the wars of reconquest (1683–1699), and numerous smaller conflicts produced renewed and severe depopulation. Only after the first third of the eighteenth century did recovery begin in earnest, with the population reaching some 8.5 million by around 1790. It was, however, the Hungarians inhabiting the central and southern regions – those most exposed to constant military operations – who suffered the heaviest demographic losses. Population growth in the following decades was driven not solely by natural increase but also by extensive internal and external migration, processes that radically altered the ethnic composition of the kingdom to the detriment of the Hungarian element.³

The Ottoman threat had cast an ever-lengthening shadow over the Kingdom of Hungary since the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg (1368–1437), marking the beginning of a continuous and decades-long struggle. The distinguished military achievements of John Hunyadi (1407–1456) – above all the defence of Belgrade (Nándorfehérvár in Hungarian) in 1456 – demonstrated that, following

³ For recent comparative data on the European kingdoms and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern age, see János B. Szabó – Pál Fodor (eds.) *On the Verge of a New Era: The Armies of Europe at the Time of the Battle of Mohács*. (Mohács 1526–2026: Reconstruction and Remembrance) Budapest, 2021. On the army of the Kingdom of Hungary, see János B. Szabó, 'The Military Organization and Army of the Kingdom of Hungary (1490–1526)', in B. Szabó–Fodor (eds.), *On the Verge of a New Era*, 147–172.

the fall of Byzantium in 1453,⁴ the Kingdom of Hungary had become one of the principal opponents of the Sublime Porte. By the early decades of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman menace had grown increasingly intolerable. The southern frontier zones of the kingdom, exposed to constant pressure, were by the 1520s gradually collapsing under sustained Ottoman attacks. At the same time, during these first decades of the sixteenth century, Ottoman expansion against the Christian world extended far beyond the Hungarian theatre. The Ottoman advance also affected Poland, Moldavia, and Wallachia – regions whose struggles lie beyond the scope of this volume – as well as the Mediterranean basin and North Africa, where the two great civilizations of the age confronted each other on multiple fronts.⁵

By the first decades of the sixteenth century, the conquering Ottoman Empire had encircled Western Christendom both by land and by sea. The link between the Hungarian military frontier and the Mediterranean lay in the confrontation of two great powers: the Habsburg dynasty and the Ottoman Empire. It has often been asserted that the conflict between Sultan Suleiman and Emperor Charles V was primarily a clash of spheres of influence rather than a genuine imperial confrontation.⁶ Yet such an interpretation seems untenable. In reality, there existed a profound and multifaceted imperial rivalry between the two foremost rulers of the age, extending across several frontiers. From the perspective of this rivalry, the reigns of the Habsburg brothers, Charles V and Ferdinand I, cannot be sharply divided. As the head of the dynasty, Charles V occupied a central position within the Habsburg structure, and the brothers maintained a close – if occasionally strained – collaboration. They remained in continuous consultation over the struggle against the Ottomans; and although the emperor's direct activity was concentrated in the Mediterranean, he followed the events on the Hungarian front with consistent attention and concern.⁷

4 About the defense of Belgrade, see Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács. A History of Ottoman–Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 63.) Leiden, Boston, 2018, 174–187.

5 Excellent works addressing the broader Ottoman context include Gábor Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and its Wars in Europe*. Oxford, 2022; see in particular the Ottoman–Hungarian conflicts before 1526 on pp. 61–67, 144–158. See also Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire: The Ottomans in Central Europe – A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*. Budapest, 2016². For more on the Ottoman expansion in the Mediterranean and North Africa, see Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra – Mercedes García Arenal, *Los españoles y el Norte de África, siglos XV–XVIII*. Madrid, 1992; Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra, 'Las guerras de Carlos V en el Mediterráneo', in César Chaparro Gómez – María Martínez de Codes (eds.), *Carlos V y el mar: El viaje de circunnavegación de Magallanes – Elcano y la era de las especias*. Yuste, 2021, 53–78; Palmira Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*. New York, 1994. Also the still relevant volumes by Fernand Braudel, *El Mediterráneo y el mundo mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II*. Ciudad de México, Madrid, 1976; in Hungarian: Fernand Braudel, *A Földközi-tenger és a mediterrán világ II. Fülöp korában*, 3 vols. Budapest, 1996.

6 The cited works by Bunes Ibarra from 2002 and 2021 consistently reflect this view.

7 On the impact of the family disputes on Hungary and the Ottoman expansion, see Zoltán Korpás, 'Quarrelling Brothers. The Fraternal Relationship of Charles V and Ferdinand I and their Attitudes towards Hungary', in Tibor Marti – Roberto Quirós Rosado (eds.), *Eagles Looking East and West*:

Although Ferdinand I ruled his realms and provinces as a sovereign monarch, his dynastic dependence upon his brother, Charles V – and, one should add, their mutual interdependence – was so considerable that, without imperial support, Ferdinand would have faced grave difficulties in defending not only the Kingdom of Hungary but even the city of Vienna, the gateway to the Holy Roman Empire, against the advancing Ottoman power. It was the combined strength of the Habsburg dynasty that enabled resistance to this strategic menace. Ferdinand's abilities and achievements as a ruler are beyond question: under his reign were laid the institutional, administrative, financial, and military foundations of the Danubian Habsburg Monarchy which, despite the severe territorial losses in Hungary, rendered the kingdom under Habsburg rule ultimately resilient to Ottoman conquest. Yet it required many decades before the initial Ottoman superiority was finally counterbalanced, and only in the latter half of the seventeenth century did the equilibrium of power begin to shift, making possible the reconquest of the central territories occupied by the Ottomans. Even so, Ferdinand's accomplishments in consolidating his new possessions and sustaining the struggle against the Ottoman Empire are scarcely conceivable without the continuous and substantial support of Charles V.

