



In Malta, the Wars of Religion reached their climax. If both sides believed that they saw Paradise in the bright sky above them, they had a close and very intimate knowledge of Hell.

THE GREAT SIEGE OF MALTA

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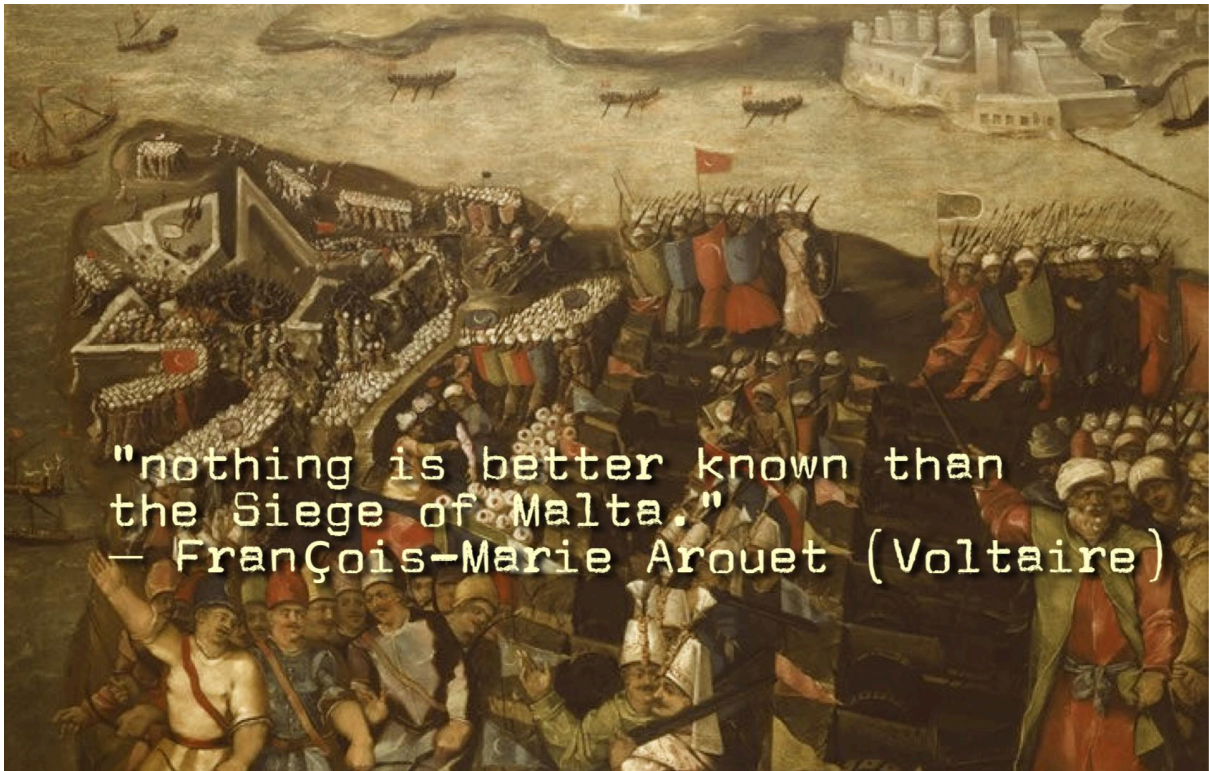
Letter from Secretary General:

Letter from Under-Secretary General:

Esteemed delegates assigned to this committee, first of all I shall start by introducing myself. I am Alin Asel Mordeniz, my role will be guiding you as your Under Secretary General throughout this journey. I wholeheartedly hope that the study guide that I have provided to you will be able to assist you further within your aims and objectives as future crisis delegates. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me via my email address below:

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Introduction to the Committee:



cr: me

This committee is convened to discuss and take actions for one of the most crucial conflicts of the 16th century as this conflict did not only determine the condition of Malta but also further. Its far-reaching effects were affecting the battle between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the power balance in the Mediterranean area.

The Mediterranean region was rife with strife and violence in the year 1565. The small but strategically significant island of Malta was desirable for the forces of the Ottoman Empire. The Knights of St. who were known for their nautical power and national ambition to defend their motherland, having control over Malta, which I am once again stating was situated at the intersection of critical ports was difficult and it caused many casualties for both sides. The siege was an emblematic conflict between two powerful civilizations and theological philosophies.

In order to take control of the island and establish a foothold in the Mediterranean, the Ottoman forces started the bloody siege.

