The debate on the chronology and the nature of the alleged ‘Military Revolution’ focuses on the effects of the tremendous increase of the size of the armies and the growing power of the field artillery. Charles V commanded about 55,000 men and 150 guns during his siege of Metz in 1552. Although this may well have been the largest and best equipped army in Europe since the decay of the Roman Empire, it was unable to take the city since its new fortifications proved to resist the bombardment. The costs of the armies as well as that of the construction of defence systems rose so sharply that even France and the Habsburg Empire could construct only a limited number of fortresses of the new Italian type, and even then the competition exhausted both states financially in the 1550s. In the following paper, I shall point to the logistic and organizational problems the new military techniques raised for the political leaders. I will raise the question if the political apparatus could bear the executive functions required for an adequate implementation of the technical novelties. It seems indeed from the sources I will present, that the political rigidity overshadowed the potentials so decisively, that the notion of ‘Military Revolution’ seems rather inappropriate for the first half of the sixteenth century. I will focus on two major confrontations in Italy from 1526 to 1530, the very period during which the Charles’s hegemony over Italy was established and the first new defence systems were developed.

After their astonishing victory at Pavia in 1525, some poorly paid imperial troops remained marauding in Italy. The League of Cognac, struck in May 1526 between Pope Clement VII, King Francis I, Venice, and Francesco Sforza, the

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Wim Blockmans

unfortunate Duke of Milan, launched another offensive against the imperial positions. Writing ultimately ten years after the events, the removed Florentine statesman Luigi Guicciardini noted in his history of the sack of Rome that this had been a risky enterprise, badly advised, lacking unanimously determined targets and the required financial means. The loss of the Milanese citadel for Sforza was in his opinion due to the pope’s main general, the Duke of Urbino’s wrong evaluations and his all too slow actions vis-à-vis Charles de Bourbon’s attack. By his unwillingness – due to personal interests – to join the core of the League’s army in Tuscany, he left the field to the imperial troops which, following the reliable Spanish chronicler Santa Cruz, consisted of German, Italian, Spanish and Swiss companies numbering up to about 45,000 men. But these also suffered from retarded payments, unclear missions and antagonisms between the generals. Guicciardini held Pope Clement VII responsible for the lack of defence of Rome, as he had disbanded his army immediately after his truce, struck in September 1526 with Charles of Lannoy, viceroy of Naples. A similar criticism is expressed by his fellow countryman Francesco Vettori, dismissed from his political offices in Florence after 1527 and writing before 1529 his Brief History of Italy. The pope lacked both the captains and the money the conduct war but he got involved in an action to recapture Siena, while in Rome itself he had to fly for the Colonna attack on 19 April 1526, plundering the holy city and even its churches. The pope’s changing sides made him unreliable as an ally and suspect as an enemy. In the meantime he left Rome undefended while he was spending his money elsewhere. It were mainly the failures in the execution of the policy, even if it was changing, that created the uncertainty of the situation, says Guicciardini. Such weaknesses on both sides led to the disaster of the sack of Rome: Bourbon could no longer keep his captains from moving against Rome since the pope did not keep his promise to pay them and had instead excommunicated them altogether. Both armies were hardly organized, were not led in a coherent way and suffered

4 L. GUICCIARDINI, Sacco, p. 38-47.
5 M. FERNANDEZ ALVAREZ, Carlos, p. 366.
6 L. GUICCIARDINI, Sacco, p. 75-85.
8 GUICCIARDINI, Sacco, p. 124.
Logistics of Warfare in Central Italy, 1527-1530

from retarded payment. The political and organizational factors seem to have been dominant to explain the evolution of the military situation in Italy, rather than either the size or the equipment of the armies.

