

Habsburg Self and Bourbon Other in the Franco–Austrian Alliance, 1756–1791

by

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Abstract

Taking cues from the work of Paul W. Schroeder, this project seeks to investigate the particular conditions which allowed the Habsburg Monarchy and two of its leading politicians—Leopold II and Metternich—to have such pride of place in Schroeder’s ‘transformation’ of the European state-system. It contends that the international politics of restraint, reciprocity, and far-sighted collective security predate the French Revolution and the Habsburg reaction to it, instead proceeding from the Austrian experience in the 18th Century. At the same time, inspired by both constructivist and critical approaches to diplomatic history, this project aims to set this ‘Habsburg self’ against its ‘Bourbon other’ in a discussion of the Monarchy’s primary ally from 1756–1791: the Kingdom of France. In this sense it acts as a much-needed counterpart to the burgeoning literature on French perceptions of Austria, Marie Antoinette, and Austrophobia. Far from a “deadlocked alliance”, what emerges from this analysis is the history of a relationship—founded on a significant degree of assumption of commensurability—which Habsburg policymakers consistently sought to improve through further investment and optimism, despite repeated disappointments. This structure serves to set France and Austria apart from the other Great Powers, particularly Prussia and Russia, in order to tentatively suggest that the diplomatic and foreign-policy cultures of *ancien-régime* Habsburg–Bourbon Europe anticipated the international order of the 19th Century.

To Dave and John

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List of Abbreviations

- MTJI* Ritter von Arneth, Alfred. *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.: Ihre Correspondenz Sammt Briefen Joseph's An Seinen Bruder Leopold*, vol. I. Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1867.
- MTJII* Ritter von Arneth, Alfred. *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.: Ihre Correspondenz Sammt Briefen Joseph's An Seinen Bruder Leopold*, vol. II. Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1867.
- JLK* Beer, Adolf. *Joseph II., Leopold II. und Kaunitz: Ihr Briefwechsel*. Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1873.
- DFKR* Beer, Alfred. "Denkschriften des Fürsten Wenzel Kaunitz-Rittbergs", in *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, vol. 48. Wien: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1872.
- CSKK* Schlitter, Hanns. *Correspondance secrète entre le comte A. W. Kaunitz-Rietberg et le baron Ignaz de Koch, 1750–1752*. Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et C^{ie}, 1899.
- CSJMK I* Arneth, Alfred Ritter von, and Jules Flammermont. *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'empereur Joseph II et le prince de Kaunitz*, vol. I. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889.
- CSJMK II* Arneth, Alfred Ritter von, and Jules Flammermont. *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'empereur Joseph II et le prince de Kaunitz*, vol. II. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891.

Introduction

Writing to his State Chancellor, Prince Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz–Rietberg from Milan on June 27th, 1791, Leopold II elaborated on a series of issues he had addressed in a letter the day before, mostly concerning the ongoing peace negotiations with the Ottoman Empire at Sistova, the evolving new Austrian relationship with Prussia in the aftermath of Reichenbach, and political developments in Hungary. The Emperor referred to France only in passing—to say that he concurred entirely with Chancellor Kaunitz’s views and to mention that he was still awaiting the arrival of a courier, dispatched from Vienna, who was to bear a letter on the subject from Leopold to the King of Spain. Leopold wound down the letter by discussing his rather banal plans for returning to Austria after a brief sojourn in Padua. If urgent news should reach him, he would return by the “plus court chemin de la Pontiéva et la Carinthie à Vienne.” If circumstances were less pressing, he would return more leisurely via Trieste, Gorice and Laibach.¹

In a sudden postscript added onto this letter, Leopold remarked that he had just received word that if accurate, “pouroit [*sic*] donner lieu à de grandes Consequences”: Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, Leopold’s sister, had fled Paris.² This news was not entirely unexpected—Leopold II had speculated openly

¹ Pontiéva refers to the town of Pontebba, Italy. It was then a longstanding border town on the sole mountain crossing between the Venetian Terraferma and Carthina. Adolf Beer, *Joseph II., Leopold II. und Kaunitz: Ihr Briefwechsel*, (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1873), 410–416.

² The Emperor seems not to have considered this news worthy of rushing back to Vienna; after leaving Padua sometime after July 5th, he wrote again to Kaunitz from Trieste on the 13th, and was in Graz only on the 18th. *Ibid.*, 416–418.

in a letter from Mantua a month earlier, after several meetings with the counter-revolutionary émigré leader, the comte d'Artois, on what commitments Austria would make in the event that the French royal family escaped the capital.³

Nevertheless, the failure of the dramatic Flight to Varennes and the 'arrest' of the royal family quickly pushed Austrian policy in new directions: in the infamous Padua Circular, Leopold called for joint action by all crowned-heads of Europe to "recognize as law and constitution legally established in France only those [measures] which they shall find bearing the voluntary approval of the King, in enjoyment of perfect liberty." All other developments in France, past and future, were to be considered as if open revolt.⁴

In many ways, these events, from imagining the escape of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, to the project's sudden failure and the initial Habsburg reaction, were the last great moments of the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756. They cannot be understood outside of it—when they were arrested at Varennes, the French Royal Family were en route to Montmédy, a royalist fortress mere kilometres from the border of the Austrian Netherlands, where Austrian troops, fresh from restoring Habsburg rule in the tumultuous provinces, were awaiting invitation to

³ Ibid., 405–408. Although Joseph II and Kaunitz had quickly seen through the comte d'Artois' conspiracies in the early stages of the French Revolution, Artois' standing and influence certainly seemed heightened around the time of the Flight to Varennes. Whether this was a result of the failure of the royal family's escape and the moving of the émigré headquarters to Koblenz as Michael Hochedlinger suggests, or if it predates these events—as Leopold's letter outlining his written agreement with Artois perhaps suggests—is unclear. Michael Hochedlinger, "Who's Afraid of the French Revolution? Austrian Foreign Policy and the European Crisis 1787–1797," *German History*, vol. 21 (3) (2003), 304–305.

⁴ John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 223; original in Alfred von Vivenot, *Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserpolitik Oesterreichs während der französischen Revolutionskriege*, vol. 1 (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1873), 185–7.

help guard the King and Queen .⁵ The Franco–Austrian alliance that served as the foundation of such a course of action had been deftly brokered by Kaunitz in 1756, doubtlessly impelled by the antecedent Convention of Westminster which disabused Louis XV and the Cardinal de Bernis—at least temporarily—of their pro–Prussian leanings.⁶ This alliance provided the basis and the cause of Leopold’s especial interest in French domestic affairs, and made Austria a natural focal point of counter-revolutionary efforts. Beyond this, however, the Diplomatic Revolution had a familial dimension, so famously embodied by the French Queen, but perhaps no less evidenced by Leopold’s preoccupations with Spain and the remainder of the House of Bourbon in his agreement with the comte d’Artois. Indeed, during the negotiations Leopold suggested that the publicly announced agreement of Spain and “toute la maison de Bourbon” was a necessary precondition for any demarche in Paris, not merely “la volonté du Roi de France.”⁷ Such concerns invoked the world of the Third Family Compact of 1761, a longstanding Franco–Spanish rapprochement that had inducted Austria, France, and Spain into an ersatz triple alliance during the Seven Years’ War,⁸ and which was still active during the first stages of the French Revolution. Before,

⁵ Leopold offered Austrian troops to the Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette “comme leur allié et parent,” if they successfully escaped the capital. Beer, *JLK*, 407.

⁶ The most detailed account is Richard Waddington, *Louis XV et le Renversement des Alliances: Préliminaires de la Guerre de Sept Ans, 1754–1756*, (Paris : Librairie de Firmin-Didot, 1896).

⁷ Leopold remained preoccupied with Spain as late as just before hearing of the royal escape—he reiterates the need to send a courier to Spain and suggests that as the reason for his stay in Padua. Beer, *JLK*, 406 and 416.

⁸ See H.M. Scott, “Religion and Realpolitik: the Duc De Choiseul, the Bourbon Family Compact, and the Attack on the Society of Jesus, 1758–1775”, *The International History Review*, vol. 25 (1) (Mar. 2003), 42–43.

during, and after, the Flight to Varennes was coloured by an alliance system some three and a half decades old.

By the time of the Declaration of Pillnitz in August, 1791, this system—at least in its Franco–Austrian dimension—was all but dead: it had likely been a fiction since France’s virtual disappearance from the international scene in 1787 after the Prussian invasion of the United Provinces. But amidst the turmoil of the French Revolution in the summer of 1791, Leopold led an initially reluctant Kaunitz—perhaps justly in light of the catastrophe at Merle a year later—into accepting realignment with Prussia and the Triple Alliance instead of clinging too closely to Russia, then still at war with the Ottomans. This radical *volte-face* of the axiomatic Habsburg hostility to Prussia—upon which Kaunitz’ *renversement des alliances* had been existentially prefaced—represented, in the words of Michael Hochedlinger, the “Second Diplomatic Revolution.”⁹

This second great reversal of alliances decisively signaled the beginning of the end for the Franco–Austrian partnership, which is usually assumed to have been “preserved, at least on paper, until 1792.”¹⁰ Alongside the French declaration of war against the Monarchy, this *renversement* opened the decisive era of the

⁹ Hochedlinger suggests that the Flight to Varennes was a key cause of Austro–Prussian cooperation. Michael Hochedlinger, *Krise und Wiederstellung: Österreichische Großmachtspolitik zwischen Türkenkrieg und „Zweiter Diplomatischer Revolution“, 1787–1791*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2000), 449–455.