Pre-period of 18 May 1565:

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Turks were in occupation of the Balkans, Asian Minor, the Middle East and North Africa including Egypt. The Islamic tide lapped at the gates of Vienna (years before it had set foot on Otranto in Italy) and the Christian defeat at the Battle of Mohacs in Hungary in 1526 proved that the feudal system of government and war strategy then prevailing, were powerless to stop the Ottoman advance. The Ottoman Empire had strongholds in many parts of the world. The Ottoman Empire had some goals in the

Mediterranean. By controlling the trade routes in the Mediterranean, they wanted to gain more strength economically. Their other aim was to make Europe the main base of power of the Ottoman Empire by establishing a political and military superiority in the Mediterranean. By controlling strategic points such as Malta and Djerba they wanted to gain power overseas.

Europe had a tough reaction against the Ottoman advance. The combination of the Habsburg Empire, Spain, the Papacy, the Kingdom of Naples and the Republic of Genoa wanted to stop the Ottoman advance. By decreasing the Ottoman threat in the Mediterranean and protecting its own trade routes they aimed to provide the power balance. With the time Suliman the Magnificent took over the throne in 1520, Ottoman Empire and Christians conflicts began but the nameable ones changed the flow of history which are listed below:

1. **The Siege of Rhodes (1522):** The Ottoman Empire launched a siege on the Christian island Rhodes which also was held by the Knights Hospitaller. It ended up with the surrendering of Knights Hospitaller and the victory and occupation of Ottoman forces.
2. **The siege of Vienna (1529):** The Ottoman Empire launched a siege on the Christian Holy Roman empire-controlled city of Vienna. Even though the siege failed to succeed, this event marked a very beginning of a series of conflicts between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, which was a major enemy for the Turks since Habsburgs had taken control over much of Central Europe those days.
3. **The Invasion of Gozo (1551):** The Sack of Gozo in 1551 was a devastating event that highlighted the ongoing conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian states of Europe. Its immediate impact was the near-total depopulation of Gozo, but it also served as a catalyst for the Knights of St. John to strengthen their fortifications and resolve, setting the stage for the monumental events of the Great Siege of Malta a decade later. Understanding this invasion provides valuable insights into the broader historical narrative of the Mediterranean during the 16th century.

The Ottoman Empire had been expanding their territories by occupying strategic areas in Central Europe such as I have mentioned, the Island of Rhodes.

On the other hand, The Knights Hospitaller, as the Christian military order, were defending the Christian faith and maintaining European territories from Ottoman incursions.

Battle of Djerba (1560):

The Battle of Djerba took place in 1560 near Djerba off the coast of Tunisia. In this battle, the Ottoman navy won the victory against the Crusader navy with approximately 120 ships under the command of Piyale Pasha and Turgut Reis. Ottomans were once again in need to gain control all over Europe and around Mediterranean, Europeans were once again aligned to prevent this advance from happening. The Ottomans achieved a strategic position in the Mediterranean by establishing a strong base on Djerba Island. The Navy prepared during

the winter and waited for the appropriate time to attack. The Crusader navy under the command of Giovanni Andrea Doria took action to destroy this strategic base of the Ottomans with approximately 200 ships.

At the beginning of the battle, on May 9, 1560, the Crusader navy attacked Djerba, forcing the Ottomans to retreat. However, this retreat enabled the Ottomans to take the Crusader navy into a more vulnerable position as a strategic move. So the plan didn't work as they wanted it to be.

There was an Ottoman counter-attack on May 14, the Ottoman navy launched a sudden attack under the leadership of Piyale Pasha and Turgut Reis and caught the Crusader navy unprepared. The ambush occurred and it succeeded.

The fast and more maneuverable ships of the Ottoman navy neutralized the large and bulky ships of the Crusaders. The Ottomans inflicted heavy losses by besieging the Crusader navy. It was shown that quality was over quantity with the help of rapid expansions.

At the end of the war, about 60 ships of the Crusader navy were sunk, and many ships were captured. The Crusader forces had to accept the Ottoman superiority in the Mediterranean, which suffered a great defeat.

The Ottoman navy won a great victory and reinforced its naval power in the Mediterranean. So to say, the victory provided power. On the other hand, a large part of the Crusader navy was destroyed or captured, which changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean in favor of the Ottomans. That is why this was such significant event occurred back in history and effected the siege of Malta. There were some strategic and political consequences of this event, such as sovereignty in the Mediterranean, The Ottoman Empire secured trade routes by controlling strategic points in the Mediterranean. There were some psychological impacts, such as In Europe, the perception of the invincibility of the Ottomans in the seas was strengthened, which led the European powers to develop more careful strategies against the Ottomans. There were coalition efforts which are efforts to form stronger coalitions between European powers against the Ottoman threat have accelerated.