Around his coronation in February 1530, Emperor Charles V remained in Bologna for several months, negotiating with the pope. His viceroy in Naples, in the meantime Philibert of Chalon, was entrusted with the task of taking Florence for Alexander de Medici, one of Charles' sacrifices for his imperial coronation. His task was to implement the strategic agreement forged between emperor and pope. Who was this Philibert of Chalon, whom Charles called 'my cousin', and who was very frank with Charles in long letters written in his own hand, yet signed himself 'your most humble and most obedient servant and subject'? His father, John of Chalon (1443-1502), was prince of the small sovereign principality of Orange, and was among the most important vassals of the duke of Burgundy. The family's patrimony extended into both the dukedom and the free imperial county of Franche-Comté. His marriage to Joanna de Bourbon, a sister-in-law of Charles the Bold, made him a close relation of the dynasty and the emperor Charles called him cousin. John of Chalon was equally exposed to French influences. The changing fortunes of the principalities of Burgundy left their marks on the Chalon family. In March 1477 John had chosen the side of Mary of Burgundy in her struggle against the surprise attack by the French. To this he was indebted for his appointment in 1478 as stadholder of the free imperial county - not a peaceful possession in view of the constant French attacks. Louis XI confiscated his property and John was forced to retreat to the Low Countries. The transfer of the free imperial county as a dowry for Margaret of Austria, who was married to the dauphin in 1482, meant that John's property was returned to him, but also that he was drawn into the French camp. On occasions he mediated between the royal houses. The strategic situation of their lands and the size of their fortune made the Chalon family a much sought after ally for both sides.

The ties with the Burgundian Habsburg house were strengthened in 1516 when John's son, Philibert, was admitted to the Order of the Golden Fleece at the age of 14. He was commander of an ordnance corps and, in his turn, was made stadholder of the free imperial county, now in the name of countess Margaret of Austria. In 1515, Philibert's sister, Claudia, married Henry III of Nassau, a member of a prominent family that had served the house of

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9 This biographical information has been borrowed from the Ph.D. thesis presented by Hans Cools, Mannen met Macht, Zutphen, 2001.
Burgundy faithfully for generations. This marriage joined the fortunes of the princes of Orange to that of the counts of Nassau. Henry's uncle, Engelbrecht, had become a knight of the Golden Fleece in 1473, when he was 22; in 1483 he was made stadholder of Luxembourg, in 1487 stadholder of Flanders, and was twice governor-general of the Low Countries under archduke Philip the Handsome. Henry received the chain of the Golden Fleece in 1505, when he was also 22. In 1510 he was appointed to the Council of Finances, in 1515 to the Privy Council and the governorships of Holland, Zeeland and Guelders. In 1521 he was given the title of first gentleman of the bedchamber, thus becoming one of Charles' most important advisors, but it was as military commander that he made his mark. Réné of Chalon, the son of Henry and Claudia, became a knight of the Golden Fleece in 1540, also aged 22; the following year he was made stadholder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, and in 1543 of Guelders too. He died childless one year later, of cannon wounds received at the siege of Saint-Dizier. The property of the Chalon family, including the principality of Orange, passed to his cousin, William of Nassau, who was born in 1533. Towards the end of his reign, Charles grew fond of this William, who had been brought up at the court of Mary of Hungary. In 1559 he too became a knight of the Golden Fleece and soon afterwards stadholder of Holland, etc. The loyalty shown by the great noble families over generations facilitated their appointment to positions of importance at an early age.

This was true, too, of Philibert of Chalon, who had been a useful commander for Charles in Italy and in 1528 was rewarded with the particularly important position of viceroy of Naples. The siege of Florence, with which he was entrusted, was no sinecure, however: it dragged on from October 1529 to August 1530. This could have been anticipated, for the city had for many centuries been protected by very long ramparts. A selection from Charles' extensive correspondence with Philibert gives us amazing insight into the state of affairs in the field.