¹⁰ The implied cutting-off point is the French declaration of war on Austria on April 20th, 1792. Marco Cesa, *Allies Yet Rivals: International Politics in the 18th Century Europe*, trans. Patrick John Barr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 177. This view is representative of broader sketches of the alliance and its history; as both Hochedlinger and H.M. Scott note, however, the Flight to Varennes is the more crucial episode for the deterioration of relations. Hochedlinger notes that Austria even broke off relations with Paris over the suspension of Louis XVI. Hochedlinger, “Who’s Afraid of the French Revolution?”, 306–307; see H.M. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), 251–260.

Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, which changed the European state-system forever. In his magisterial *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848*, Paul W. Schroeder argues that this particular moment and context—Leopold II, the Habsburg Monarchy, and its crisis of reaction to France—gave the first indication of the “*metanoia*” which would come to change Europe:

a generation before the Congress of Vienna, long before successive wars and disasters finally converted Metternich for a few years from a clever but shallow diplomat and grand seigneur into something of a statesman, Leopold anticipated him in breaking with eighteenth-century politics and trying to create a new international system. Only thus, and not just as expedients to get Austria out of trouble or to manage an increasingly chaotic situation, must Leopold's actions in the summer of 1791 and later be understood.

Leopold hoped to use the French Revolution as a threat to maintain peace and stability in Europe.¹¹ Schroeder's thesis about Leopold, and by extension, Metternich, underlines the centrality of the Habsburg Monarchy in creating the Europe of the 19th Century. Yet, upon closer reflection on both Schroeder's characterisation of Austria and the details of Habsburg policy, it remains open to question whether Leopold was truly even so exceptional or if perhaps the Monarchy's transformative politics had originated earlier. Exploring this issue is important in further understanding the forces identified by Schroeder, and a key objective of this project.

And yet, the *renversement* of 1791 was equally the end of a major systemic alliance which had endured for decades. It was an alliance which has acquired a dubious historiographical reputation, forged between two states of

¹¹ Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 88–89.

equally dubious power. This legacy of the Diplomatic Revolution is rarely portrayed in a positive frame: Jeremy Black draws attention to the inherent suspicion that France had for Austria, calling the *renversement des alliances* an “accident, rather than geopolitical determinism.”¹² H.M. Scott asserts that the survival of the disputatious Franco–Austrian alliance can be traced primarily to the impossibility of an alternative alignment after a Russo–Prussian agreement in 1764.¹³ Marco Cesa’s typology of 18th century alliances lists it as the primary example of a “deadlocked alliance” between two great powers of equal standing and with widely “heterogeneous” interests.¹⁴ Thomas Iiams labels it “troubled” and allows for debate on whether or not signing the alliance was the greatest folly of Louis XV’s entire reign.¹⁵ Schroeder stresses how France and Austria proved incapable of any positive or cooperative action, and his initial sketch leaves one to wonder what possible purpose the alliance could have served. Schroeder suggests its primary function was to serve as a pact of mutual restraint, a type of alliance which he sees as dominating the early 19th Century,¹⁶ and an integral part of the transformative new European politics in the post-Napoleonic era.

¹² Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 2nd Edition, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 341. Black further develops the theme of short-term influences and the falsehood of assuming ‘natural alignments’ in Jeremy Black, “Essay and Reflection: On the ‘Old System’ and the ‘Diplomatic Revolution’ of the Eighteenth Century”, *The International History Review*, vol. 12 (2) (May, 1990): 301–323.

¹³ Scott reiterates the frequent theme of Habsburg–Bourbon differences, noting that while the alliance may have been “the most stable and...the most enduring of the new alignments which emerged in 1756–7...this axis was characterized by repeated and severe disagreements, particularly over military strategy and finance.” H. M. Scott, *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers, 1756–1775*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 36 and 117–119.

¹⁴ See Marco Cesa, *Allies yet Rivals*, 176–210.

¹⁵ Thomas M. Iiams, *Peacemaking from Vergennes to Napoleon: French Foreign Relations in the Revolutionary Era, 1774–1814*, (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger, 1979), 12–15.

¹⁶ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 41–43 and 15. On the functions and roles of alliances in the 19th Century, see Paul W. Schroeder, “Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power

In fact, Schroeder's pact of mutual restraint embodies a wide historiographical consensus on the Franco–Austrian relationship. Where pressed to provide a justification of the alliance, most historians turn to this idea of checks and holds, occasionally also mentioning the geopolitical advantages of the neutralization of Italy and the Austrian Netherlands and dynastic connections. At least one historian has hazarded the suggestion that Catholicism may have also played a role.¹⁷ There is rarely any suggestion that the alliance provided positive benefits to either party, except when it comes to furnishing each power with a 'free hand' against its primary rival—Britain and Prussia, respectively. This perspective is true even of literature geared towards examining the "atavistic" and durable legacy of Austrophobia in France, which itself subtly suggests that French policymakers' attitude towards the Alliance was guided by negatively-biased assumptions and incorrect or at least unfair assessments of Austria's diplomacy and place in Europe.¹⁸ Only Franz Szabo hazards to suggest that the Franco–Austrian alignment might have been used in a positive sense—both in 1756–1763

and Tools of Management", in Klaus Knorr ed., *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas for National Security Education Program, 1976): 227–262.

¹⁷ Gwynne Lewis, *France 1715–1804: Power and the People*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 34 and 174. Jeremy Black also suggests that religion is an often ignored factor in systemic accounts of 18th century diplomacy. Black, "On the Old System", 305.

¹⁸ Lewis, *France*, 232. Examples of literature focused on Austrophobia include Gary Savage, "Favier's Heirs: the French Revolution and the Secret du Roi", *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41 (1) (Mar. 1998): 225–258; Thomas E. Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie-Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror", *French Historical Studies*, vol. 26 (4) (2003): 579–617; Thomas E. Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie Antoinette? Diplomacy, Austrophobia, and the Queen", *French History*, vol. 14 (3) (2000): 241–271; Gary Savage, "Foreign Policy and Political Culture in Later Eighteenth-Century France", in Scott and Simms, *Cultures of Power*, 304–324; and Thomas E. Kaiser, "The Austrian Alliance, the Seven Years' War and the Emergence of a French 'National' Foreign Policy, 1756–1790", in Julian Swann and Joël Félix eds., *The Crisis of the Absolute Monarchy: France from the Old Regime to Revolution*, *Proceedings of the British Academy* vol. 184, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 167–180.

and beyond—had Versailles recognized just how aligned the two powers’ interests were.¹⁹

Thus the alliance survived, according to the broad consensus, because it allowed each power to control and restrict the actions of the other. On the French side, especially, this consensus is an apt one, insofar as historically-held perspectives and not counter-factual potentials are at play. The apparently manifest explanation for the longevity of the alliance has, however, prevented most historians from asking further questions about the history of the two allies’ relationship, in particular from a Habsburg perspective. This tendency is aided neither by the general neglect of 18th-century diplomatic history in Austrian academic circles,²⁰ nor by the theoretical homogeneity of the largely Anglo–American scholars who do continue to work on such issues. The result is that, despite the alliance’s length of tenure and centrality in the functioning of the European state-system during the second half of the 18th Century, little work has been done since before the First World War which takes it as a direct focus. What modern literature that does exist either focuses on the negotiations for the various

¹⁹ The advantages for France that Szabo discusses out of the 1757 Treaty of Versailles help to make this point, alongside his general description of the pro-Austrian policy of Louis XV during the Seven Years’ War—ultimately unsuccessful as it was. See Franz A. J. Szabo, *The Seven Years’ War in Europe 1756–1763*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), esp. 48–51. Szabo also discusses the potential and real benefits of the Alliance for France in his indictment of French policy during the Seven Years’ War, which failed to conquer Hanover as leverage for peace, in Franz Szabo, “Perdre l’Amérique en Allemagne: les revers français en Europe durant la guerre de Sept Ans,” in Bertrand Fonck and Laurent Veyssière, eds., *La fin de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris: Armand Colin-Ministère de la Défense, 2013), 39–63.

²⁰ Michael Hochedlinger, “Political History”, in Thomas Wallnig, Johannes Frimmel, and Werner Telesko eds., *18th Century Studies in Austria, 1945–2010*, (Bochum: Verlag Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2011), 15–16; see also Charles Ingrao, “From the Reconquest to the Revolutionary Wars: Recent Trends in Austrian Diplomatic History, 1683–1800,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. 24 (1993), 210–214.

treaties of Versailles,²¹ the dissolution of the alliance during the French Revolution and the tradition of Austrophobia in France,²² or the Franco–Austrian alignment as an element of wider issues.

Moving beyond such concerns and addressing both the question of the role of Austria and the history of Austria’s relationship with France requires shifting methodological and theoretical frames. Paralleling a significant transition in the discipline of International Relations away from neo-realism and neo-liberalism towards at least the appearance of a ‘rationalist–constructivist’ debate,²³ diplomatic historians of Europe have shifted from more traditional approaches to ones which seek to understand and describe systemic transformations. The preoccupation with system-level analysis is a hallmark of early constructivist thought in International Relations,²⁴ which had a sustained and noted influence

²¹ The Diplomatic Revolution itself has by far the most literature. On the Austrian side, see especially the series on Kaunitz by McGill. William J. McGill, “The Roots of Policy: Kaunitz in Italy and the Netherlands, 1742–1746,” *Central European History* vol. 1 (2) (1968): 131–149; idem., “Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rittberg and the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748,” *Duquesne Review*, vol. 14 (1969): 154–167; and idem., “The Roots of Policy: Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles, 1749–1753,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 43 (2) (June, 1971): 228–244. Also relevant is Schilling, *Kaunitz und das Renversement des alliances: Studien zur aussenpolitischen Konzeption Wenzel Antons von Kaunitz*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1994); and John C. Batzel, “Austria and the First Three Treaties of Versailles, 1755–1758,” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Brown, 1974). The French side is lacking, though pre-war literature on the *renversement* includes Albert duc de Broglie, *L’alliance autrichienne*, (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897).