The economical and social effects were also important. There was a guarantee of a trade agreement. The Ottomans increased their economic power and ensured the security of trade by controlling the trade routes in the Mediterranean. Any trading activity would from now on be under their supervision. Also there was the population and migration movements which were affected by the environment of security and prosperity in the Ottoman-controlled regions.

So basically, The Battle of Djerba represented the peak of the Ottoman naval power and emphasized the importance of naval battles in terms of strategy, tactics and technology. The strategy was not intentional since the Ottoman ships were unintentionally smaller, but in the end The Ottomans defeated the heavy, strong and bulky navy of the Crusaders with small ships with high mobility and experienced sailors. This battle not only consolidated the maritime superiority of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean, but also revealed the seriousness of the Ottoman threat for the European powers.

It can be said that The Battle of Djerba is an important conflict in which the Ottoman Empire consolidated its maritime superiority and achieved most of its strategic goals in the Mediterranean. This battle is of critical importance in terms of 16th century Mediterranean history and understanding Ottoman maritime history. The analysis of the battle provides important information about the naval wars and strategies of that period and reveals the reasons for the Ottoman Empire's maritime superiority.

The Battle of Djerba was such an important turning point in the naval struggles between the Ottoman Empire and Western European powers. The effect and importance of this battle on the Great Siege of Malta in 1565 should be evaluated in many ways. First of all, there was the power show-off of the Ottoman navy forces. The Battle of Djerba reinforced the superiority of the Ottoman navy in the Mediterranean. This victory showed how strong the Ottoman naval power was against the Western European powers and played an important role in the development of the Ottomans' naval force strategic power.

Because of many reasons and priorly because Turgut Reis was experienced with struggles and difficulties at this war and learned about war tactics, The Battle of Djerba is of great importance, both strategically and psychologically, for the Siege of Great Malta. While this victory reinforced the naval power of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean, it also inspired the tactics and strategies used during the Siege of Malta. The experience gained by the Ottoman navy, moral superiority and logistics preparations had a direct impact on the planning and implementation of the Siege of Malta. Therefore, the Battle of Djerba Naval should be considered a critical landmark in the historical context of the Siege of Malta.

Ottoman Empire:

Current State: Political

In world history, the sixteenth century played a pivotal role in many areas, which have been described as the greatest hallmarks in early modernity. While such transformations affected the Ottoman Empire, the peculiar historical developments in the empire made the sixteenth century more important for history-writing. In 1565, the Ottoman Empire was at the height of its power under the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent who ruled from 1520 to 1566. Ottoman Empire lived its best years.

Centralized Authority: The Ottoman Empire was a highly centralized state under the absolute power of the Sultan. Though Suleiman the Sultan had much power, he relied on a well-organized bureaucracy.

The Divan: Mainly known as Divan, this Imperial Council served as the Sultan's highest advisory board. It was composed of Grand Viziers, who were chief ministers to the sultan and heads of governments as well as other high-ranking officials such as viziers, chiefs of army and judgeship (kadiasker).

Provincial Administration: The empire was subdivided into provinces (vilayets) each with its governor called beylerbeyi (provincial governor). These governors ensured law and

order in their jurisdictions and collected taxes as well providing military support. Beneath these beylerbeyi were sanjak beys running sanjaks, which were smaller administrative units.

Janissaries: Janissaries were the Ottoman Empire's personal guard, acting as their armies in all military operations. They had a reputation for being obedient, well-trained and devoted to the Sultan.

Navy: Led by notable admirals like Piyale Pasha and Turgut Reis, the Ottoman's navy was an indomitable force in the Mediterranean. Some of its' notable battles include; Battle of Preveza (1538), and occupation of Cyprus (1570-1571).

Expansion of Territory: In 1565, the empire had grown to cover vast areas of South-Eastern Europe, Western Asia and North Africa. This move went hand in hand with an organized military system that could hold such growth.

Trade Routes for Economic Prosperity: The empire was strategically located on most trade routes from Europe to Asia. These important centers of trade and commerce in agriculture were the cities of Istanbul, Cairo, and Aleppo. **Agriculture and Taxation:** The economy of the Ottomans was agrarian, and to a certain extent, land tenure and taxation were also a bit developed. Timar was a land tenure system that provided the military officers with the land in return for their service to maintain a vast standing army. **Urbanization and Infrastructure:** The Ottomans also performed massive infrastructural development, building roads, bridges, and caravanserais to promote trade and interaction across the empire. Major cities experienced massive development of mosques, schools, and other public buildings.