THE INTERCONNECTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANTI-OTTOMAN FRONTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND IN HUNGARY

As noted earlier, the confrontation between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires in the Mediterranean cannot be regarded merely as a “clash of interests” in the narrow sense. Between 1520 and 1571 the frequency, scale, and cost of hostilities between the Ottoman and Christian worlds reached a level unmatched in later phases of the early modern era. One need only recall the major engagements – Rhodes, Mohács, Vienna, Coron, Patras, Tunis, Preveza, Castelnovo, Buda, Algiers, Esztergom, Székesfehérvár (Alba Regia), Temesvár, Eger, Djerba, Malta, Szigetvár, Cyprus, and Lepanto – to appreciate the magnitude of the conflict. These costly sieges and naval battles demonstrate unmistakably that both empires were mobilizing immense resources in their struggle for supremacy. Yet Mediterranean warfare had inherent limitations when compared with the Ottoman expansion on land: unlike the continental campaigns in Hungary, the naval confrontations of the period could not yield durable territorial gains. This distinction may explain a certain interpretative bias in some works, in which maritime operations, despite their enormous expense, appear less consequential than the spectacular land conquests. From this perspective it was only a short step to the mistaken conclusion that the spheres of interest of Charles V and Sultan Suleiman merely overlapped, and that the emperor's anti-Ottoman activity was limited, ineffectual, or simply lacking.

Dynasty, Ritual and Representation in Habsburg Hungary and Spain. (Habsburg Worlds, 4.) Turnhout, 2021, 181–196.

If we seek to define what constituted success in this context, it is a clear fact that during the first half of the sixteenth century the Ottoman expansion proved more successful both on the Hungarian front and in the Mediterranean. As already mentioned, Sultan Suleiman won a “perfect victory” over the Kingdom of Hungary on 29 August 1526. In the years that followed, the complete annexation of the kingdom by the Ottoman Empire seemed inevitable, and two major campaigns were even directed against Vienna, the gateway to the Holy Roman Empire (1529 and 1532). Three costly, large-scale invasions of Christian Europe within a mere six years testify to the formidable military and economic superiority of the Ottoman state at that time. In this light, the mere survival of the Kingdom of Hungary, and the gradual consolidation of Habsburg authority in its northern and western regions, including Slavonia and Croatia too, may be attributed primarily to a strategic misjudgement on Suleiman’s part. Instead of occupying the entire, defenceless realm in the aftermath of Mohács, he allowed the emergence of John I Szapolyai as a vassal ruler – militarily insignificant in comparison to the Ottomans, yet capable of competing with Ferdinand I for the crown of Saint Stephen. Although both Ferdinand and John Szapolyai appeared weak, from a historical perspective the Ottoman preference for indirect rule through a vassal rather than outright conquest must be regarded as a serious strategic error. The fifteen years that elapsed before the bloodless occupation of Buda, on 29 August 1541 (the very anniversary of the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 and Mohács battle in 1526), represented a squandered strategic advantage for the Ottomans.⁸ While the internal war between Ferdinand and John Szapolyai had tragic consequences during this period, it was equally crucial for the survival of the Hungarian nation that Ferdinand was thereby afforded a decade and a half in which to establish a stable administration and organize the defence of his new realm.⁹

During these same decades, the Ottoman Empire stood as the predominant power in the Mediterranean. Its naval operations were concentrated along the Christian coasts in the west, yet by the latter half of the century – after the siege of Malta in 1565 and the Christian victory at Lepanto in 1571 – a certain equilibrium gradually emerged between the Ottomans and the Spanish Habsburgs. By the century’s end, the anti-Ottoman front in the Mediterranean had lost much of its former significance, and the scale of imperial naval rivalry between the two powers had visibly declined. Nevertheless, the Christian maritime campaigns of earlier decades, undertaken under the aegis of Charles V, while seldom producing enduring gains, frequently served to relieve Ottoman and North African pressure on the Maghreb and the western Mediterranean coasts for varying periods. It should also be recalled that the Ottoman galley fleets, commanded by successive

8 On Ottoman expansionism, see Pál Fodor, *Magyarország és a török hódítás*. Budapest, 1991; Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire*.

9 See Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*. (CHSP Hungarian Studies Series, 18; East European Monographs, 735.) Boulder, Col., Wayne, NJ., 2009. In Hungarian, Géza Pálffy, *A Magyar Királyság és a Habsburg Birodalom a 16. században*. Budapest, 2010; see further Géza Pálffy, *Hungary between Two Empires, 1526–1711*. (Studies in Hungarian History) Bloomington, 2021.

kapudan pashas, on several occasions cooperated effectively with French forces: during the Habsburg–Valois Wars (notably in 1542–1544 and the early 1550s) they launched raids against the Italian and Spanish littorals and the Balearic Islands.