²² See especially Savage, “Favier’s Heirs”; Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot”; and Kaiser, “Who’s Afraid of Marie Antoinette?”

²³ As Maja Zehfuss explains, neo-realists and neo-liberals constitute the ‘rationalist’ side, and “believe that social phenomena may be explained in the same way as the natural world and that facts and values may be clearly separated. Their goal is to uncover regularities.” Constructivists emphasize the critical nature of practice and norms on outcomes, and see the social world as constructed; their goal is “interpreting meaning and grasping the influence of changing practice.” Zehfuss considers this debate artificial and silencing of more critical–radical approaches to the discipline. Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3–5.

²⁴ For example, Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics”, *International Organization*, vol. 46 (2) (Spring 1992): 391–425.

over Paul W. Schroeder, whose work has proven seminal for the field of diplomatic history. Although Schroeder never mentions constructivism directly as an intellectual influence, he has expressed belief in “the superiority of system-level explanation and structural analysis over unit-level explanations”, as well as consistent interest in state-systems conceived of as “the understandings, assumptions, learned skills and responses, rules, norms, procedures, etc. which agents acquire...within the framework of a shared practice.”²⁵ Such concerns have warranted placing him between the then-porous categories of neo-liberal institutionalism and constructivism.²⁶ Schroeder’s work on the transformation of the state-system has opened up new questions for European diplomatic history, questions which have often been explored in turn by H.M. Scott. Scott’s recent pair of monographs on the Eastern Powers and the birth of the concept of ‘Great Power’, as well as his article on the Third Family Compact,²⁷ reflect both the influence of Schroeder and the English School of International Relations, itself readily compatible with constructivism and concerned with systems.²⁸

²⁵ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, xi–xii. A lengthier, more qualified, and more detailed exposition of roughly the same in the specifically European context can be found in Paul W. Schroeder, “Europe’s Progress and America’s Success, 1760–1850,” in Frederick C. Schneid ed., *The Projection and Limitations of Imperial Powers, 1618–1850*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 177–182.

²⁶ Jack S. Levy, “The Theoretical Foundations of Paul W. Schroeder’s International System”, *the International History Review*, vol. 16 (4) (November 1994), 736.

²⁷ See Scott, *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers*; Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System*; and Scott, “Religion and Realpolitik”.

²⁸ The English School is especially dominant in the United Kingdom. Constructivism, neo-liberal institutionalism, and the English School share a complex and nuanced relationship with many commonalities (and differences). See Andrew Linklater, “The English School,” in Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations*, Fourth Edition, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 108–09.

The move towards system-centred analyses and even the culture of diplomacy has provided a great deal of insight, and could yet provide more. Certainly, historians are still grappling with the exact nature of the core-periphery divide between Europe and the wider world. While it remains clear that events on the Continent were decisive, as the French experiences in 1740–8 and 1756–63 demonstrate, European historians would be remiss to neglect the role of the semi-periphery and the preoccupation with the colonial dimension.²⁹ The role of social norms and procedure within diplomatic corps can also be a useful field to examine as a factor affecting the conduct of affairs,³⁰ much like the evolving techniques and technologies around communication. Understanding the cosmopolitan and occasionally corrupt nature of diplomacy in Europe is likewise valuable for domestic politics, as many ambassadors continued to be prominent political figures at home right up until the First World War.³¹ Above all, such approaches can seek to identify and map out significant changes in the international order, especially in the more ambiguous territory of Early Modern Europe.

Yet for all of the advantages of a constructivist-inspired work of diplomatic history, there are a few substantial, vitiating weaknesses. Far too much

²⁹See Szabo, “Perdre l’Amérique en Allemagne”; Edward Ingram, “Bellicism as Boomerang: the Eastern Question during the Vienna System,” in Peter Krüger, Paul W. Schroeder eds., in cooperation with Katja Wüsterbecker, *“The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848”:* *Episode or Model in Modern History?*, (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002):205–225.; and Jeremy Black, “The Napoleonic Wars in Global Perspective,” in Frederick C. Schneid ed., *The Projection and Limitations of Imperial Powers, 1618–1850*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 149–169.

³⁰ See Hamish Scott, “Diplomatic Culture in Old Regime Europe”, in Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 58–85.

³¹ See especially the remarkable case in Bruce Fulton, “France’s Extraordinary Ambassador: Ernest Constans and the Ottoman Empire, 1898–1909,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 23, (4) (Fall 2000): 683–706.

emphasis is placed on the shared identities, norms, rules, and procedures which make “shared meaning possible”. This emphasis on commonality serves “to reinforce the separation of the normative from the political”, and as Maja Zehfuss points out, different actors can appeal “to the same normative notions, [but have] radically different, even contradictory, interpretations of them.”³² A system-wide frame can obscure fractures in the culture and politics of the international system—such as that between the Habsburg-Bourbon circuit and the rising expansionist powers in the East—as well as the often vital role of domestic politics in the creation of foreign policy, even under theoretically absolutist governments. It occasionally lapses into attributing intentionality to states, and it sometimes relies on assertions which beg further explanation, such as the idea that “Austria was politically and psychologically incapable” of dropping out of its war against Revolutionary France in the 1790s and simply seizing Bavaria as compensation.³³ Assessments such as this in fact point to the heart of the matter: systemic approaches tend towards the erosion or passing over of the centrality of the unique political cultures and identities which make each state-actor, and group of state-actors, distinct. The origins of the great transformations in the European state-system cannot be located in the structure of the system itself, but rather in the particular logics of different foreign policy and political traditions.

Of course, this project cannot aim to affirm Schroeder’s great “Transformation” or even *metanoia* in all of its vastness through an analysis of

³² Zehfuss, *The Politics of Reality*, 222–226.

³³ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 121.

political culture in every major state—and some of the minor ones—that he and other constructivist-oriented diplomatic historians discuss. Rather it seeks to grapple with Schroeder’s particular emphasis on Austria and the Habsburg dilemma, which he sees as integral to the formation of the new European state-system predicated on moderation and collective security. It further proposes to set this Habsburg self against a “major but little-noted factor...in the evolution of the [European] system as a whole.”³⁴ That factor is none other than the tumultuous but resilient Franco–Austrian Alliance. This project aims to examine the cultural-historical, institutional, and systemic self-conception of the Habsburg Monarchy in the period directly antecedent to the French Revolution and the beginning of the emergence of Schroeder’s new international politics. It will then relate this self to a Bourbon other—as ally—and attempt to act as a counterpart to the emerging literature on France’s resoundingly negative image and relationship with Austria under the *ancien régime*. It seeks not to explain the importance, longevity or dysfunction of the Alliance itself—though in the course of the analysis these issues will inevitably be touched upon—but rather to use the Alliance as an illustration of the Habsburg experience in the 18th Century. The history of this experience suggests that the policymakers of the Monarchy already fundamentally grasped the quandary inherent in the European state-system long before Leopold II fumbled through attempts at addressing the Flight to Varennes.

In order to facilitate such a task, this project will be divided into two roughly equivalent parts—the first dealing with the Habsburg Monarchy, its

³⁴ Ibid., viii and 41–42.

broader history, its three leading figures, and its imagining of its role in Europe, and the second dealing with the history of its optimism and disappointments in France. Attention will be drawn to the different voices, opinions, and narratives which co-existed, often disputatiously, within the Habsburg elite, though what emerges is a remarkable degree of coherence and continuity in the Monarchy's policy. At the conclusion of these two parts, the issue of the French Revolution in Austrian policy and the exceptionalism of Leopold II will be examined directly. By way of such a structure this project shall attempt to understand the substance both of a complex and vital Habsburg political culture and an underrated relationship between Europe's two most preeminent dynasties. Both were at the very heart of the functioning of Continental diplomacy in the second half of the 18th Century.

Part One: Habsburg Self

1. Habsburg Myth: Morality, Pragmatism, & Austria's Carousel Triumvirate

When it comes to discussing the history of the Habsburg Monarchy³⁵ from the reign of Louis XIV to the French Revolution, the death of Charles VI in 1740 and the subsequent War of the Austrian Succession loom large over the first half of the century. Common to this discussion are echoes of Prince Eugene's apparently sage advice to the Emperor that the succession of the young Archduchess Maria Theresia was best guaranteed by a strong, ready army and full coffers.³⁶ While the sudden nature of Charles' death so soon after the end of the disastrous Austro-Turkish War of 1737–1739 makes it difficult to discern how the Emperor truly intended to leave his dominions to his daughter,³⁷ it remains

³⁵ Both the term “Habsburg Monarchy” and its counterpart used more widely in international history, “Austria”, have a myriad of disadvantages and advantages, as well as incoherencies, assumptions, and politics. The best overview of these is Grete Klingenstein, “The Meanings of ‘Austria’ and ‘Austrian’ in the Eighteenth Century,” in Robert Oresko, G.C. Gibbs and Hamish Scott, eds., *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 423-478. The fluidity and interchangeableness of terms presented here is intentional: it is meant not to solve but reflect historiographical complexity and pluralism.

³⁶ A soldier's advice, to be sure. William J. McGill, *Maria Theresa* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 16. This advice corresponds well to the image of Maria Theresia's accession to a bankrupt and militarily shattered throne in 1740, with enemies—Prussia, France, and Bavaria—encircling her. Such an image, however, anticipates developments and underestimates Habsburg strength, apparent as it was in Austria's—albeit at times tenuous—survival.