Habsburg-Ottoman Rivalry: The Ottoman Empire had a long rivalry with the Habsburg Monarchy, which took place principally in Central Europe and the Mediterranean. The two powers constantly collided, with the significant battles being the siege of Vienna in 1529 and the ongoing fight over Hungary. **Relations with France:** The Ottomans had preserved an alliance with France, which was called the Franco-Ottoman alliance. The two had an unusual partnership based on their shared goal of working against the authority of the Habsburgs. French ambassadors and merchants can be seen turning around in the Ottoman lands. **Wars in the Mediterranean:** The Mediterranean was one of the major battlegrounds through which the Ottomans fought with the Spanish Empire, the Republic of Venice, and the Knights of St. John. History One crucial event was the Great Siege of Malta in 1565 when Ottomans tried to get the island of Malta from the order of the Knights of St. John, but, in the end, they didn't manage it. **Social and Cultural Aspects Religious diversity:** The Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious. It is said that under the rule of Suleiman, Ottomans lived through a cultural renaissance. The empire developed a huge renaissance related to art, architecture, literature, and science. It is said that the people following these religions lived under the rule of the Ottomans. Through the millet system, religious people were granted some autonomy to run their affairs. The well-known architect Mimar Sinan built most of the city's famous buildings, including some poets, such as Baki and Fuzuli.

Legal Reforms: Sultan Suleiman also had the designation "Kanuni" (the Lawgiver) due to his role in legal reforms. He codified and consolidated the laws to have a more consistent and just administration over the empire. Challenges and Internal Issues Succession and Governance: The issue of succession was perennial to the Ottoman court. The empire's future had begun to be looked upon with worry in the year 1565, with Suleiman's sons fighting for the title of heir and, at times, competing against each other through local fights and intrigues in the palace. The empire, through the course of its life, once in a while saw local revolts and unrest in the provinces despite its central strength. That is so: the governors and the local inhabitants sometimes take matters as disputes to the central authority, thereby necessitating local handling of the ensuing squabbles.

Ottoman Empire:

Current State: Military

What can be considered the apex or the golden age of the Ottoman military was in 1565 under the leadership of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. For any central or multi-dimensional force that involved an elite corps, highly trained generals, and a demanding navy, the subsequent organization and leaders of the military at the time were at the core:

Principle Military Units Janissaries (Yeniçeri) The Janissaries were the Ottoman elite infantry corps. Initially, they were purely Christian lads who were devşirme: converted to Islam and were predominantly disciplined, professionally trained, and immensely loyal to the Sultan. Commanders: Agha of the Janissaries was the head of the corps. In 1565, the Agha of the Janissaries became a mighty position; however, again, names in this period may vary much due to the high frequency of appointment and dismissal.

Sipahi

The Sipahi were the Ottoman horsemen. While in military terms, they were unbeatable, in exchange for the fiefs of the Sipahi, they were of immense importance not only for their fighting skills but also for performing the crucial job of maintaining law and order in the provinces. Commanders: The commanders of the Sipahi were usually the governors of the province (beylerbeyi) and the governors of a district (sanjak bey).

Azabs

Azabs were irregular volunteer foot soldiers. The Azabs commonly found employment in the work of sieges and garrison duties. Commanders The Azab units were generally commanded by local headmen or nobles, having no fixed chain of command.

Topçular (Artillery)

The Ottoman artillery had the best firepower in the whole world during their zenith, "basilisks," so to speak, of a thousand sorts. Commanders: The Topçubaşı, or Master Gunner, commanded the artillery corps and, mostly, was pivotal during sieges.

Navy

The Ottoman Navy was one of the great powers of the Mediterranean, with experienced admirals and mariners in command. The navy was employed in projecting Ottoman power overseas. Admirals Piyale Pasha: He was a head admiral and was influential in several naval engagements, amongst which was the Battle of Djerba (Cerbe) in the year 1560. Turgut Reis (Dragut): A legend of corsairs and admirals, he was one of the inventors of diversions and other operations and was involved in the Great Siege of Malta in the year 1565, where he finally died.

Key Military Leaders and Generals

Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent As the supreme commander under whose direction the whole Ottoman military operated, Sultan Suleiman was responsible for any ultimate military campaign and plan. Therefore, he was regarded as essential to the organization and consequently issued commands for offensives and, on occasion, even directly led one or more of them.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha This Grand Vizier reigned from 1565 to 1579. As a personality, he emerged powerful in empire administration and military maneuvers to ensure the steady operation of the military machine.

Lala Mustafa Pasha A leading general of the time, he participated in most of the campaigns of importance before leading the conquest of Cyprus in 1570-1571.

Kızıl Ahmedli Mustafa Pasha Another leading Ottoman general, was involved in most critical campaigns during Suleiman's reign.