The eastern Mediterranean basin nevertheless remained an Ottoman hinterland. Major imperial expeditions were concentrated in the Adriatic and the western basin, led by the Genoese admiral Andrea Doria in imperial service – most notably at Patras and Coron in 1532, during the Holy League campaigns of 1538 at Preveza and Castelnuevo, and in the expeditions to Tunis (1535) and Algiers (1541). Only during the Ottoman–Venetian War of 1570–1573 – at the time of the Ottoman siege of Cyprus and the Battle of Lepanto – was Western Christendom able to dispatch a significant fleet into the Aegean, which had long been regarded as an Ottoman “inland sea”. The period was not defined solely by these major naval engagements: Ottoman and Maghreb piracy, continual raiding, and smaller-scale operations formed a constant element of Mediterranean life, bringing repeated plunder, destruction, and the capture of coastal settlements in Italy and Spain, together with their inhabitants.¹⁰

It is evident that neither the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Hungary nor those living along the Mediterranean littoral perceived the relentless warfare that devastated central Hungary or the Ottoman raids that ravaged the Italian and Spanish coasts as a mere friction between “imperial spheres of interest”. The violence was far too immediate and destructive for such abstractions. Although the Ottoman attacks on the Italian and Spanish shores were not conducted on the same scale as those in Hungary, they were nonetheless serious and sustained. Ottoman strategy demonstrably contemplated the invasion and possible conquest of Italian territories. The threat was tangible across the Mediterranean: the narrow Adriatic, easily traversed from the Albanian coast, offered a direct route into the Italian peninsula. As early as 1480, the forces of Mehmed II successfully captured Otranto and held it for nearly a year as a bridgehead on Italian soil. In the first half of the sixteenth century, reports again circulated of Ottoman designs to establish a permanent foothold in Italy. Suleiman’s campaign of 1537 against Corfu near the Albanian coast, threatened Habsburg possessions in southern Italy; a small Ottoman raiding force even landed in Apulia, while Sicily and Ancona suffered attacks. Similarly, the Ottoman assault on Malta in 1565 – the key island situated at the heart of the Mediterranean and in close proximity to Sicily and the Italian mainland – was perceived as a major geostrategic menace.

It is no coincidence that the government of Philip II reacted with remarkable speed, dispatching Spanish and Italian forces to secure the successful relief of Malta. An Ottoman occupation of the island would have had incalculable consequences for the Habsburg dominions in Italy. In this light, the widespread assumption that the spheres of interest of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires in

10 See Braudel, *A Földközi-tenger*; Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*. Cambridge, 1971; Bunes Ibarra–García Arenal, *Los españoles y el Norte*; Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier*. Chicago, London, 1978.

the Mediterranean merely overlapped is neither true nor convincing. When examining events in this theatre, it seems more accurate to attribute the limitations of large-scale and costly engagements to the inherent constraints of naval warfare itself: the logistical difficulties of transporting infantry and cavalry, the still greater challenge of conveying supplies, and the restricted possibilities for landing, deploying, and maintaining troops far inland in the early modern period. In other words, the Ottoman Empire exploited to the full the possibilities afforded by contemporary maritime warfare, attacking Habsburg possessions in Italy, North Africa, and Spain with a vigour comparable to that demonstrated in its land campaigns through the Kingdom of Hungary. The means and methods naturally differed: sustained and more spectacular results could be achieved on land, as shown by the fall of Belgrade and the Battle of Mohács, than through assaults on islands or isolated coastal fortresses, whose conquest rarely produced lasting strategic gains. An exceptional case, however, was the Great Siege of Malta in 1565. Owing to its geographical position, Malta's potential capture by the Ottomans would have constituted a formidable bridgehead against Italy and the western Mediterranean, analogous in strategic significance to that of Belgrade in the Hungarian theatre of operations.

In my view, the spheres of interest of the two great emperors of the age, Charles V and Sultan Suleiman, did not merely overlap but were in open conflict on a historic scale – both in the Mediterranean and in the Kingdom of Hungary. Nor can the territories and crowns held by the two Habsburg brothers be treated separately within this imperial context. As head of the Universal Monarchy, Charles V bore responsibility for the entire Habsburg dynasty, which was regarded as a single, unified entity encompassing the newly acquired Hungarian and Bohemian crowns. A decisive transformation occurred, however, in the mid-sixteenth century. Several milestones marked this change: the dynastic disputes over succession and the abdication of Charles V on 16 January 1556; the division of the dynasty into two branches – the Catholic Monarchy and the Danubian Habsburg Monarchy; the death of Sultan Suleiman at Szigetvár in 1566; and, even more significantly, the aftermath of the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Collectively, these events reshaped imperial priorities. After 1573, both the Catholic Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire effectively abandoned the Mediterranean as an active frontier, reducing their conflicts. By contrast, the Ottoman–Christian borderlands in Hungary remained a dynamic and contested civilizational frontier until the late seventeenth century, and to some extent even into the first decades of the eighteenth. The dissolution of Charles V's Universal Monarchy, and the ensuing division of the Habsburg house, thus fragmented the anti-Ottoman struggle into two largely independent theatres that no longer interacted as they had in the first half of the century. Compared with the period of Charles V and Ferdinand I, direct anti-Ottoman cooperation between the two Habsburg branches declined sharply after 1556. A significant change in mindset regarding the Ottoman threat had already begun a few years earlier. In his 1548 *Instrucciones* to the young Philip II, Charles V clearly articulated a new strategic orientation: reflecting the frequent demands of his Castilian subjects, he declared that the burden of the anti-Ottoman

struggle should henceforth fall upon Ferdinand I and his successors, and that the Spanish crowns were no longer to contribute resources to warfare on the eastern frontiers of Christendom.¹¹

THE IMPERIAL IDEALS OF THE TWO RIVAL EMPERORS

It is also worth briefly referring to the ideological background of the two great rivals, Charles V and Sultan Suleiman. The two emperors were not only contemporaries but also genuine counterparts in their aspirations: both cultivated the idea of a universal empire, and both relied on the propaganda instruments of their age to promote claims to universal sovereignty. Yet, a fundamental difference lay in the audiences they sought to address. Each ruler primarily communicated to his own domestic public, though in markedly different contexts. Charles V articulated his legitimizing and ideological claims chiefly within the framework of the Christian world, whereas Sultan Suleiman directed his messages above all to the Ottoman audience and, to a lesser extent, to Western Christendom. A further nuance is that, unlike the Habsburgs, the Ottomans consciously appealed to the European public as well as to their own subjects – employing distinct methods and incorporating numerous elements of the European Renaissance into Suleiman's imperial propaganda. Although the ideological constructions of both rulers were complex and evolved over time, the present section will highlight the following general points.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