Philibert had been given orders for 'l'emprise de Florence avec ceste la de Ferrare'. Nothing came of the conquest of Ferrara. In the second half of September 1529 he went north from Naples and could report the capture of Cortona and Reggio, some distance from his target. Then, he wrote enthusiastically on 23 September, 'I have no more opposition except Florence'.\(^\text{10}\) Yet on 18 September he had already expressed some misgivings:

\(^{10}\) I was able to consult copies of the letters in the University Library of Konstanz thanks to the systematic collection made by Professor Horst Rabe and his colleagues who were particularly kind in allowing me access to their treasure-house. The original letters are in Vienna, Haus-Hof- und Staatsarchiv, PA Belgien, nos. 68/3 f° 40-77, 69/2 f° 49-56 and no. 69/4 f° 1-61.
Logistics of Warfare in Central Italy, 1527-1530

"Sire, you know that I have written on a number of occasions about the dire financial problems of the army. I am the most desperate man in the world for having to trouble you so often, but so that matters do not end other than you would wish, I must inform you of what I feel these people will do if their pay is delayed any longer. The Italians will desert to the enemy who will buy them, which is what they are keen to do. The Germans will mutiny and leave, at the very least. The light and heavy Spanish cavalry will refuse to obey any orders at all."

A month later nothing much had changed. Philibert wrote from his camp before Florence, 'I cannot think of any remedy, if neither you nor the pope send me money or if Florence does not yield'. On 25 October Clement appears to have promised 10,000 scudi to pay the Spanish, who had missed their last pay; in five days' time the entire army would have to be paid again, and where was the money to come from?

'If you are resolved to take this town I think that you will not succeed with the small force I have here; believe me, I should have to remain here for ten years to see the end [of the undertaking]. If you want the town you must send ten or twelve thousand men immediately to lay the siege on the other side of the river, together with a good artillery crew, which you could find in Bologna. In my view, the Germans who, it is said, do not accomplish anything, and the Spaniards, could then put a rapid end to this siege. Without that help, and without money, you should not expect a successful outcome, for there are as many inside the city as we are here outside. I have stayed close by the wall of San Dammate and cannot see how we can do more to take the town than we are doing now by extending our trenches and bulwarks.

Sire, you have now heard everything, and will answer as you think fit. I can only make every effort to carry out your wishes. But I beg you, whatever your decision, to remember that I do not have any money at all, and without money it is impossible to maintain this army any longer.'

Philibert sent a list of the expenses with this letter. On 30 October he had heard from the emperor's envoy that the siege must be continued; now Philibert sounds resigned:

'In any event I shall do what I can, but I think that it will not be much. Sire, I fear greatly that you will regret this long delay. May God will otherwise, but without money I see your army on the verge of mutiny.'
The Germans said that they had served their agreed term and would themselves send a delegation to the emperor to find out for sure whether they would be paid.

'The Spaniards are after me every day and ask if I can work miracles so that they can live without food, saying that they cannot eat if they have no money and that I have not told you this. They are so dissatisfied, and with such good reason, that I can only tell them that I am expecting money from you any day now. As you know, I haven't a penny, and nothing to borrow against should this end badly. I beg you not to blame the person who would grieve the most, should it be so. If God does not work a miracle and provide you with money I think a general mutiny is almost a certainty. I am the unhappiest man in the world that I must trouble you so often with this urgent matter, but it is my duty, both for your service and my honour. [...] Please send your answer by this same messenger, even it is just to do something useful towards ensuring that it is not I who lost this good army without a fight. If you will, relieve me of this command and give it to another who can do what I must do without money, I beg you. At least, spread a rumour that your troops and artillery are on the way from Bologna, with money; that too could work wonders.'

A good week later, 8 November, Philibert returned more insistently to the subject of increasing the artillery:

'Of the 10 cannon I have here four are broken, and I think the same is true of those that came from Siena for they have never fired more than two or three salvos. Then I still have four from the pope, so you can imagine what I can achieve with those. It would be excellent if you could manage to provide some from Bologna or Genoa. If there are none there, I believe that if you were to ask the duke of Ferrara to lend you some, he would not refuse. [...] There are a number of places in this town where artillery would be of great use.'