³⁷ For example, vis-à-vis the election of Maria Theresia's husband Francis Stephen to the Imperial dignity, at the time of Charles VI's death the Austrian candidate should have been able to rely on five of the nine electoral votes—Bohemia, the three ecclesiastical electors, and Hanover (for details on the longstanding treaty with that elector—if perhaps lapsed by the extinction of the Habsburg male line – and the others, see M.S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession: 1740–1748* [New York: Longman, 1995], 91; an interesting source both in regard to Archbishopric of Mainz and the Bohemian suffrage issue in the wake of the Imperial election of Charles VII is Austria, Sovereign. [Maria Theresia], *The Manifesto of Her Hungarian Majesty upon the Late*

clear that the foremost aspect of his plans for the succession was the Pragmatic Sanction. This quasi-constitutional document and piece of public House law would “provide the legal justification for the existence of the monarchy as an indivisible whole for well over one hundred years,”³⁸ and its multi-dimensional position straddling the realms of domestic, international, and Imperial make it an ideal starting point for a discussion of the pillars of Habsburg self-conception in a foreign-political sense.

It is perhaps somewhat of a truism in Austrian history that the Monarchy’s internal politics were inexorably intertwined with its diplomacy, usually presented as a result of the Habsburg state’s incongruity with nascent national borders and inefficient conglomerate/dynastic structure.³⁹ While most great powers possess some form of relationship between external policy and domestic concerns, the

Pretended Election of an Emperor of Germany: Stated from the Public Acts of the Empire and the Laws of Nations [London: T. Cooper, 1742]). Prussia’s vote was uncertain, and it seemed possible that both Saxony and Bavaria might also stand for election, thereby splitting the remaining votes anyway.

³⁸ Karl A. Roider, “The Pragmatic Sanction” *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol.8 (1972), 153. Roider provides an excellent overview of a largely late 19th/early 20th century body of scholarship on the subject. The recent literature on the Pragmatic Sanction is itself not terribly vast. Original texts and translations are available in Gustav Turba, *Die pragmatische Sanktion, authentische Texte samt Erläuterungen und Übersetzungen* (Vienna: K-K Schulbücher-Verlage, 1913) and C.A. Macartney ed., *The Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (New York: Walker, 1970), 82–94; See also Charles Ingrao, “Empress Wilhelmine Amalia and the Pragmatic Sanction,” *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 34 (1981): 333–341 and idem., “Pragmatic Sanction and the Theresian Succession: a Reevaluation,” *Etudes Danubiennes*, vol. 9 (1) (1993): 71–87; there are a number of articles across a number of related subjects and issues in vol. 9 (1) (1964) of *Der Donauraum*, 1–74; similar to articles on Hungary and Croatia in the *Der Donauraum* edition, the Pragmatic Sanction is again the object of discussion in a domestic context in a recent article – see Simon Karstens, “Von der Akzeptanz zur Proklamation: die Einführung der Pragmatische Sanktion in den Österreichischen Niederlanden, 1720–1725,” *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, vol. 40 (1) (2013): 1–34; as well, in a broader sense, as the relevant sections of Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (particularly 7–11) and Derek Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741–1780*, vol. I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17–28.

³⁹ F.R. Bridge expresses this idea succinctly in “The Foreign Policy of the Monarchy,” in Mark Cornwall ed., *The Last Years of Austria–Hungary: a Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, expanded edition, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 14–20.

Habsburg Monarchy is often treated as a more vivid case; in 1914 as in 1740, its external politics were a politics of survival. Thus, that the Pragmatic Sanction was simultaneously a ratified legal document encompassing every crown land of Charles VI, a law of the Empire—endorsed by all the crown lands and the Imperial Diet between 1711 and 1732—and an international treaty ostensibly to be observed by all of the major Powers of the 18th Century meant that the stakes involved in upholding it for Maria Theresia were very high indeed. Since both the Imperial and international aspects of Charles VI's system were torn asunder by the invasion of Silesia by Frederick II and the chain-reaction entry of France, Bavaria, Spain, and Saxony into the war, the domestic adherence to the succession law was also open to question.⁴⁰ At the same time the Imperial Electors criticized moves to step away from the Pragmatic Sanction by the Queen as equally violating her right to succession.⁴¹ The Empress⁴² herself wrote in 1749/1750,

The cession of any territory, even if only of a few Principalities, would be the more prejudicial to the dispositions of the Pragmatic Sanction because all the other Powers, as guarantors, would regard themselves as the less obliged to give further guarantee because we should ourselves have broken the indivisible succession.⁴³

⁴⁰ The estates of Upper Austria at Linz had readily accepted Charles Albert in 1741, and his coronation in Prague was attended by leading Bohemian aristocrats. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 85–87.

⁴¹ The electors contested Maria Theresia's act of co-regency and her attempt to delegate the Bohemian suffrage. The Saxon elector is listed as the source of the specific objections to the act of co-regency, while the Archbishopric of Mainz is accused of hypocrisy in the Bohemian suffrage question. Maria Theresia, *The Manifesto of Her Hungarian Majesty upon the Late Pretended Election of an Emperor of Germany*, 2–5.

⁴² Maria Theresia was Queen (technically King) of Hungary and Bohemia from the early 1740s, and retained all the other hereditary Habsburg titles in her own right. She was also Grand Duchess of Tuscany, and became Holy Roman Empress upon Francis Stephen's election in 1745. As it was an almost unique and highly prestigious title, Maria Theresia made wide usage of her status as Empress, even after she became Dowager Empress in 1765—her conspicuous widowhood at once a personal statement and a reminder of the status of her husband.

⁴³ Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 100.

The Sanction became a policy straightjacket for Maria Theresia, and thus added both an important constitutional and international-legal backdrop to her deep moral outrage at its sudden dismantling by Prussia.

In many ways the Sanction and its abrogation would have reverberations throughout the remainder of the Empress–Queen’s reign, emphasizing Austria’s commitments to treaty law, peace, and moderation—perhaps even prefiguring early 19th century Habsburg ‘conservative-legalism’⁴⁴—in contrast to the more restless powers of Prussia and Russia. Her determination not to bend in the face of political Machiavellianism was an integral part of Austria’s dominant and overarching hostility to Frederick II and his policy. Prussia became a rhetorical device for the Empress, especially in correspondence to her son, the Emperor Joseph II—embodying all that was wicked in Europe.⁴⁵ The place of Prussia as an opposing other against which Austria, its culture, and its interests were aligned was also taken up—at least in certain instances—by Kaunitz, such as when he wrote von Daun during the Seven Years’ War distinguishing Austrian and

⁴⁴ F.R. Bridge observes that Austria under Metternich—and beyond—had a “stubborn insistence on legitimism and the sanctity of treaties” in order to uphold the Monarchy’s great power status, even if this insistence could be bent in times of need, such as in dealing with Napoleon, or run roughshod over when it came to dealing with lesser states (seemingly also a facet of Habsburg diplomacy of the 18th century). F.R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: the Foreign Policy of Austria–Hungary, 1866–1914*, (New York: Routledge, 1972 [2010 paperback reprint]), 4–5.

⁴⁵ Admittedly, Frederick II was a theme between the two sovereigns as a result of Joseph’s well-noted fascination with the man and his government. For Maria Theresia’s vilifications, see Roider, *Maria Theresia*, 28–29 and 67–68 (originals in Alfred, Ritter von Arneth, *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.: Ihre Correspondenz Sammt Briefen Joseph’s An Seinen Bruder Leopold*, [Wien: Carl Gerold’s Sohn, 1867]—volume two, 298–299 for the former, and volume one, 362–363 for the latter); as well as the more personal exhortation for Joseph to avoid acting like Frederick in regards to the interpersonal affairs of governance in Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern*, 185–187 (original *MTJI*, 202–204).

Prussian military cultures, or in his assertion that “Prussian militarism was ‘incompatible with the happiness of humanity.’”⁴⁶

To Schroeder, this Austrian vilification of Prussia was thus really a reaction against a new form of geopolitics which was intrinsically working against the further survival of the Monarchy: the rise of balance of power diplomacy. While some Habsburg historians, like Charles Ingrao or Derek Beales, often point to the geographical location of the Habsburg state at the centre of Europe as a key reason for its conservatism and weakness,⁴⁷ Schroeder lists such explanations, along with “internal weaknesses, indecision and blunders in policy...and strategic vulnerability” as “half-truths and surface explanation”.⁴⁸ Instead he points to the influence of geography and system, noting how Austria’s breadth—spanning every major theatre of European politics—meant that it could never have sufficient military forces to enjoy security without triggering hostile coalitions and arms-races. More importantly, Schroeder outlines how the very nature of the Habsburg Monarchy meant it could not survive in a balance of power system:

The eighteenth-century balance-of-power game had become, as it often tends to do, one of pure balance of conquests. Yet the Habsburg monarchy

⁴⁶ Franz A.J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753–1780*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 266–268. A few interesting examples at the close of the Seven Years’ War of the “more enlightened, almost humanitarian politics” of Austria over Prussia can be found in Matt Schuman, “The End of the Seven Years’ War in Germany”, in Mark H. Danley and Patrick J. Speelman eds., *The Seven Years’ War: Global Views*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 514–515.

⁴⁷ Beales’ initial discussion of Kaunitz’s foreign policy is a good example of such themes, arguing that no other Great Power had so long frontiers (aside from Russia), no other power had far-flung territories across Europe, all “had better access to the sea”, and “no other Power had a border with a militarily significant European Power, as Austria had with Prussia and, in Belgium, with France.” Derek Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World, 1780–1790*, vol. II, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108–111. See also Charles Ingrao, “Habsburg Strategy and Geopolitics during the Eighteenth Century”, in Gunther E. Rothenberg, Béla K. Király and Peter F. Sugar eds., *East Central European Society and War in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century*, (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1982), 49–66.