It is not my intention to present, in a separate chapter, the course of events in the Kingdom of Hungary during the first half of the sixteenth century for readers less familiar with Hungarian history. Authors of excellent monographs have already accomplished this task thoroughly and in great detail.¹² Rather, in what follows, I will offer a brief chronological summary that juxtaposes the key events on the anti-Ottoman fronts in both Hungary and the Mediterranean. By tracing these events in parallel, I aim to demonstrate the close interconnection between the two regions throughout the period under discussion:

11 See the Instructions of Charles V to Phillip II, Augsburg, 18 January 1548. In Manuel Fernández Álvarez, *Corpus Documental de Carlos V*, 5 vols. Madrid, 1973, II. 574: "...Y esto entiendo procurar en beneficio común desta Germania, y aun en favor del dicho rey, mi hermano. Y viendo claramente, y conociendo que me sería imposible haber dineros de mis reinos y señorios por tal necesidad, ni vos menos terniades la posibilidad de asistir al dicho reino después de mi fallecimiento, ni los reinos ni Estados lo querían hacer, como no sería justo, siendo gastados como están, y teniendo aún continuo gasto en otras partes contra infieles."

12 See Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*; Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary*; Pálffy, *Hungary between Two Empires*.

Table 1: Events in Hungary and in the Mediterranean, 1526–1556

Events in the Kingdom of Hungary		Events in the Mediterranean		Comments
Fall of Belgrade (29 August 1521)	1521			Strategic shift in Ottoman Expansion with Suleiman's ascension to the throne (1520)
	1522	Fall of Rhodes (22 December 1522)		
Battle of Mohács (29 August 1526)	1526			
	1528	Andrea Doria switches sides serving Charles V.		Andrea Doria's naval successes helped relieve the pressure on Hungary (From 1529 onward)
1st Siege of Vienna	1529	Peñon de Argel conquered by Hayreddin Barbarossa.		
2nd Campaign against Vienna Siege of Kőszeg (Güns)	1532	Andrea Doria's campaign, Conquest of Coron & Patras		
Habsburg diplomatic talks in Istanbul about the possession of Hungary and the Mediterranean Piracy	1533	Hayreddin Barbarossa assigned as Kapudan Pasha as a response to Doria's campaign.		
Continuous truce negotiations between the Habsburg brothers and Szapolyai (1533 onwards, intense between 1536-1538)	1534	Tunis conquered by Barbarossa		
	1535	Charles V's campaign against Tunis .		Direct connection between the peace of Várad and the Holy League of 1538. Ferdinand I member of the Holy League. Holy League's military plans considered Hungary (through Slavonia) as potential theatre of war
Peace of Várad 24 February between Ferdinand and Szapolyai with the intermediation of Charles V. Peace ratified in Toledo	1538	Truce of Nice, Holy League of 1538 Battle of Preveza Conquest of Castelnuovo		
Cristobal Morales' tercio in Hungary based on Várad agreement	1539	Barbarossa besieges Castelnuovo		
Death of John I Szapolyai, Birth of John Sigismund Szapolyai	1540			
Sieges of Buda (Roggendorf, Vels) and the Ottoman conquest of Buda (29 August 1541)	1541	Charles V's failed campaign against Algiers		On the news of Ottoman campaign against Buda, Charles V refused to postpone the Algiers expedition
Ottoman conquest of Central Hungary expanding the defence Zone around Buda	1542-1544	Valois-Habsburg wars with Ottoman participation in the Western Mediterranean (Barbarossa wintering in Toulon)		
Habsburg – Ottoman peace negotiations. Peace of Edirne 19 June 1547 for 5 years	1545-1547	Habsburg – Ottoman peace negotiations		The Peace of Edirne 1547 included both Habsburg brothers and was valid for both continental and mediterranean frontiers too
Negotiations and campaigns for the re-unification of Hungary. Royal army with Spanish and Italian soldiers in Transylvania. Ottoman invasion of Central Hungary and Transylvania, contacts of the Pasha of Buda with anti-Habsburg Christian powers	1550-1553	Habsburg dynastic dispute on the imperial inheritance, "Perfect storm"; Princes' Wars in the Holy Roman Empire in alliance with Henry II, military campaigns against Charles on many fronts, Ottoman-French cooperation in the Mediterranean, Ottoman campaign in North Africa against the Spanish presidios		The European wars and the events in Hungary in 1550-1553 were closely interconnected. Beyond the dynastic dispute, anti-Habsburg forces – including Protestants, the French and the Ottomans coordinated their efforts against the Habsburg's.

CHARLES V'S IMPERIAL IDEAS AND HUNGARY

Charles V of Habsburg's self-image was deeply influenced by the millenarian and messianic ideals surrounding his birth on 24 February 1500. From an early age, the young Habsburg was believed to have been divinely chosen to unite Christendom in harmony with the will of God and to lead the struggle against both the external and internal enemies of the faith. As Alonso de Valdés, Latin secretary to the emperor and a follower of Erasmus, famously expressed it: "*fiat unum ovile et unus pastor* (let there be one flock and one shepherd)". The emperor's vision was shaped not only by another of his Latin secretaries, Doctor Mota – whose address to the cortes of A Coruña in 1520 vividly articulated this mission – but even more profoundly by the Grand Chancellor, Mercurino di Gattinara. Gattinara envisioned Charles as the undisputed head of a *Universal Monarchy*: the rightful heir to Charlemagne, destined to restore the ancient splendour of Rome in a renewed, universal Christian empire. This empire, symbolically extending even beyond the Pillars of Hercules under the motto *Plus Ultra*, was to be conceived as truly universal in both its scope and divine legitimacy.¹³

