Many generals did more than just criticize. On rare occasions siege commanders intervened in the choice of approaches, but throughout the rest of the siege they called upon their expertise in field warfare to override many of the other engineering decisions. Looking closer, we see that all of the complaints about the engineers and all of the different interventions by different commanders in different armies were dedicated to the same goal: accelerate the tempo of campaigning. They simplified Vauban’s precise balancing of casualties, delays and costs into a much more straightforward calculus of capturing the town as quickly as possible. To do so, they adopted techniques directly opposed both by Vauban himself and by his French and Allied heirs. Excessive safety and *industrie* were to be eschewed while speed and action were to take their place: the engineering cult of efficiency was opposed by the generals’ cult of vigor.

Putting Vauban back into his larger military context, we see a reservoir of hostility to the efficiency paradigm among both French and Allied generals not simply because they were jealous of Vauban’s (or Coehoorn’s) authority, or because these great engineers represented the status quo, but because the efficiency ideal that engineers strived to achieve appeared to protect human life at the cost of lost time.

The desire for immediate results and the corresponding impatience with delays is in some sense timeless. The cult of vigor—an early modern cult of the offensive—likely originated from a combination of time limitations and supply shortages. The role of time was particularly important in the early modern world, when short campaign seasons and slow transportation technologies dictated significant delays.

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1 This goes far beyond warfare, of course, and beyond the early modern period as well. For recognition of the shortage of time in the Middle Ages, see Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, pp. 105–107. Future research should explore competing explanations for the cult of vigor, including the impact of decisive action on morale. However, the only reason that participants in the War of the Spanish Succession explicitly gave, as we have seen, is the desire to avoid delays.
when coordinating armies and fleets across several theaters.\footnote{Scholars have examined the tyranny of distance in a number of works, most memorably in Fernand Braudel’s *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 415ff. In early modern European military history, the best recent example is Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, (New Haven, 1998), chapter 2.} Thus strategic planning had to be done many months in advance and unforeseen delays might throw off coordination between theaters and allies, perhaps canceling military operations altogether. Political leaders were always anxious about when the army could start the campaign, since entering the field before your enemy opened up a whole variety of largely-uncontested targets.\footnote{John Lynn argues that Louis easily transitioned from a war-as-event strategy, i.e. his opening attempts to win wars quickly, to a war-as-process strategy wherein he readily accepted a war of attrition against allied forces after his initial efforts failed (*The Wars of Louis XIV*, pp. 375–376). Citing the example of the Dutch War, Lynn fails to mention, however, the two later cases of 1693 and 1706, where, as each war dragged on and became increasingly burdensome, Louis lost patience with war-as-process and sought to end it all by pushing for concerted efforts in every theater. Both of these attempts failed, forcing the Sun King to continue the wars of attrition.} Politicians similarly enquired when the army would finish up its current operation and move on to others—troop reinforcements might need to be sent to shore up another theater, or an approaching enemy corps might soon prevent the investment of another town or eliminate the possibility of a battle with numerical superiority, or peace negotiations might require a kick-start from a military victory. Conversely, delays might put a halt to successful post-battle pursuit, giving the enemy respite and time to recover from defeat, even allowing the enemy time to receive reinforcements.\footnote{Points that contemporaries were well aware of, e.g. Feuquières, *Memoirs historical and military*, vol. 1, pp. 96, 98, 106.} Applied to siegework, the cult of vigor demanded a rapid siege. The historiography’s emphasis on duration as a fundamental measure of sieges is not a coincidence, for this was by far the single most important variable to most military participants and observers. A siege might end too late in the season to start another one, or supplies in the surrounding region (or the contents of royal coffers) might be consumed before a siege’s end was projected. Such delays allowed a strategic advantage to peter away. As a result, offensive wars would degenerate into less preferable contests between equally-matched powers, increasing the likelihood of requiring yet another year of war and all the costs associated with it.