Charles generally sent his answers through envoys. Nevertheless, on 12 November, he urged his 'cousin' in a letter to 'send news often'. Charles had managed to placate the captains and they promised to remain in his service until 15 December at least. And the duke of Ferrara agreed to lend six cannon. On 30 November Philibert asked for three or four thousand foot soldiers that could plunder castles in the vicinity and thus supply the army with food. A week later, after a visit to the emperor, Philibert was forced to ask for
another 8,000 scudi to pay the Germans and to send reinforcements from Naples. There was a shortage of powder for the arquebus and cannon. The duke of Ferrara had to be reminded of his pledge to provide six cannon.

'From my information from inside the town it seems that they are resolved to wait and see what fate brings. Therefore, if you will, you will have to use some force so that they will feel the pain and the shame and you will enjoy the honour. […] Believe me, Sire, the artillery will bring them [the Florentines] to their senses.'

By 15 December finances were a pressing problem again; the pope had pledged 60,000 scudi for November, but there was still no sign of the money.

'I am the most amazed man in the world, for the entire army will ask me for what I have promised. I beg you, Sire, send it quickly, for on my word of honour if that money is not here within four or five days, it will be a total disaster. There is no doubt that all the nationalities in our camp will mutiny. I shall have to flee, otherwise they will hack me to pieces because of the promises I made them on your orders.'

On 20 December he reported a successful skirmish with the Florentines, but also that the sentries who had not been paid for two months were threatening to leave. 30,000 scudi were made available on 28 December but this amounted to only half of what was needed per month. Not everybody could be satisfied, while 'the rest of the army is very hard pressed and has borne as much as it can'. The Florentines repaired the damage to their fortifications day and night, the pope had to be reminded of his promise of 4,000 men and 2,000 minelayers. His master builder would also be useful for the possible construction of a new bridge over the Arno. Charles' answer on 3 January 1530 was very understanding. Pressure on the pope produced another 10,000 scudi, although he had promised 60,000 for each of the months of November, December and January. The emperor had no money either. The Genoese were too late with their payments, he was hoping for contributions from Flanders, Venice, Milan and Naples. They were waiting for Genoese merchants to supply credit. The promised foot-soldiers had been delayed because they had not been paid and the road was bad. The pope would do his best to supply the promised troops.

'I beg you, cousin, to make the best of things. What you write about the two months [pay] that was still due to the army when you were here [in
Bologna], I truly thought that this only applied to a few units. As time goes on people will have to do as best they can.'

Comforting words maybe, but no tangible support for an army that had to get through the winter after a siege that had already dragged on for three and a half months. Reinforcements trickled in by degrees, but the same problems remained. On 10 March Philibert complained that he only had enough ammunition for one day, 45 shots per cannon. He would try to buy some in all the neighbouring towns but still asked the emperor to provide some as soon as possible, to ask the dukes of Ferrara and Urbino for some and to have Andrea Doria send some from Genoa. In one letter he even asked for ammunition to be sent by boat.

'If we were even able to make a breach we could not keep it open, because of the shortage of munition. If you will, remind the pope that the Spaniards and Italians are due to be paid on 12 March. I have received nothing from him, he has not a penny for an ordinary mortal. I have managed to borrow a little from three or four captains.'

By 18 March, Philibert was once again on the brink of despair. Of the 2,000 minelayers promised by the pope, no more than 400 had turned up. And payday had passed without any sign of the money.

'Sire, I do not know what I can do for these people, for our need is so great that everything is in short supply. The Italians have only been paid 2,000 scudi, and the Spaniards nothing at all. The Spanish are desperate, and believe me, Sire, they have every reason to be. Almost all of them have gone from the camp, I think only about 200 are left. They say they are going to get food wherever they can find it. I think they will plunder their way from town to town. The Germans are on the point of looting everything in the vicinity. If you do not take action this army will disintegrate and do the very worst you can imagine. Please give a swift answer to the bearer of this message so that we can at least arrange to save the cannon if you are unable to help; even that would be impossible, I think, if they all mutiny. [...] I believe the pope is making a fool of you and me. He is quite wrong if he thinks that Florence can be taken in four months because its inhabitants are hungry. They still have grain supplies and with the dried meat they are resolved to stand firm until their last crust. [...] But it is impossible to keep an army as large as this alive on promises.'
Charles' answer came three days later from Bologna: the pope was doing what he could to pay the troops. Philibert reacted immediately, complaining that the captains had abandoned their companies en masse, preferring to stay in some court or other. The emperor himself would have to order them to complete their service. Many foot soldiers had died of the hardships.