Even within the dynasty, the emperor's leadership was indisputable. Dynastic unity presupposed that the members of the Habsburg family – above all Ferdinand I and Mary of Hungary – would give their full support to the emperor's policies, despite the occasional, and not infrequent, disputes. It also implied that the emperor would in turn defend the hereditary Habsburg estates, including those of Ferdinand I. Within this dynastic conception, the abandonment of the Central European realms (above all the crown of Hungary) was never a viable option. By contrast, territories such as Milan or the Low Countries were sometimes raised as potential dowries in the course of the Valois–Habsburg marriage negotiations. Had the Kingdom of Hungary been lost to the Habsburgs, the Ottoman advance would have directly endangered Vienna and the inner lands of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as the dynastic core territories.

After the election of Charles V as emperor, great expectations surrounded his person: he was seen as the ruler destined to restore the unity of Christendom, to combat heresy, and above all to defeat the Ottomans and liberate the Holy Land. Imperial propaganda celebrated the failure of Sultan Suleiman's 1532 campaign against Vienna – halted at Kőszeg (Güns in German sources) – as a decisive victory, portraying it as though the emperor's own forces had repelled the sultan's mighty army. Charles V thus appeared as the Saviour of Vienna and the Champion of Christianity. Following the conquest of Tunis in 1535, a new and even more resplendent image emerged: that of the *Lion of Africa*, a warlord likened to Scipio

13 Concerning Charles V's imperial ideas, see Zoltán Korpás, 'Fiat unum ovile et unus pastor. V. Károly birodalomeszméje és annak megjelenési formái', in Nóra G. Etényi – Ildikó Horn (eds.), *Portré és imázs. Politikai propaganda és reprezentáció a kora újkorban*. Budapest, 2008, 13–28. Cf. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, 'Formación del fundamental pensamiento político de Carlos V', in Peter Rassow – Fritz Schalk (eds.), *Karl V. Der Kaiser und seine Zeit. Kölner Colloquium*, 26–29. November 1958. Köln, Graz, 1960, 144–166; Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France 1500–1800*. New Haven, 1995, 45–87.

Africanus, the Victor over Islam, and the Defender of the Faith. This triumphant image was propagated not only through the famous series of tapestries by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, but also through the emperor's triumphal entry into Italy and a multitude of contemporary works of art and literature.

However, the emperor at the dawn of the early modern era was not merely a late exponent of medieval Christian ideals of rulership; he was also a pragmatic sovereign whose actions were shaped as much by circumstance as by ideology. It was no coincidence that, at the most critical moments of the Ottoman advance following the Battle of Mohács, Charles V advised Ferdinand I not to seek possession of the entire Kingdom of Hungary at all costs, for such an ambition would almost certainly provoke a direct invasion by the formidable Ottoman forces, as indeed occurred in the campaigns against Vienna in 1529 and 1532. From his perspective, the minimum objective for the younger Habsburg was the retention of the Hungarian borderlands and the secure possession of the crown of Saint Stephen, which would safeguard the Habsburg patrimonial lands. At the same time, Charles V continued to support Ferdinand I, who, as a sovereign monarch, conducted his anti-Ottoman policies in Hungary with growing determination. Did the emperor attempt to influence his brother, perhaps even to persuade him to adopt a defensive posture in Hungarian affairs? Undoubtedly so. His letters containing such advice date chiefly from the perilous years between 1526 and 1532, when the Ottoman advance appeared irresistible and the fate of Hungary – and, by extension, of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire – hung in the balance. Between 1532 and 1556, although the vehemence of the Ottoman attacks did not abate, the gradual strengthening of Habsburg defences in Hungary meant that the notion of abandoning the kingdom no longer appeared in the emperor's correspondence. Within six years of Mohács, two Ottoman campaigns had reached the gates of Vienna (1529, 1532). What had once seemed a distant menace before 1526 had by then become an immediate and daily terror within the Habsburg dominions. Yet, after the initial shock – when it seemed possible that Ottoman arms might not only destroy the neighbouring Kingdom of Hungary but even reach the territories of the empire, or, *ad absurdum*, advance towards Rome – the halting of Ottoman expansion became an imperative priority. By the early 1530s, Ottoman attention had turned elsewhere. The campaigns against Persia (1533–1535) and the struggle for the possession of Tunis (1534–1535), where Charles V intervened in support of Moulay Hassan, afforded the Christian front in Hungary a brief respite from the threat of annihilation. In this context, the shift of allegiance by the Genoese admiral Andrea Doria proved particularly significant: Habsburg naval operations in the distant Mediterranean, conducted under Doria's command from 1532 to 1541, contributed indirectly to easing the pressure on the Hungarian theatre. The Habsburg brothers used this respite to their advantage, initiating negotiations with their rival, King John I Szapolyai, and his supporters in an effort to unify the Kingdom of Hungary under Habsburg rule.