Significant Campaigns and Military Engagements

Great Siege of Malta (1565) The Great Siege of Malta was a crucial military engagement when the Ottomans tried to capture the island of Malta, which was under the control of the Knights of St. John. Leading Personalities: Mustafa Pasha: Overall leader of the land forces during the siege. Piyale Pasha: Leader of the naval assault at the siege. Turgut Reis: Veteran admiral who joined the blockade, only to pass away in the war.

Wars with the Habsburg Monarchy

The Ottomans always found themselves in more or less a state of war with the Habsburgs, as most warfare was wrangled between the Hungarians and the Balkans. The hostilities were rife with battles and sieges where the two Empires purported their sovereignty to the region at the center of Europe.

Organizational Structure and Logistics

Timar System

The timar system was a feudal arrangement whereby land was granted to Sipahi cavalry in return for military service.

Ottoman Empire:

Current State: Religion

In 1565, the Ottoman Empire was a vast and diverse realm encompassing various ethnic and religious groups. The religious state of the empire was characterized by a complex interplay of Islamic governance, tolerance of non-Muslim communities, and a well-defined legal and administrative framework that facilitated the coexistence of multiple faiths. The following detailed analysis examines the religious state of the Ottoman Empire during this period, focusing on the role of Islam, the status of non-Muslim communities, religious administration, and key figures and institutions.

Dominance of Islam

1. **Official Religion:** Islam was the state religion of the Ottoman Empire, with the Sultan serving as both the political and religious leader. As the Caliph, the Sultan was regarded as the protector of Islam and the supreme authority on religious matters.
2. **Sunni Orthodoxy:** The Ottomans adhered to Sunni Islam, particularly the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, which was the most flexible and widely followed in the empire. The Hanafi school's emphasis on reason and adaptability made it suitable for governing a diverse empire.
3. **Religious Institutions:** Key religious institutions included:
 - **Sheikh-ul-Islam:** The highest religious authority in the empire, responsible for interpreting Islamic law (Sharia) and issuing legal opinions (fatwas). The Sheikh-ul-Islam had significant influence over both religious and political matters.
 - **Ulema:** The body of Islamic scholars and jurists who played a crucial role in the administration of religious law, education, and public morality. They were instrumental in maintaining the religious and legal framework of the empire.
 - **Mosques and Madrasas:** Mosques were centers of worship and community life, while madrasas (Islamic schools) provided religious and secular education. Key architectural landmarks from this period include the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, commissioned by Suleiman the Magnificent.

Religious Tolerance and the Millet System

1. **Millet System:** The Ottoman Empire implemented the millet system, which allowed religious minorities to govern their own communities with a degree of autonomy. Each millet (religious community) was led by its religious leader and was responsible for its own legal and social affairs.
 - **Greek Orthodox Christians:** The largest non-Muslim community, led by the Patriarch of Constantinople. They were granted significant autonomy in religious and civil matters.
 - **Armenian Apostolic Christians:** Another major Christian group, led by the Armenian Patriarchate, primarily based in Istanbul and Eastern Anatolia.
 - **Jews:** The Jewish community was diverse, including both Sephardic Jews who had fled the Spanish Inquisition and Romaniote Jews who had lived in the region for centuries. The Chief Rabbi (Hakham Bashi) was the head of the Jewish millet.

2. **Legal and Social Status:** Non-Muslims, known as dhimmis, were granted protection and allowed to practice their religion in return for paying the jizya (poll tax). While they had certain restrictions, such as limitations on the construction of new places of worship and bearing arms, they generally enjoyed a degree of religious freedom and communal autonomy uncommon in contemporary Europe.

Religious Policies and Governance

1. **Religious Law (Sharia) and Customary Law (Kanun):** The Ottoman legal system was a dual system comprising Sharia, which governed religious and family matters, and Kanun (secular law), which covered administrative and criminal issues. Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent was known for his legal reforms, earning him the title "Kanuni" (the Lawgiver).
2. **Integration and Conversion:** While the empire did not actively force conversions to Islam, conversion was incentivized through social and economic benefits, such as exemption from the jizya tax and increased opportunities within the administration and military. Converts were often assimilated into the Ottoman Muslim identity.
3. **Interfaith Relations:** The Ottoman administration generally promoted peaceful coexistence among different religious communities. Religious leaders of various millets were integrated into the state's administrative framework, ensuring their loyalty and the stability of their communities.

Key Figures and Institutions

1. **Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent:** As the Caliph, Sultan Suleiman played a crucial role in maintaining the religious and political order. His patronage of religious institutions and legal reforms strengthened the Islamic character of the state while ensuring the integration of non-Muslim communities.
2. **Ebusuud Efendi:** The prominent Sheikh-ul-Islam during Suleiman's reign, Ebusuud Efendi was instrumental in harmonizing Sharia with Kanun, issuing fatwas that supported the Sultan's reforms and policies.
3. **Religious Scholars and Sufi Orders:** The Ottoman Empire was home to a rich tradition of Islamic scholarship and mysticism. Sufi orders, such as the Mevlevi and Bektashi, played significant roles in social and religious life, promoting spiritual practices and community cohesion.