‘For me to be certain that the pope would keep his word, he would already be here [in Florence] and we would not be in this mess. I am really afraid that he will not send me the money in time. That was why I was content to let the troops fend for themselves in the neighbourhood of Siena, under orders to behave honourably, of course. If you will, let me know whether it is certain the 20,000 scudi promised by the pope will be available at the end of the month. If that money comes too late, even just a little, it would be better to keep the mutiny at a distance, because here the mutineers would encourage all the others.’

On 25 March 500 mutinous Spaniards had left the camp, but they returned later. The problems continued until July. Then they demanded six months’ pay and threatened to go to Pisa and avenge themselves on its inhabitants. The other soldiers would make no attempt to stop them. On 7 July Philibert begged Charles, who was now in Augsburg, to pardon the mutineers, because

‘the poor devils have already suffered enough in their purses, they have nothing and are dying of hunger. If you will, have pity on them and on all the soldiers in this camp, I beg you. [...] And the Germans say they want to leave, even if they were paid, because of the plague that has brought so much death.’

Indeed, Philibert’s Spanish bookkeeper had died of the plague and two of his assistants were sick, so that the overall financial picture was missing. Yet there were signs that since the implementation of the peace between Charles and Francis I – confirmed by the return of the latter’s two sons and his marriage to Eleanor – the people of Florence were losing heart. On 1 August Charles sent his instructions for the surrender of the town: effectively, the house of Medici was to be restored to government, 'bon debvoir et prudent office', as soon as possible, and plundering, 'saccagement et extreme ruyne et desolation', was to be avoided at all costs. The troops, therefore, had to remain outside the town and disband in an orderly fashion, and were to be given decent expenses for their return home. Philibert did not live to see the crowning of all his efforts nor the emperor’s reward for his outstanding, loyal services. He died on
3 August from wounds received in one of the last skirmishes of the operation. The Republic of Florence surrendered on 12 August 1530. Charles made the Medicis archdukes, which was what it was all about. In 1537 Alexander de Medici was murdered by the opposition.

Philibert of Chalon may have come to a tragic end: his sometimes passionate pleas to the emperor clearly testify to his sincere compassion for the foot soldiers who languished through a whole winter and suffered a plague epidemic during the summer thanks to the negligence of the financial management of pope and emperor. He had no pity at all for the people of Florence who, in his view, deserved all they got because they dared to resist the emperor. Yet the thousands of inhabitants of Florence, the pearl of Humanism, suffered just as much from the hunger and hardships of the siege. What was the point of it all? The restoration of a monarchic government in the city-republic for the benefit of a cousin of the pope, and thus for the pope himself. The pope's most important quid pro quo was his opting for an alliance with the emperor against the French – a choice long-since made out of opportunistic motives – and his readiness to invest Charles as king of Naples and to crown him emperor. A realpolitik choice and two symbolic deeds. Charles failed in his efforts to persuade Clement to summon a council with a view to Church reform, even after a new round of negotiations in 1532-33. If Charles' arrangement with Clement for the recovery of Florence was questionable, his failure to use it to achieve his main aim as protector of the Church adds a very bitter taste to the 11-month siege.

The correspondence quoted above makes it clear that, even as the object of the exercise was dubious, a lot remained to be desired as far as strategy and resources were concerned. Clearly, the decision was made to take Florence at any cost, but without any idea of the resources needed. If Philibert thought in September 1529 that, after Florence, he could take Ferrara, then things turned out very differently. Beginning a siege so late in the year shows that an early success was expected, because commanders are normally anxious to avoid wintering in the open. It would seem that the besiegers did not have enough information about the city's defences, its food supplies and the morale of the people. The besiegers were faced with a very large town with a long circumference of the most modern type of rampart. From Philibert's letters it is clear that he had to wait until spring – six months – for the arrival of technically-trained minelayers who were competent to get close to the new fortifications and undermine them. Still it was not this, but the exhaustion and demoralisation of its inhabitants, that finally caused the town to surrender. Philibert had to wait for months for reliable cannon and for reinforcements,
and there was a constant shortage of gunpowder. It was the logistics of the operation that failed, apparently the result of insufficient information and preparation.