In parallel, Ferdinand I succeeded in strengthening his defensive system and in establishing a modern, centralized Habsburg economic and military

administration throughout his realms.¹⁴ Yet, during the 1540s, his Hungarian possessions suffered severe losses. Not only did Buda – the only western Christian capital to fall into Ottoman hands (1541) – succumb, but further campaigns between 1542–1544 and 1551–1552 led to the occupation of a vast area in the central part of the kingdom by the Ottomans. Nevertheless, the vacuum of power that emerged in Hungary after the Battle of Mohács was not exploited to its full extent by Sultan Suleiman, who refrained from taking possession of the entire country at a moment when every circumstance seemed to favour such a course. By allowing Ferdinand I a fifteen-year respite before the fall of Buda on 29 August 1541 (Suleiman's *dies faustus* or “lucky day”), the sultan appeared to make a strategic miscalculation. That delay provided Ferdinand with the necessary time to consolidate his position in Hungary and to lay the foundations of an enduring defence against Ottoman expansion. Never again would a constellation arise in which the Ottoman Empire enjoyed such overwhelming superiority over the Habsburgs in Central Europe. The time apparently lost was, in retrospect, decisive for the survival of both the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Danubian region. Although the benefit of hindsight simplifies such conclusions, it seems that contemporaries themselves sensed an unexpected opportunity amid the crisis. Within a decade of Mohács, the paralysing fear of annihilation was replaced by a cautious belief in the possibility of resistance – an outlook reinforced by the successful defence of Vienna in 1529 and again in 1532. Charles V's attitude towards the possession of Hungary also evolved noticeably from the mid-1530s onwards: his correspondence no longer advised Ferdinand I to be content merely with the crown of Saint Stephen and the defence of the Habsburg hereditary lands, even at the price of relinquishing large parts of the kingdom. The imperial stance shifted; emphasis was now placed on ending the internal conflict and reuniting the kingdom under Habsburg rule. From the mid-1530s, negotiations between John I Szapolyai and Habsburg representatives concerning the possible unification of the two Christian realms and the formation of an alliance against the Ottomans centred above all on the consolidation of Habsburg authority in Hungary. These discussions also addressed the establishment of a workable *modus vivendi* with the Ottoman Empire and the extent of the support that Charles V would provide to his brother in achieving these aims.

14 About the institutional reforms and governmental success of Ferdinand I, see Géza Pálffy, ‘The Origins and Development of the Border Defence System Against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (Up to the Early Eighteenth Century)’, in Géza Dávid – Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 20.) Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, 3–69; Géza Pálffy, ‘Hungary, Vienna and the Defence System against the Ottomans in the Age of Süleyman’, in Pál Fodor (ed.), *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*. Budapest, Leiden, Boston, 2019, 321–337; István Kenyeres, ‘A „fiscal-military state” és a Habsburg Monarchia a 16–17. században’, in Ildikó Horn et al. (eds.), *Művészet és mesterség. Tisztelgő kötet R. Várkonyi Ágnes emlékére*, vol 1. Budapest, 2016, 91–122; István Kenyeres, ‘The Beginnings of the European Fiscal-Military State in the First Third of the Sixteenth Century’, in B. Szabó–Fodor (eds.), *On the Verge of a New Era*, 29–46.

SULTAN SULEIMAN AND THE HUNGARIAN GOLDEN APPLE

The accession of Sultan Suleiman Kanuni heralded a golden age for the Ottoman Empire. Long before, in the founder Osman's "dream", Allah had foretold the glorious destiny of the Ottoman dynasty. As protector of Sunni Islam, the sultan also became guardian of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. With the acquisition of the throne of the last Abbasid caliph in Egypt (Cairo, 1517), supremacy among Muslim rulers was conferred upon Selim I, and thereafter upon Suleiman and his successors – regardless of the fact that the Ottoman rulers who bore the title of caliph were not descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. It was only from the 1550s that Suleiman's image as ruler began to be consciously shaped: the epithets *Magnificent* and *Lawgiver* came to define his reign, retrospectively regarded as a golden age. Yet the formulation of world-imperial claims had already begun in the 1520s. Following the Battle of Mohács (1526), the sultan's court made it known to the Habsburgs that the only emperor of the entire world could be none other than the Ottoman ruler, second only to God.¹⁵ Both the Habsburg title of emperor and the title of king of Hungary were considered illegitimate in Istanbul. In contemporary Ottoman correspondence, Charles V was regularly referred to as King of Spain, while Ferdinand I was belittled as "King of Vienna"; in one of Suleiman's letters, Ferdinand was even addressed as "the Governor of the King of Spain".¹⁶ The coronation of Charles V as emperor in Bologna (1530) provoked outrage at the Porte, which declared his claim to the imperial dignity illegitimate, since the sultan alone was master of the world. In the Ottoman view, the campaign of 1532 against Vienna was therefore intended to challenge Charles V directly, to contest the imperial title, and to determine who should rule the world. Just as Suleiman advanced to Niš and Belgrade with the pomp of a Roman triumph, so Charles V staged magnificent Renaissance pageants in Italy in 1535 to celebrate his victory at Tunis. Although both princes cherished universalist pretensions, the vast and diverse realms over which they ruled compelled them alike to compromise, improvise, and adapt. In spite of seemingly inexhaustible resources, both faced complex and multifaceted political challenges that demanded constant flexibility. The Ottoman ruler was, by religious duty, obliged to wage holy war against the faithless. Both Selim I and his successor Suleiman bore the title *Gazi* and proclaimed *jihad* against their perceived enemies, including those deemed infidels within the Muslim world itself. Upon his accession, however, Sultan Suleiman departed from the priorities of his predecessor: whereas Selim had fought primarily against the Muslim Safavid and Mamluk empires, Suleiman turned his arms against Christendom. Within Ottoman militant ideology, the symbol of the "Golden Apple" (*kızıl elma*), once held by the Byzantine emperor

15 Gábor Barta – Pál Fodor, *Két tárgyalás Sztambulban. Hyeronim Laski tárgyalása a töröknél János király nevében, Habardanecz János jelentése 1528 nyári sztambuli tárgyalásairól.* (Régi Magyar Könyvtár. Források, 5.) Budapest, 1996, 177.