⁴⁸ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 33.

had arisen only partly through conquest, and could not survive by it. It was a *Hausmacht*, a multi-ethnic, patrimonial state *par excellence*, based far more on tradition, dynastic succession, successful marriage, and territorial compromise...it depended for its independence and security as a great power upon the survival of elements of tradition and international law, and on certain moral and legal norms and rules, which balance-of-power politics was steadily undermining and would continue to undermine even if Austria, by some improbable chance, succeeded in winning the power-political competition. Thus to save Austria by a successful balance-of-power policy was in some sense to destroy it.⁴⁹

Such a pairing of observations, about the dependency of Austria on European legal norms and its tremendous borders points also to the Habsburgs' continuing role as a key power integrating the European diplomatic system. Precious few events in Europe could occur without concerning Vienna and its policymakers. Still, this hyper-involvement should not be mistaken as cause for Austria's generally moderate and hesitant foreign policy: virtually every other European state worked with serious security concerns and vulnerabilities,⁵⁰ and Austria often failed to take full advantage of its diplomatically procured and not infrequent opportunities to face its enemies—namely Prussia—alone.⁵¹ Schroeder's emphasis on other features of Habsburg existence, which are so much a part of why he locates the initial drive towards the new European 'equilibrium'

⁴⁹ Ibid., 33–35. Original italics. This specifically Austrian conundrum was recognized, Schroeder suggests, in varying degrees by Maria Theresia, Joseph II, Kaunitz, and finally Leopold II. This is the cause for Austria's often strange policy of “à corsaire, demi corsaire.”

⁵⁰ These were often masked by successful alliances: France had overcome its traditional preoccupation with Spain through the Family Compacts, Prussia worked closely with Russia from 1764–1781, Russia played both of the German powers against one another, and Austria successfully mitigated any real threats aside from Prussia in the 1780s (even if France was occasionally hostile, as in the Scheldt Crisis).

⁵¹ There were of course mitigating circumstances on most occasions, especially in 1778 and after the signing of the alliance with Russia, not least of which was the continuing belief that the Monarchy was incapable of dispatching Prussia on its own.

with Leopold II and Metternich, is an important corrective to over-reliance on geographical explanations.

In order to keep up with Schroeder's emerging balance-of-conquests game in the international arena, however, Austrian foreign policy institutions adapted under Maria Theresa by becoming more coherent and formalized. The Empress proved adept at flexing her 'novel' female sovereignty in order to dominate both diplomatic policy and decisions herself prior to the 1750s—to the exclusion of many of her father's ministers and most notably, her husband.⁵² This attribute of her reign—integral to reforming the diplomacy of the Monarchy—also contributed to the rise of Kaunitz. The Chancellor—then diplomat—had views on foreign policy which were remarkably congruent with those of the Queen, and he used this fact early on in order to gain her unwavering confidence. He used this support to effectively silence the traditional, conciliar aspects of the new Habsburg foreign ministry—created only in 1742—which he inherited. Under his direction, officials in the ministry multiplied, minutiae were entrusted to subordinates, *esprit du corps* and training were fostered, relations with the Porte was wrested back from the war ministry (*Hofkriegsrat*), and state-interest enshrined as the guiding principle.⁵³ It also absorbed the government councils responsible for the government of the Austrian Netherlands and the Duchy of

⁵² Michael Yonan's work on the art of Maria Theresa's reign particularly dwells on the problems of representing—convincingly—female sovereignty in the 18th Century. See Michael Yonan, *Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), especially the introduction, 1–11; a brief discussion of the co-regency and its art is on 31–32.

⁵³ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 46–49.

Milan.⁵⁴ Most importantly, whereas policy making had been dominated by the Privy Conference (*Geheime Konferenz*), whose relationship to the foreign ministry was complicated—though the minister was always a member—Kaunitz gained ascendancy over this body from the outset in 1749 and used his influence as Chancellor of State after 1753 to set the frequency and agenda of Privy Conference meetings.⁵⁵ During the Seven Years' War, Kaunitz began starving the Privy Conference of diplomatic information and sidelining it from the war effort, culminating in his 1761 formation of a Council of State (*Staatsrat*) which became the “main legislative body of the Monarchy”; even “the principal safeguard that made the evolution of Prussian-style autocracy impossible in Austria.” Since its competencies were chiefly domestic, it did not replace the Privy Conference in a formal sense, but Kaunitz's control of that body's schedule and the new emphasis on the Council of State as the highest body of the Monarchy ensured Kaunitz's relatively unfettered control of foreign affairs from a ministerial perspective.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ This shift towards being governed by the foreign ministry was part of a reconceptualization of these territories as ultimately expendable by Kaunitz and a new emphasis on the Monarchy's core. However, far from being unimportant, it should be underlined that the very diplomatic system that Kaunitz crafted—the alliance with France—benefited the security of these territories above all. The Chancellor had also spent a great deal of time in both territories, and tried to use them as a model to affect the same sort of power over Galicia in 1772. Ibid., 50–51; Franz A.J. Szabo, “The Center and Periphery: Echoes of the Diplomatic Revolution in the Administration of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1753–1773”, in Marija Wakounig, Wolfgang Mueller, und Michael Portmann eds., *Nation, Nationalitäten und Nationalismus im östlichen Europa: Festschrift für Arnold Suppan zum 65. Geburtstag*, (Berlin: LIT, 2010), 473–478 and 486–490.

⁵⁵ Szabo's work on Kaunitz describes the evolution of the Habsburg foreign ministry and internal administration in a wealth of detail—much of it based off of the dairies of Khevenhüller-Metsch—and he discusses the origins of the institution and the sidelining of the Privy Conference during the Seven Years' War. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 38–53. See also Scott's similar overview to this one, though in his typical and thought-provoking systemic frame, H.M. Scott, “The Rise of the First Minister in Eighteenth-Century Europe”, in T.C.W. Blanning and David Cannadine eds., *History and Biography: Essays in Honour of Derek Beales*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 21–52 (esp. 35–37).

⁵⁶ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 55–60.

Although it is doubtless that other figures in both the administration of the foreign ministry—especially Kaunitz’s secretary, Friedrich Binder von Kriegelstein⁵⁷—as well as the war ministry had significant influence on the particulars of policy and thus helped to drive the conceptions of Austrian interests and selfhood, from 1753–1765 Habsburg diplomacy was dominated by the Chancellor and the Empress. After the death Maria Theresia’s husband in 1765, however, a different and more complex dynamic emerged between Kaunitz, the Queen, and Joseph II. What court politics existed in the Monarchy’s foreign policy were often the interpersonal politics of the three leading personalities (though not always all three at once), and this facet of Austrian governance helps to explain why a sizable amount of the literature on Habsburg diplomacy in the period deals in debates about their personalities, dispositions, and ideas. All three have their own apologists—as does Joseph II’s younger brother, Leopold II. Discussions of who was more or less bellicose in any given situation—a common enough theme⁵⁸—often run into the problem of trying to reify/render stable an individual’s personality. Nevertheless, then and now, such considerations were a key part of how Austria was perceived by others. Internally, the relationship between the three decision-makers was seemingly quite fluid, and there were often also substantial policy differences between them—even if these differences

⁵⁷ Ibid., especially 17–18 and 48.

⁵⁸ It is in this vein that Derek Beales comes to the defence of Joseph II, whose foreign policy “almost every historian has condemned... as exceptionally aggressive”, and who had allegedly been “held in check by the pacific attitude of Maria Theresa and by the moderating influence of Kaunitz.” Instead, Beales suggests that Joseph II was, if cynical, not as unrestrained in diplomacy as he was in domestic politics, citing Kaunitz himself as a major influence (“sometimes more bellicose than the emperor”). Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 272–273, 277, and 293.

can perhaps not be boiled down to a mere facet of temperament. A distinct hostility to Prussia and its monarch formed the most obvious common bond, though it took on different valances in every case—mixed with admiration in the case of Joseph, mitigated by practicality and logic in the case of Kaunitz, and accompanied by an almost theodicean resignation for Maria Theresa.⁵⁹

These three valances to the Monarchy's tense relationship with the House of Hohenzollern reflect differing proposals for Austrian policy, even if it did not always appear as if there were three options. From the time of Kaunitz's acquiring of Maria Theresa's trust until the sole reign of Joseph II, as in most European monarchies, the sovereign acted less as a policy advocate and more of an adjudicator of proposals from her ministers—in this case both Kaunitz and the co-regent, Joseph. In this sense Maria Theresa often seems to retreat into the background of policy formulation amidst the quarrels between the Chancellor and the Emperor, only emerging to lament the necessities of certain courses of action. It is this image which Derek Beales criticizes as commonplace but inaccurate—Maria Theresa was merely “indulg[ing] her conscience...by ostentatiously dissociating herself from some of her government's actions.” Through this indulgence she managed to obfuscate her ultimate authority over Austrian

⁵⁹ That is to say, the Empress both conceived of Frederick as wicked and felt that Prussia needed to be struggled against, but resigned herself to tolerating his—and to a lesser extent Russia's—manipulations and prioritizing peace because of an acceptance that God manifestly permits evil in the world. This can be sensed in her despairing letter to her son Ferdinand in 1772, when she pleads over the Partition of Poland that only the dizzyingly bleak circumstances—internationally and domestically—have “compelled me to follow these unholy proposals, which throw a shadow over my whole reign. God will that I not be held responsible for them in the next world...it lies in my heart, follows me, and poisons my already too tragic days.” Roider, *Maria Theresa*, 68.

diplomacy.⁶⁰ There is a ring of truth to this uncharitable assessment, but Beales oversimplifies; the fluidity of the Austrian system lay not in a true triumvirate decision-making structure but rather in the tactical games which all three figures played. The most infamous of these games was of course the threat of resignation, which was often employed in the occasionally acrid disputes between Kaunitz and Joseph.⁶¹

Their disagreements mirrored in many ways their respective valences on the problem of Prussia. Kaunitz advocated pragmatism and ongoing competition in order to deal with a state which he considered over-militarized and effectively a despotism. He trusted in free, civilian governance and the economic logic of domestic modernization to place the Monarchy at an advantage vis-à-vis the Hohenzollern machine. It is this view that has led historians to stress Kaunitz's conception of the "Primacy of Domestic Policy", and given greater impetus towards studies which focus less on foreign policy and more on economics or the great reform efforts that Kaunitz was intrinsically a part of as State Chancellor.⁶²

⁶⁰ Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 305.