It is astonishing to read that all these logistical details were repeated on an average of once a week in the lengthy correspondence between the viceroy and his emperor. Was this the level at which soldiers’ pay and the purchase of powder should be discussed, with the accounts enclosed? Charles’ answers show that, even in personal conversations, some with the pope, he was very concerned with this sort of detail and that he agonised over finding money to make up the constant shortages. The organisation of the imperium was clearly not yet specialised enough to respond to the heavy demands created by the massive military operations. All the problems, large and small, came to rest on the emperor’s shoulders.

Both sides stuck to their plans. The beleaguered city gave way first, its food supplies exhausted, stricken by epidemic, the hopes of French support faded. The besieging army also had its weaknesses but, objectively seen, the mutinies and plundering actually helped the attackers because they impoverished the surrounding countryside, thus further endangering the town’s supplies. The tenacity of both sides, the strength of Florence’s defence and, finally, the enormous size and endurance of the imperial and papal army made this the longest siege of Charles’ reign. Withdrawal would have meant an unprecedented loss of face for both emperor and pope. The longer the siege continued the worse the situation became, so they staked everything on it. Clearly they had far greater resources than the isolated town.

This is why the continuing financial problems of the attackers are so baffling. The pope honoured his commitments only partially and after long delays, although the siege seemed to be chiefly in his own interest. The problems of payments occurred during the early months of the siege so they cannot be blamed on depleted reserves, but rather on insufficient organisation for the objective. The incompetence on Charles’ side is equally baffling: improvisation, getting what one could where one could, too late, finally borrowing from the Genoese bankers. In the long run it was the taxpayers of Naples and the pope’s subjects who had to bear the brunt of this venture of purely dynastic prestige.

On the other hand it must be remembered that it has always been difficult to foresee the progress, length and cost of war. Contemporaries were not much more successful at such prognostications. During the sixteenth century war was considered the prerogative of princes. Even when the representative bodies of their subjects – either through discussion about the allocation of taxation or in principle – demanded some say in their involvement in wars,
the princes retained the exclusive right to declare and end war. Their subjects were always left to pick up the bill. Charles himself made this very clear in a speech to his Council in 1528: 'It is not fitting for a prince to think of money when he is occupied with heroic deeds: in matters of honour the people must commit their persons and their fortunes'.

This implies that the prince himself must decide which heroic deeds deserve his complete dedication, and the fortunes of his subjects are implicitly presented as being part of his. We are only familiar with this text through a chronicler, but even if the original version had a more delicate nuance, it expresses a view that is in keeping with Charles' actions.

A prince's honour is beyond price. Florence, too, was all about Charles' honour, as Philibert of Chalon said. The consequences of such a viewpoint were felt constantly during the performance of these heroic undertakings. Financial resources had to be raked together from various sources, usually much too late; failure to pay the soldiers was a regular phenomenon, as were their resulting raids made at the cost of the innocent local populace. In 1527 Clement VII's failure to make the promised payments to the imperial troops had driven the starving force to attack Rome. Three years later the lessons learnt from the Sack of Rome made Charles ensure that his troops would not enter Florence in any event, any excuse would be used to buy their departure. The city had to be handed over to the Medici ruler in good condition.

Both the events in 1526-1527 as those around the siege of Florence show that during the late 1520s the potential advantages of the military innovations were severely challenged by the incapacity of the political decision makers to define their targets clearly, to ensure transparent command structures and, above all, to secure the required financial and material means to attain their goals. Before any 'Military Revolution' might come into effect, the state apparatus had to be prepared for it.

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