16 Suleiman to Ferdinand, Istanbul, 15 April 1527. In Antal Gévay, *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Geschichte der Verhältnisse zwischen Österreich, Ungarn und der Pforte im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderte*, 3 vols. Wien, 1838, I/1. 62–63.

Justinian, represented the ultimate universal goal of conquering Islam. Identified with Constantinople until 1453, the Golden Apple thereafter came to symbolize the Kingdom of Hungary, and later Vienna and Rome – the sacred objectives of Ottoman imperial ambition. Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, had already added to his titles those of “emperor of Rome” (*Kayser-i Rum*) and *basileus*. After 1453, the sultans not only conceived their dominion as universal but also regarded themselves as heirs to Rome, in conscious continuation of Byzantine imperial tradition. It is telling that Suleiman personally led seven of his thirteen imperial campaigns into the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, including the expeditions against Vienna. The imperial ideals of Emperor Charles V and Sultan Suleiman were thus in direct and irreconcilable conflict. Both rulers aspired to universal dominion, and the ideological aura surrounding their persons endowed each with a sense of divine election. Suleiman was the *sultan of sultans*, the conqueror of the world and *padishah*; Charles V was the restorer of the Holy Empire and champion of Christendom, under whose righteous rule Christianity would be reunited and whose empire extended *Plus Ultra* – “beyond the known world”. Suleiman ruled over the Islamic holy cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, and claimed to be heir to the ancient Roman emperors; Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, inherited the legacy of Charlemagne and counted among his many titles that of the crusading king of Jerusalem – by then a realm long held by the Ottomans. In the millenarian expectations of the age, Charles was even identified with the princely redeemer destined to reconquer the Holy Land for Christendom.¹⁷

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

I see it as essential to examine the anti-Ottoman struggles within their broader European context, emphasizing as much as possible the continental and Mediterranean interconnections. A principal aim of this volume is precisely that: to highlight the interactions between the anti-Ottoman conflicts in the Mediterranean and in Hungary during the reign of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain (1516/1519–1556). At the same time, a deliberate limitation must be noted: this study does not seek to provide a detailed analysis of the historical relations between the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary. This omission is partly justified by the fact that in recent years several distinguished scholars – some of whom are cited in the following chapters – have thoroughly examined key aspects of Ferdinand I’s rule in Hungary: the fiscal-military system, the development of the military frontier, the *Türkenhilfe* taxation

17 Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest*, 79–81, see also 198–200; Gábor Ágoston, ‘Ideológia, propaganda és politikai pragmatizmus: A Habsburg–Oszmán nagyhatalmi vetélkedés és a közép-európai konfrontáció’, *Történelmi Szemle* 45:1–2 (2003) 4–24. See also Özlem Kumrular, *Las relaciones entre el Imperio Otomano y la Monarquía Católica entre los años 1520–1535 y el papel de los Estados Satélites*. İstanbul, 2003, 20–27.

and contribution mechanism, the evolution of Habsburg administration, the impact of the Reformation, social transformations, and the relationship between the Hungarian political elite and the Habsburg court, including the rise of a supranational aristocracy. Furthermore, recent historiography has undergone a significant shift in perspective. Only in the last decade and a half have Hungarian and international historians working on the period 1526–1556 begun consciously to integrate the connections and overlaps between the Hungarian and Mediterranean anti-Ottoman frontiers. The military, diplomatic, and political history of the Mediterranean struggle against the Ottomans is well documented, as is the rich multilingual literature on the Habsburg–Ottoman confrontation in Hungary. Yet, with few exceptions, these two spheres have been studied separately. There are still remarkably few works that attempt to analyse and synthesize the correlations between the two theatres of war. It is this lacuna that the present volume seeks to address – building upon, and extending, my previous research. This English-language edition is a revised and substantially expanded version of my Hungarian monograph published in 2008. The earlier work covered only the period 1526–1538, thus omitting the final two decades of Emperor Charles V's life – an omission that is now rectified. In the intervening years, I have published partial findings in several studies in English, Spanish, and Hungarian. Consequently, the volume now in the reader's hands is considerably more comprehensive and detailed than the 2008 edition.¹⁸

The central question I seek to answer is the following: *in what sense did Emperor Charles V contribute to the anti-Ottoman struggles of the Kingdom of Hungary?* In addressing this question, I aim to challenge the long-standing and still widespread historiographical assumption that the emperor neglected the Hungarian front and effectively abandoned his brother, King Ferdinand I – and thus the Kingdom of Hungary itself – in the face of Ottoman aggression during these decades. To reassess this issue, I rely primarily on archival sources preserved in Spain. These documents, which include a significant body of *Hungarica* material, have remained largely unknown or unutilized in Central European scholarship until quite recently. Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries several Hungarian archivists and historians identified and described relevant *Hungarica* collections – particularly in the Archivo General de Simancas and other Spanish repositories – their findings were never systematically analysed.¹⁹ My own archival research in Spain, begun around 1999–2000, has revealed a substantial and hitherto unknown wealth of sources relating to Hungarian affairs.

¹⁸ Zoltán Korpás, *V. Károly és Magyarország (1526–1538)*. Budapest, 2008.

¹⁹ Mihály Hatvani [Horváth], *Magyar történelmi okmánytár a brüsseli országos levéltárból és a burgundi könyvtárból* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Diplomataria, I–II.), vols. 1–2. Pest, 1857–1858; Vilmos Fraknói, 'Tanulmányaim Spanyolország állami levéltárában', *Századok* 3:3 (1869) 150–165; Lipót Óváry, 'Kutatások a nápolyi Farnese levéltárban', *Századok* 1 (1877) 1–17; Lipót Óváry, *III. Pál pápa és Farnese Sándor bíbornok Magyarországra vonatkozó levelezései (1535–1549)*. (Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Diplomataria, XVI.) Budapest, 1879; Lipót Óváry, *A Magyar Tud. Akadémia Történelmi Bizottságának oklevél-másolatai*, vols. 1–3. Budapest, 1890–1901.