⁶¹ The best example of this tactic was in late 1773, when a disagreement over Kaunitz's major administrative reform proposals precipitated threats from all three to resign. Maria Theresia defused the situation and a compromise—relatively favourable to Kaunitz—was brokered. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 110–112.

⁶² The initial debate between Szabo and Beales/T.C.W. Blanning on Kaunitz's policy and the idea of its domestic focus can be found in Franz Szabo, "Prince Kaunitz and the Balance of Power," *The International History Review*, vol. 1 (3) (July 1979): 399–408; Derek Beales, and T.C.W. Blanning, "Prince Kaunitz and the 'Primacy of Domestic Policy,'" *The International History Review*, vol. 2 (4) (October, 1980): 619–624; and Franz Szabo, "Prince Kaunitz and the Primacy of Domestic Policy: A Response," *The International History Review*, vol. 2 (4) (October 1980): 625–635. Examples of the success of this new focus are of course Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, and Grete Klingenstein and Franz Szabo ed., *Staatskanzler Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, 1711–1794: Neue Perspektiven zu Politik und Kulture der europäischen Aufklärung*, (Graz: Andreas Schnider, 1996). Discussing Kaunitz's turn towards economics after 1761 and its intellectual underpinnings are Harm Kleuting, *Die Lehre von der Macht der Staaten: Das außenpolitische Machtproblem in der „politischen Wissenschaft“ und in der praktischen Politik im 18. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1986), and Grete Klingenstein's review which

Internationally, Kaunitz's views required peace—a key selling feature for the war-weary Maria Theresa—and permitted expansion only when necessary to remain competitive against the Eastern Powers. Even then, Kaunitz more than recognized the dangers of using roughly-equal partitions—which simply raised the power-political stakes—to replace or weaken intermediaries as the three powers did in 1772,⁶³ and his clash with Joseph over the governance of the newly acquired Galicia partly involved his attempt to keep the province at arm's length and still within a distinct Polish orbit.⁶⁴

Always attendant to Kaunitz's conception of Austrian interests was a keen logical sense: the tumultuous and grandiose Bavarian Exchange project was such an attractive positive project precisely because of the impracticality of the Austrian Netherlands and the manifest advantages of accruing less geopolitically-hostaged lands within the Empire, Habsburg miscalculations about international constellations notwithstanding.⁶⁵ It was with the same sense of logic that Kaunitz proceeded in the Eastern Question, where his fear of a nascent Russian power and

argues for the importance of Montesquieu—Grete Klingenstein, review of *Die Lehre von der Macht der Staaten. Das außenpolitische Machtproblem in der 'politischen Wissenschaft' und in der praktischen Politik im 18. Jahrhundert* by Harm Klueting, *English Historical Review*, vol. 103 (406), (Jan., 1988): 134–138. Kaunitz's and his circle's leadership of economic reform in the Monarchy before 1763—taking cues from Western European ideas—is taken up by Klingenstein in idem., “Between Mercantilism and Physiocracy: Stages, Modes, and Functions of Economic Theory in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1748–63,” in Charles Ingrao ed., *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994): 181–214.

⁶³ His aversion to an ongoing Eastern Concert and more partitions is discussed in Harvey L. Dyck, “Pondering the Russian Fact: Kaunitz and the Catherinian Empire in the 1770s”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* vol. 22, (4) (December 1980), 459–460.

⁶⁴ See Szabo, “Prince Kaunitz and the Balance of Power,” 405–406; Szabo, “Prince Kaunitz and the Primacy of Domestic Policy: A Response,” 627–630; and Szabo, “The Center and the Periphery”, 486–490.

⁶⁵ The War of the Bavarian Succession and the various exchange projects are discussed in Paul P. Bernard, *Joseph II and Bavaria: Two Eighteenth Century Attempts at German Unification*, (the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965); Beales provides useful corrections in Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 386–427.

cavalier disdain for the Ottoman Empire—which he considered inevitably on a path towards disappearance—led him to feel perfectly comfortable advocating seizure of Turkish territory whenever it suited the Monarchy’s interest.⁶⁶ So in 1775 with the acquisition of the Bukovina as in 1783 with his urging to Joseph to take an equivalent after the Russian annexation of the Crimea, which historians have occasionally used as evidence against the ‘Kaunitz as restraint on Joseph’ thesis and which Szabo—perhaps correctly—labels an anomaly.⁶⁷ Kaunitz’s policy often carried the day in Vienna, thanks to the often stalwart support of the Empress; this was widely recognized by contemporaries and cemented Kaunitz as the key figure in Austrian diplomacy, a position not guaranteed to a continental foreign minister in the age of the *Secret du Roi* and Frederick II’s personal government. Nonetheless his success was manifestly not always assured: the movement towards Prussian-style cantons and conscription by the Emperor represented a significant defeat, and Kaunitz would be forced to witness the Austrian capitulation at the close of the last Austro–Turkish War. By then,

⁶⁶ Dyck, “Pondering the Russian Fact”, 457–458; Paul P. Bernard, “Austria’s Last Turkish War: Some Further Thoughts,” *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. 19 (1983), 16–17; Roider goes so far as to blame Kaunitz directly for the last Austro–Turkish War and pursuing a policy which Joseph II hesitantly felt was “not in Austria’s best interests”, Karl A. Roider, “Kaunitz, Joseph II and the Turkish War”, *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 54 (4) (October, 1976), 539–543; modern historians are themselves guilty of buying into Kaunitz—and others’—dismissal of the Porte, see Matthew Z. Mayer, “The Price for Austria’s Security: Part I – Joseph II, the Russian Alliance, and the Ottoman War, 1787–1789,” *the International History Review*, vol. 26 (2) (June, 2004), 258; more examples of Austrian contempt can be found on *Ibid.*, 269–270.

⁶⁷ Szabo, “Prince Kaunitz and the Primacy of Domestic Policy: A Response,” 630–631. If this policy was not inconsistent with Kaunitz’s wider conception of Habsburg interests in the Balkans, this conception itself was often at odds with his better sense in other theatres. In this regard he was not alone; Habsburg policy towards the East was often confused and full of contradictory fears and assumptions. Nevertheless, in his defence, there are echoes of Poland in the strict logic of advocating Austrian participation in the Annexation of the Crimea. See also Karl A. Roider, *Austria’s Eastern Question, 1700–1790* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 165–168.

admittedly, he was being increasingly marginalized by a changing administration under Leopold II.⁶⁸

Joseph, by contrast, was of a significantly less civilian persuasion—if by no means necessarily less inclined to peace. As the longstanding commander of the Monarchy’s armed forces—one of the only domains in which he enjoyed a consistent preponderance of influence during the co-regency—he was often concerned with more concrete strategic advantages and threats. He consciously admired the Prussians’ efficient state system, their esteemed military, and Frederick II’s personal style of rule, if not especially its substance:

The Prussian Monarchy, given its situation, given the means by which it has been aggrandized, but especially given the outlook, principles, strength and reputation of the king, its chief and sole director...is our most powerful, natural, and so to speak, our only truly daunting enemy. Since glory is his sole aim – regardless of all other considerations, even good faith – he seizes every opportunity. Besotted by his luck, genius and resources, which have already extricated him from several false moves during the last war, he dares everything. Hence his neighbours can feel safe only if they have themselves a sufficient force capable of resisting him.⁶⁹

Though it is hazardous to suggest the same consistency in foreign policy for Joseph as the Chancellor, there were particularities of Joseph’s which remained

⁶⁸ Discussion of the military reforms and the disagreement between Kaunitz and Joseph can be found in Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 278–295; Kaunitz’s policy (and its repudiation) in 1789–1791 of attempting to hold on to gains and continue the course despite a multitude of security threats is outlined in Roeder, *Eastern Question*, 186–188, and tentatively endorsed as a potentially better policy in Matthew Z. Mayer, “The Price for Austria’s Security: Part II – Leopold II, the Prussian Threat and the Peace of Sistova, 1790–1791,” *the International History Review*, vol. 26 (3) (September, 2004), 506–507. Kaunitz’s displacement is taken up by the (not usually sympathetic) Michael Hochedlinger in “Das Ende der Ära Kaunitz in der Staatskanzlei,” in Klingenstein and Szabo, *Staatskanzler: Neue Perspektiven*, 117–128.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 189 (formatted as printed). Beales also rightly points out that even in the case of military affairs, Joseph’s influence was incomplete, as Maria Theresia consistently conferred with military officials behind his back. See *Ibid.*, 183–187. Kaunitz wrote something quite similar in 1749; see McGill, “Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles”, 232.

with him throughout his life. As an officer and as the Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph carried with him a firm sense of honour, and it was this feature which was occasionally responsible for causing problems for the Monarchy, as in the case of the San Remo affair,⁷⁰ but in particular with Russia: complicating negotiations in 1780 towards an alliance, possibly accelerating Russian plans towards the Crimea in 1782/1783, and drawing Austria into the vortex of its last Turkish war.⁷¹ From this last instance it can be inferred that Joseph felt this sense of honour an important facet of the international system and the functioning of alliances. This emphasis on honour was not however unique to the Emperor, inherited and passed on as it was; it formed an integral part of the culture of diplomacy and of Habsburg and Bourbon diplomatic culture especially.⁷² In some ways the co-regency allowed for adroit uses of its gendered scripts: the language used in the

⁷⁰ Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 123–124.