Social and Cultural Impacts

1. **Religious Architecture:** The period saw a flourishing of religious architecture, with the construction of grand mosques, madrasas, and other religious buildings. These structures were not only places of worship but also symbols of Ottoman power and piety.
2. **Cultural Syncretism:** The coexistence of multiple religious communities led to a vibrant cultural exchange, influencing art, literature, music, and cuisine. This syncretism enriched Ottoman culture and contributed to its unique character.
3. **Education and Scholarship:** Madrasas and religious schools were centers of learning, producing scholars who contributed to Islamic jurisprudence, science, and the humanities. The period was marked by significant intellectual activity and the production of important literary and scientific works.

Island of Malta & Knights Hospitaller :

Current State: Military

Before the Great Siege of Malta in 1565, the Knights Hospitaller, also known as the Knights of St. John, had established Malta as a formidable military stronghold. Their preparation for defense and their military organization were critical in withstanding the Ottoman onslaught.

Historical Context and Background

1. **Arrival in Malta:** The Knights Hospitaller were granted the islands of Malta, Gozo, and the North African city of Tripoli by Charles V of Spain in 1530, after losing Rhodes to the Ottomans in 1522.
2. **Fortification of Malta:** Recognizing the strategic importance of Malta in controlling the central Mediterranean, the Knights set about fortifying the island extensively. They constructed and improved fortifications, including the significant forts of St. Elmo, St. Angelo, and St. Michael.

Key Fortifications and Defensive Structures

1. **Fort St. Elmo:** Located on the Sciberras Peninsula, this fort guarded the entrances to both the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour. It was a crucial defensive position against naval attacks.
2. **Fort St. Angelo:** Situated at the tip of Birgu (Vittoriosa), this fort served as the primary stronghold and headquarters of the Knights. It was heavily fortified and served as the command center during the siege.
3. **Fort St. Michael:** Positioned in Senglea, this fort protected the entrance to the Grand Harbour alongside Fort St. Angelo.
4. **The Three Cities:** Birgu (Vittoriosa), Senglea, and Bormla (Cospicua) were heavily fortified urban areas that provided strong defensive positions and housed much of the population and military resources.

Military Organization and Forces

1. **Grand Master Jean Parisot de Valette:** The leader of the Knights Hospitaller, Valette was a seasoned and respected commander with extensive experience in defending against Ottoman forces.
2. **Knights of the Order:** The core military force consisted of about 500 Knights, who were well-trained and heavily armed. They came from various European noble families and were highly motivated by religious and chivalric ideals.
3. **Maltese Militia:** The local Maltese population played a crucial role in the defense, with approximately 3,000 to 4,000 Maltese soldiers and irregulars supplementing the Knights' forces.
4. **Mercenaries and Soldiers of Fortune:** The Order hired additional mercenaries and soldiers of fortune, increasing their total fighting force. Estimates suggest that the

total number of defenders, including all sources, ranged between 6,000 and 9,000 men.

5. **Artillery and Weaponry:** The Knights had a substantial arsenal of artillery, including cannons and arquebuses. The fortifications were equipped with numerous guns, and the defenders were well-supplied with ammunition and other war materials.

Strategic Preparations

1. **Fortification Enhancements:** In the years leading up to the siege, extensive work was done to strengthen the existing fortifications and build new ones. Ditches, bastions, and ravelins were constructed to provide layered defenses.
2. **Naval Preparations:** Although the Knights' naval forces were limited compared to the Ottoman fleet, they had several galleys and smaller vessels prepared to defend the harbors and provide logistical support.
3. **Supply Stockpiling:** Understanding the likelihood of a prolonged siege, the Knights had stockpiled large quantities of food, water, and medical supplies. The strategic positioning of supplies in various fortresses was crucial for maintaining the defense.
4. **Intelligence and Diplomacy:** The Knights maintained a network of spies and informants to gather intelligence on Ottoman movements. Diplomatic efforts were also made to secure support and reinforcements from European powers, particularly from the Spanish Empire and the Papal States.

Key Figures

1. **Jean Parisot de Valette:** The GrandMaster who led the defense with exceptional leadership and strategic acumen.
2. **Chevalier de la Fontaine:** The commander of Fort St. Elmo who played a significant role in its defense.
3. **Gabriele Tadini de Borgo:** An Italian Knight who was notable for his contributions to the defense and his role in organizing the artillery.