At the same time, complementary research efforts were being undertaken by Hungarian teams working in the Vatican Archives, producing parallel discoveries that enriched and confirmed many of my findings. In recent years, a new generation of historians has continued this line of inquiry, extending the *Hungarica* research in Spain to encompass sixteenth- and seventeenth-century materials from both public and private collections, as well as relevant manuscripts preserved in the Low Countries. Together, these efforts have significantly broadened the empirical foundation for re-evaluating the role of Charles V in the anti-Ottoman struggles of Central Europe.²⁰

But the Hispanic methodological focus was relevant not only in terms of curiosity and the intellectual value of the explorations. I examine Charles V's support for anti-Ottoman endeavours in Hungary through several interrelated themes:

- Diplomatic support: In more than half of the volume, I present the political and diplomatic history that provides a picture of how Charles V conceived of the anti-Ottoman warfare, the role he attributed to Hungary within it, and how his views and policies evolved over the years.
- Financial support: It is natural that Ferdinand I's greatest financial contributors to his rule in Hungary were his own kingdoms and provinces, his subjects, and various creditors. From the 1540s onwards, he could also rely increasingly on the *Türkenhilfe* of the Holy Roman Empire. Yet we should not underestimate Charles V's financial contribution. The emperor's direct influence is evident in his efforts to secure funds for the anti-Ottoman struggles beyond the empire – in Rome,²¹ and especially in the Spanish kingdoms, in Italy, and in the Low Countries. A unique and, in a sense, one of the earliest manifestations of global thinking occurred in 1530, when the imperial government called upon officials from the emerging Caribbean and Central American colonies – and even allied *caciques*, or indigenous chiefs – to contribute to the anti-Ottoman campaigns in Hungary. (This remarkable case will be examined in more detail below.)²²
- Military support: Perhaps one of the most fundamental themes of this volume is the presence of the Spanish Old Tercios in Hungary. Unlike the *Landsknechts* of the Holy Roman Empire or the Italian infantry contracted by Ferdinand I, the Spanish infantry (and indeed a significant proportion

20 Tibor Monostori, 'A Magyar Királyság helye az Ausztriai Ház országai között az európai spanyol hegemonia korában (1558–1648)', *Századok* 143:5 (2009) 1023–1062; Tibor Monostori, 'Az aranykori spanyol és a magyarországi irodalom: egy új, európai paradigma', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 124:4 (2020) 417–451; Tibor Monostori, 'Hungaria Hispanica: Resilient Hungary and Its Integration into the Spanish Habsburg System, 1558–1648', in Fabian Persson et al. (eds.), *Resilience and Recovery at Royal Courts, 1200–1840. Queenship and Power*. Cham, 2023, 21–40; Martí–Quirós Rosado (eds.) *Eagles Looking East and West*.

21 Zoltán Korpás, '¿Pesos de oro mexicanos contra la expansión otomana en Hungría?', in Ramón Sánchez González – István Szászdi León Borja (eds.), *Comercio, Rentas y Globalización en la Guerra de las Comunidades*. Sahagún, 2021, 343–360.

22 See Chapter 4: Golden Pesos from the Americas in the Fight against Ottoman Expansion in Hungary.

of the Italians fighting in Hungary as well) were allowed on to the Hungarian battlefield exclusively with the permission of Charles V. In fact, the presence of Spanish tercios on the Hungarian battlefield between 1526 and 1556 was a regular feature of the Central European anti-Ottoman theatre of war, and their proportion within the royal forces was remarkably high, ranging from 10 to 20 percent. They represented one of the most important elite military formations of the period – indeed, one of the first standing armies in Europe – and their combat effectiveness was comparable to that of the feared Ottoman janissaries. It should be underscored that the Spanish contingent in King Ferdinand I's army was of a similar proportion to that of the Spanish royal army in Flanders under Philip II a few decades later, in what is regarded as the most significant theatre of war in Spanish military history: the wars in the Low Countries. With a touch of rhetorical flourish, one could even say that there existed an "Eastern Flanders" for the Spanish tercios: the Kingdom of Hungary between 1526 and 1556.

- The overlap in personnel between the two regions: The presence of Spanish tercios in Hungary is closely linked to other theatres of war in which the Spanish infantry fought. The concluding chapter of this volume, together with the accompanying list of names, provides clear evidence – through the biographical data of hundreds of Spaniards – of how deeply intertwined the anti-Ottoman struggles in the Kingdom of Hungary were with the military campaigns in Italy, the Mediterranean, the Low Countries, and even, in certain cases, with the early phases of the colonization of the Americas.

The choice of title was not without difficulty: how best to connect the three key elements – Charles V, the anti-Ottoman struggles, and the Kingdom of Hungary. After all, the emperor's vast and intricate monarchy, directly affected by Ottoman expansion, encompassed far more than the Holy Roman Empire: it included the viceroyalties of Naples and Sicily, the Duchy of Milan, and the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, not to mention the North African presidios and, in certain cases, the overseas colonies. A detailed examination of the Italian dimension – such as the role of the Italian infantry in Hungary – would, however, have extended the scope of this work beyond reasonable limits. For this reason, the focus has remained primarily on the Spanish crowns, though it must be emphasized that without assessing the contribution of Naples, Sicily, and even Malta and Genoa, Charles V's anti-Ottoman policy in the Mediterranean can only be viewed in a partial light.