⁷¹ Negotiation issues with Russia centred on the Imperial title and its rights. Isabel de Madariaga, “The Secret Austro–Russian Treaty, 1781”, *Slavonic & East European Review*, vol. 38 (90) (December, 1959), 120–124—it is interesting to note that renewal of the Austro–Russian alliance in 1789 once again was an exchange of letters, while the treaty signed in 1792 under Franz II occurred in the brief space wherein he was only King of Hungary and Bohemia [Clive Parry ed., *The Consolidated Treaty Series*, vols. 50–51 (New York: Oceana, 1969), 431–434 and 359–376 respectively; the latter is also printed in Leopold Neumann, *Recueil des traités et conventions conclus par l’Autriche avec puissances étrangères, depuis jusqu’à nos jours*, vol. 1, (Leipzig : F.A. Brockhaus, 1855), 487–493]; Roeder blames Joseph’s “chivalric” reply to St. Petersburg for encouraging the Russians to annex the Crimea in *Eastern Question*, 162–163; Joseph’s rather blunt letter to Leopold illustrates his sense of obligation to Russia: “La guerre que ces maudits Turcs viennent de déclarer à la Russie, et l’emprisonnement du ministre Bulgakow aux sept tours, malgré toutes les menaces et instances de mon Internonce et de l’ambassadeur de France, me mettent dans le cas absolu du *casus fœderis*, car ils attaquent la Russie.” Alfred Ritter von Arneht, *Joseph II. und Leopold von Toscana: Ihr Briefwechsel von 1781 bis 1790*, vol. 2, (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1872), 115.

⁷² See for example Scott’s fascinating systemic overview to the cultural differences between France/Austria and Prussia/Russia: Scott, *Rise of the Eastern Powers*, 140–161; Scott, “Diplomatic Culture”, 72–82; and Hamish Scott, “A Model of Conduct from the Age of Chivalry? Honour, International Decline and the end of the Bourbon Monarchy”, in Swann and Félix, *Crisis of the Absolute Monarchy*, 181–204.

Austrian peace maneuvers during the Bavarian crisis is particularly striking.⁷³

Honour remained a dominant aspect of foreign policy making in Vienna throughout the co-regency and the era of Joseph's sole rule, even if it is consistently under-rated by historians.

Joseph had other features that contributed in indirect ways to the tenor of Austrian policy: he was the first Habsburg monarch to lead troops in the field for generations, his itinerant (if incognito) travels made him more akin to a Burgundian knight than a sovereign of the age of palaces, and his enthusiasm for personal diplomacy, doubtlessly impelled by his love for travel, meant he met with most of the great rulers of his day in person. He took an avid interest in surveying and assessing Austrian gains, and was instrumental in precipitating the large Habsburg share in the First Partition of Poland and the annexation of the Bukovina.⁷⁴ For Joseph, Austria had to be inventive and determined in its pursuit of primacy over Prussia, considering all avenues and willing to emulate the enemy—insofar as the constraints of honour and the Habsburg mission itself would allow.

⁷³ Maria Theresia wrote to Frederick II behind Joseph's back, pleading her age, her "inclination to peace", and the worry placed on her "maternal heart" by having so many sons in the military, that he resume negotiations—in secret so as to preserve Joseph's honour and ensure success. The letter is printed on Roider, *Maria Theresa*, 69–70. This was certainly a far cry of a letter from the Empress' reaction to the Graf Ulfeldt in 1763 when it was rumoured she had written the hated Prussian monarch: "Zu meiner grosser Verwunderung habe ich die nämliche Antwort von zwei Personen gehört. Kein Wort ist wahr. Ich bin dem Könige wohl obligirt, dass er mir nicht geschrieben: meine Feder hätte ihm niemals geantwortet. Mein Herz sagt nichts dahin." Alfred von Arneht, *Briefe der Kaiserin Maria Theresia an ihre Kinder und Freunde*, vol. 4, (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1881), 209.

⁷⁴Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 297–302. He was also preoccupied during negotiations with Bavaria in the early 1780s over differing assessments of the territory's tax revenue, attempting to be careful to not disadvantage the Habsburg state by a significant loss of income. Bernard, *Joseph and Bavaria*, 153–163 and 172–174.

For as much as Kaunitz and Joseph differed, elaborating on their distinctive conceptions obscures the existential consensus which silently dominated the wider strains of Habsburg politics, and which Maria Theresia effectively represented. The House of Austria and its intertwined Counter-Reformation Catholicism,⁷⁵ Universalist Humanism, and cosmopolitan Imperial legacy stood at the heart of the Monarchy's self-conception, and it was this which Maria Theresia, Joseph II, and Kaunitz endeavoured to preserve. Admittedly the 18th Century was marked by significant changes away from the forces which had shaped these values. Thus the Monarchy shifted from Baroque religious ostentation towards more Spartan celebration and eventually greater toleration, as well as from the neoscholasticism that dominated Catholic intellectual circles in the 17th Century—long neglected by intellectual historians⁷⁶—towards Enlightenment ideals and Cameralist methods. It also moved from a union between the Habsburg sovereign and the Holy Roman Emperor—if not always clear and effective, at least outwardly incapable of contradictory policies—towards a semi-retreat from Imperial institutions and structures. For while there was a longstanding hostility between *Reich* and *Hof* in Habsburg circles, the supremacy of Austrian interests over Imperial ones was understood early on by

⁷⁵ Among the most useful studies of Habsburg Catholicism as a whole is Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, translated by William D. Bowman and Anna Maria Leitgeb, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2004).

⁷⁶ Intellectual history in Central Europe from the start of the Counter-Reformation onwards is generally rather limited, as the literature focuses more on confessionalization. Exceptions include: R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Anthony Grafton, "The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism," *Central European History*, vol. 18 (1) (Mar. 1985): 31–47; the transformation of Catholicism itself in the period is discussed in Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: a Reassessment of the Counter Reformation*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

Joseph II, who Beales demonstrates held a utilitarian perspective on the Empire—though such views would become more negative later—and it was the supremacy of the interests of the *Erbländer* and the dynasty that the acts of co-regency under Maria Theresia were designed to protect. Both the Empress and Kaunitz continued a longstanding—if perhaps intensified—Habsburg tradition of subordinating the Imperial to the domestic, and there is evidence to suggest that the Monarchy’s role in the Empire may have been ultimately incompatible with its Great Power status in general.⁷⁷ Yet these cultural, intellectual, and Imperial changes speak only to the internalization of these ideas into the legacy of the dynasty itself. It was thus that an Emperor of the House of Austria in a later age could find purchase without the trappings of the Empire from whence he came.⁷⁸ Many of Maria Theresia’s protests at the pragmatics of Habsburg policy as articulated by Kaunitz and Joseph originated from her belief that they somehow transgressed this existential legacy, and it seems apparent both maintained a

⁷⁷ See Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 132, and J.F.J. Duindam, “The Habsburg Court in Vienna: Kaiserhof or Reichshof?”, in R.J.W. Evans, Peter H. Wilson eds., *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806: A European Perspective* [Boston: Brill, 2012]: 91–119; Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 119–133; Joseph’s later derision for Imperial institutions are discussed in idem., *Joseph II: Against the World, 1780–1790*, 403–405 and 410–411. On the co-regency’s design, see idem., *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 136–137. Maria Theresia and Kaunitz’s hostility is found in Angela Kulenkampff, *Österreich und das alte Reich: die Reichspolitik des Staatskanzlers Kaunitz unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II.*, (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 152; Charles Ingrao, “Introduction: Foreign Policy”, in Charles Ingrao ed., *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), 280. On the incompatibility of great power status and the Habsburg commitments to the Empire see Heinz Duchardt, “International Relations, the Law of Nations, and the Germanies: Structures and Changes in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century”, in Ingrao, *State and Society in Early Modern Austria*: 286–296.

⁷⁸ Indeed, it was initially under Franz II’s authority as *erwählter Römischer Kaiser* that his title as Emperor of the House of Austria was to be recognized, on parity again with a new French state—“more royal than imperial”—using the personal crown of Rudolf II. In the end, little justification for the move was given beyond keeping up with Napoleon. Peter H. Wilson, “Bolstering the Prestige of the Habsburgs: the End of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806”, *The International History Review*, vol. 28 (4) (Dec. 2006), 723–725.

certain sense that there was little point in securing victory for Austria if there was nothing left of Austria itself. In the same vein, as Schroeder suggests, playing *à corsaire, corsaire et demi* in order to restore the international balance was a dangerous game if it undermined the system in its entirety. The only question for Austria was how far to go.