Island of Malta & Knights Hospitaller :

Current State: Religion

In 1565, the religious state of the Knights Hospitaller on the Island of Malta was defined by their role as a Catholic military order, their mission of defending Christendom, and their relationship with the local Maltese population.

The Knights Hospitaller: A Catholic Military Order

1. **Origins and Mission:** The Knights Hospitaller, formally known as the Order of Knights of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, were founded in the 11th century during the Crusades. Their initial mission was to provide care for sick and injured pilgrims in the Holy Land, but they soon took on a military role in defending Christendom against Muslim forces.
2. **Vows and Structure:** The Knights were bound by the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their structure was hierarchical, with the Grand Master at

the top, followed by the knights, sergeants-at-arms, and affiliated clergy. The order was divided into several languages, or tongues, based on the knights' geographical and linguistic origins.

Religious Practices and Institutions

1. **Chapel of the Order:** The primary place of worship for the Knights was the Conventual Church of St. John in Birgu (Vittoriosa). This church was the spiritual center of the Order and housed relics and sacred objects. Religious services, including daily Mass, were held here.
2. **Chaplaincy:** Each language had its own chaplains who conducted religious services and provided spiritual support to the knights. The chaplains played a crucial role in maintaining the religious life of the Order.
3. **Hospitals:** True to their original mission, the Knights maintained hospitals where they provided care for the sick and injured. The Sacra Infermeria in Birgu was one of the most advanced hospitals in Europe at the time, known for its medical care and hygiene standards.
4. **Religious Observances:** The Knights observed the liturgical calendar with its feasts, fasts, and religious celebrations. They also participated in regular communal prayers, confessions, and the Eucharist.

Relationship with the Local Maltese Population

1. **Catholic Unity:** The Knights and the local Maltese population shared a common Catholic faith, which helped to forge a sense of unity and cooperation, especially in the face of external threats such as the Ottoman Empire.
2. **Local Clergy:** The Maltese clergy played a significant role in the religious life of the island, maintaining local churches and parishes. The local church hierarchy was led by the Bishop of Malta, who worked in conjunction with the Knights.
3. **Religious Education and Charity:** The Knights engaged in charitable activities and supported religious education for the Maltese people. They founded schools and orphanages and supported local parishes.

Symbolism and Ideology

1. **Crusading Spirit:** The Knights Hospitaller were deeply influenced by the crusading spirit. They saw themselves as defenders of the Catholic faith and protectors of Christendom against the Muslim Ottoman Empire.
2. **Symbols and Insignia:** The white eight-pointed cross was the emblem of the Order and symbolized their religious and chivalric ideals. This cross was prominently displayed on their clothing, buildings, and banners.
3. **Chivalric Code:** The Knights adhered to a chivalric code that combined martial prowess with religious devotion. They were expected to live by the principles of courage, honor, and piety.

The Motivation behind the Great Siege of Malta:

The motivation for the Ottoman Empire was both because Malta was of immense strategic significance to the Ottoman's long-term plan of conquering Europe because of the exact place of Malta.



The Ottoman Turks had the idea of gaza and their first aim was to bring the whole Islamic world under their protection. Also, the primary objective of Suleiman was to dislodge the Hospitallers from Malta.

The Great Siege of Malta:

March 1565

Ottoman's navy forces departed from Istanbul at this date, they were led by commanders Turgut Reis and Piyale Pasha. The fleet's strength included approximately 40,000 men and 180 ships. Their main goal was to capture Malta and to maintain the reign of Ottoman in the Mediterranean, also to preserve a base in cases of a conflict within Europe.

18th of May 1565

The Ottoman Navy Forces have moored at Marsaxlokk Bay which is located at the northwest side of Malta. This area was a strategic point for the siege itself and a key place for the arrival. Their first plan was to attack to St. Elmo Castle since this castle was providing the safety of Valletta Port.

22th of May 1565

Ottoman forces started their first siege by attacking with a heavy artillery fire. The artillery particularly destroyed the walls of the castle. After the artillery fire, Ottoman infantry attacked the walls but the Knights Hospitaller countered with a strong resistance against their fire.

23rd of June 1565

After one month of fierce fighting and resistance, Ottoman forces took control over the castle. The resistants stood out against until their last breath but at the end of the day, most of them were defeated. The fall of the castle was an important victory for Ottoman Turks but this victory resulted with such great waste of time and supply. Castle was captured but Ottoman forces were worn out.

July 1565

After capturing St. Elmo, Ottomans shifted their attack focus more on the defensive centers of the island, Birgu and Senglea. These two castles were the strategic hearts of Malta and the resistance of the knights. Ottomans deployed their heavy artillery batteries inside Birgu and Senglea. These artillery started a heavy fire in order to destroy the walls and to absorb the knights' strength. Ottoman forces dug ditches and put barricades for their siege. These sides of sieges helped Ottoman forces advance near the castles and narrowed the knights' movement capability.

The Ottomans carried out their violent attacks against Birgu, they used climbing hooks and stairs to cross the castle walls. However, the Knights and local people of Malta strongly opposed and maintained their lines of defense.

The Ottomans carried out their similar attack tactics on Senglea. Artillery fire and pedestrian attacks caused great damage for the walls of the castle. Therefore the defenders carried out counter-attacks to stop the advance of the Ottomans. They have made some tactical mistakes and that caused them to reduce their chances of winning. They had coordination deficiencies which is also called a double head. The Ottomans had difficulty in carrying out simultaneous attacks on Birgu and Senglea. Lack of coordination between the commanders and the death of Turgut Reis reduced the impact of the attacks. His death will be explained in more detail afterwards since it was very crucial for this siege.

There were lack of supplies and soldiers couldn't show the exact effort they showed in first one month. The long siege began to consume the ammunition and resources of the Ottomans. While the soldiers were tired, the lack of ammunition reduced the severity of the attacks.

The knights tried unprecedented tactics at this phase of the war and did not do their best to ably influence the Ottoman soldiers. Some of them were:

Night Raids:

The knights organized night raids on the siege lines of the Ottomans. These raids disrupted the siege arrangements of the Ottomans and gave morale to the defenders. These raids also ended up with deaths of Ottoman soldiers as they were unexpected and harsh.

Use of Liquid Fire:

The defenders used "liquid fire" (flammable liquids) to repel the Ottomans' attempts to climb. This tactic made it difficult for the Ottomans to approach the castle and slowed their attacks.

Continuous Reinforcement and Repair:

During the Defence, the walls of the castles were constantly repaired. The defenders quickly repaired the damage caused by the Ottoman cannons and kept the Defence lines strong.

23rd June 1565

Ottoman's most experienced and most effective naval commander Turgut Reis played a critical role in the siege of Malta. He was in charge of the attacks on St. Elmo. On June 17, he was seriously injured during an attack to St. Elmo. The artillery fire and the wounds he received during the close combat seriously affected the situation of the old commander. After being injured he retreated to the Ottoman camp.

After his death, both the army and the commanders' morale has fallen down. Piyale Pasha and others could not fulfill his place.

August 1565:

The Knights Hospitaller in Malta, from the early days of the siege, have asked the Spanish King II. Felipe for help. The Knights, who needed the support of other Christian states in Europe, made this call with an urgency. II. Felipe was sensitive to the expansion of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean and responded positively to the Knights' call for help. At the end of August, a rescue fleet that came with Spanish help arrived in Malta. These reinforcements, which brought about 8,000 soldiers and a significant amount of ammunition, provided great support to repel the Ottoman attacks. These forces helped the knights well and increased their morale.

The newcomer Spanish forces aligned with the knights and attacked Ottoman Turks troops. With the help of these attacks, knights became more powerful than their enemy. Ottomans stepped back because they started to give too much casualties.

7-8th of September 1565

The Ottomans attempted to prepare a major and a final attack to break down the resistance in Malta. In this attack, they used all their power to defeat the defenders. Ottoman commanders made an intense effort to succeed in the final phase of the siege.

On September 7, 1565, the Ottomans launched coordinated attacks on Birgu and Senglea castles. They aimed to destroy the Defence lines with artillery fire, pedestrian attacks and tunnel digging attempts. These attacks witnessed the most violent conflicts of the siege.

Ottomans last attacks resulted with violent clashes. Knights fought back at the walls of the castles and inside the ditches. Spanish and Knights forces counter-attacked in order to prevent the Turks to continue on moving forward. These counter-attacks generated mental

instability to the Turks while Knights were increasing their morale by religious ceremonies inside the castles.

Ottomans gave so many casualties while they were both running out of supplies and manpower. Commanders gave orders to retreat. It was clearly a defeat.

11th of September 1565

The Ottoman navy and ground forces withdrew from Malta, inflicting heavy losses. The withdrawal reflected the worn and demoralized status of the Ottoman forces. The Ottomans returned without achieving the success they wanted in Malta.

The Knights Hospitaller, who showed great resistance throughout the siege, celebrated their victory with great enthusiasm. Malta had been successfully defended against Ottoman attacks. The knights were declared heroes by other Christian states in Europe.

Expectations from Delegates:

As your crisis team, what we expect from you is to study well to your guide and use more resources in order to do research. Please study your allocated characters as well. Also, don't forget that memorizing some of the war tactics used in this siege might help you and enlighten you too. Hope this study guide found you well, good luck!