2. “à corsaire, demi corsaire”: *Austria’s Place in Europe, 1748–1790*

This question had a variety of answers over the course of the second half of the 18th Century, and is intertwined with perceptions about the Habsburg Monarchy’s wider place and role in the international state-system. From the end of the reign of Leopold I during the War of the Spanish Succession until Charles VI’s death in 1740, Austria enjoyed a particular sort of confidence as an uncontested Great Power and primary party to the international settlement of Utrecht/Ratstatt—in the same league as Britain, France, and Spain—and an enthusiastic, if only partial, heir to the glorious prestige of the Spanish Habsburgs.⁷⁹ During much of Charles VI’s reign, the Ottomans seemed permanently in retreat and the Monarchy had a secure command on the northern fringes of Europe, with an ally in an emergent Russia, arrangements—if not always without suspicions—with Prussia, and a weakened Sweden.⁸⁰ Charles VI was thus able to concentrate ostentatiously on his Spanish heritage and patrimony

⁷⁹ Literature on the reign and diplomacy of Charles VI is generally slight; an excellent overview is still the relevant sections of Derek McKay and H.M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great powers, 1648–1815*, (Longman: London, 1983), 58–77 and 94–159.

⁸⁰ Habsburg-Ottoman relations are treated in Ivan Parvev, *Habsburgs and Ottomans between Vienna and Belgrade (1683-1739)*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1995). Austria’s relations with Russia just prior to 1740 are discussed in Karl Roeder, *The Reluctant Ally: Austria’s Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737–1739*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972). See also the early chapters of idem., *Eastern Question*; earlier periods are covered by several articles in the 50th volume of *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchiv* published in 2003. Austro-Prussian relations under Frederick I and Charles VI were complicated, with the Monarchy reluctant to make full use of its Prussian ally lest it claim advantages. Still, the sudden invasion of Silesia was far from “the only possible solution to the tension between Prussian expansionism and Habsburg geopolitics within the Empire,” as Ingraio suggests. Ingraio, “Strategy and Geopolitics”, 58–59. See also the brief Margaret Shennan, *The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 48–50. Sweden’s defeat at the end of the Great Northern War by Austrian allies effectively ended the kingdom’s pretensions to Great Power status, though it remained a significant factor in European diplomacy until the 19th Century.

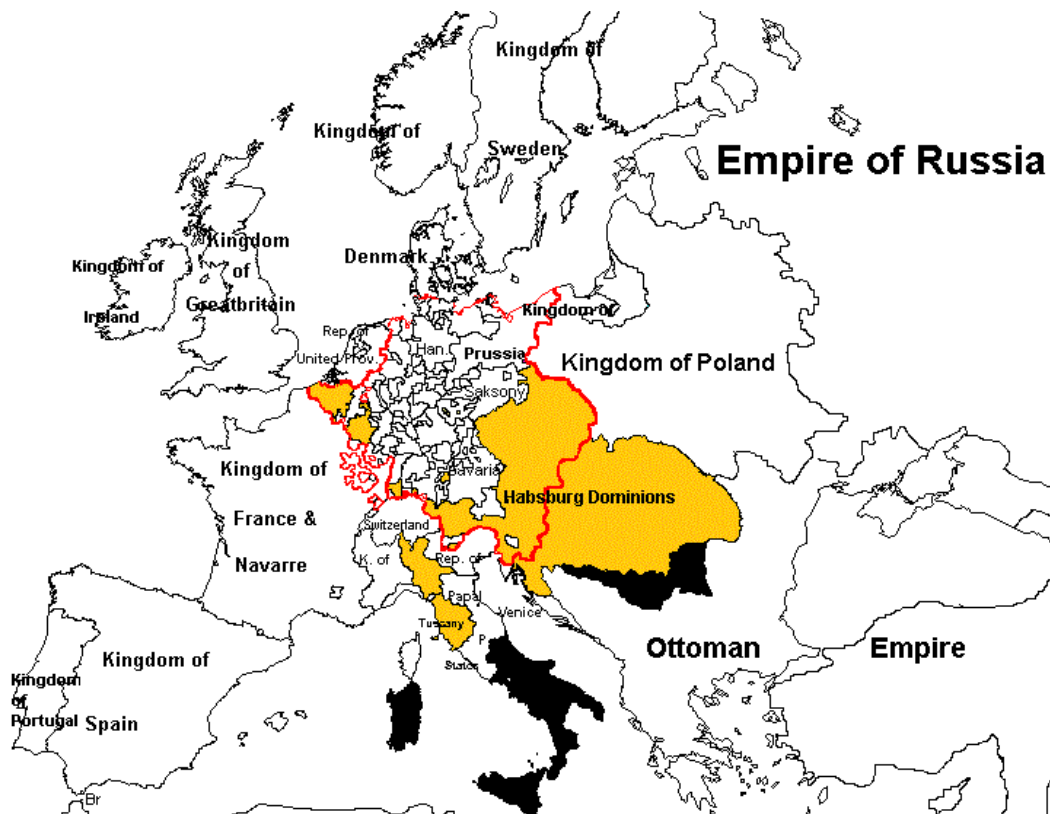


Figure I - The Habsburg Monarchy at the death of Charles VI, with losses since 1720 in black⁸¹

while committing himself to an ambitious legalistic succession. Austria did not go unchecked, however, and the reversals in Italy, Poland, and the Balkans had by 1739 prompted a degree of soul-searching and recognition for the need of at least some reforms if Austria was going to avoid being outpaced—again—by its continental Bourbon rivals. The first four decades of the 18th Century were the last of a Habsburg–Bourbon dominated Europe.

After the invasion of Silesia by Frederick II, as discussed above, Maria Theresia understood that the Monarchy’s position in Europe had fundamentally— if hopefully temporarily—changed, with the recapture of Silesia and the

⁸¹ Adapted from source: Gerard von Hebel, “1748”, *The Historical Atlas of Europe*, <http://home.zonnet.nl/gerardvonhebel/1748.htm>

punishment of an aggressive Prussia its chief goals. The War of the Austrian Succession directly challenged Habsburg primacy in the Empire to an extent not felt since the darkest days of the Thirty Years' War. And while she was not her father and felt little for the Spanish inheritance,⁸² the war further underscored the strategic weakness of the Austrian Netherlands and the Habsburg territories in Italy, as well as the continuity of hostility from France. Austria from 1740–1748 was torn between two distinct but inter-related wars and two distinct but potentially united hostile powers. Contrary to the assertions of some historians, this new Franco–Prussian alliance was neither traditional nor natural. France had traditionally opposed Habsburg supremacy in the Empire through smaller—but nonetheless significant—powers such as Bavaria or Protestant states such as the Palatinate. Prussia, though Protestant, was chiefly an ally of the Emperor from the Thirty Years' War onwards, and an enemy of France's protégé, Sweden, in the various wars of the North. Most importantly, Prussia's new Great Power status both inside and outside the Empire was contrary to France's policy of influencing Germany politics through leadership of the anti–Habsburg party, regardless of French claims about the alliance as part of its continuation of supporting Protestants. It was not coincidence that Jean Favier's 1756 indictment of the

⁸² Maria Theresa heartily endorsed and continued to support Kaunitz's turn away from the prioritization of Lombardy and the Austrian Netherlands in Austrian foreign policy throughout her reign (Kaunitz's rejection of "Spanish" policy and history with the "Bohemian Party" are discussed in Szabo, "The Center and the Periphery", 474–483). This is not to suggest that she felt nothing; during the Bavarian exchange project she was noted as having deep reservations about trading off part of her patrimony, going so far as to suggest losing the Austrian Netherlands—"une province si fidèle et si utile"—would be "une beaucoup plus grande perte que de la Silésie". *MTJ II*, 228; further examples listed in Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 397. This may have had an influence on how poorly planned the Habsburg intervention was after the death of the Elector Maximilian Joseph in 1777.

Franco–Austrian alliance justified the more “natural” alliance with Prussia by pointing to its “palpable inferiority” and its inability “jouer un premier rôle dans les opérations que nous partagerons avec lui.”⁸³ Indeed, for France, the persistence of strong anti-Austrian politics may point to the dominance of a “balance of threats” model—where Austria was historically a more significant threat than an assumedly second-tier Prussia—over a “balance of power” as such.⁸⁴ Still, as Kaunitz sagely argued in 1749, the real enemy for Austria had shifted from France to Prussia, and notwithstanding the brief period when Louis XVI was still constitutional monarch over the summer of 1792, the War of the Austrian Succession was the last Habsburg–Bourbon war.

Habsburg diplomacy from 1749–1757 was primarily concerned with attaining allies for the impending struggle with Prussia, which Szabo argues was assumed to be inevitable by virtually all parties.⁸⁵ Kaunitz leveraged the exasperation of Maria Theresia with the British in 1748 and the longer disappointing history of British coalition war-time diplomacy in working towards the new Franco–Austrian alignment. Austria operated from several presuppositions: namely that the Habsburg Monarchy was a legitimate Great Power; that the peace achieved at Aix-la-Chapelle was deeply in need of revision; and that the Monarchy’s security was still threatened. This last assumption was integral to Kaunitz and other policymakers’ reluctance to abandon the British

⁸³ Thomas E. Kaiser, “Who’s Afraid of Marie Antoinette?”, 246. Gary Savage also casts doubt on Prussia’s willingness to aid French aims in Gary Savage, “Foreign Policy and Political Culture in Later Eighteenth-Century France”, 308.

⁸⁴ This refers to the neorealist theory of Stephen Walt as discussed in Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It,” 396.

⁸⁵ Szabo, *Seven Years’ War*, 1–13.

connection until the French—or some other power’s—aid was secured.⁸⁶ Maria Theresia and Haugwitz’s reforms marched on in Austria, but there was little appetite for another struggle with Prussia alone; in 1749 Kaunitz stressed the necessity of Russian cooperation if any anti-Prussian action was to be taken. For the origins of the Seven Years’ War, it is important to highlight that the Habsburg expectation of France prior to Frederick’s invasion of Saxony was merely neutrality in the upcoming conflict—as Kaunitz had envisioned from the start—and that the Monarchy was actively trying to stall an eager Russia.⁸⁷ The massive international coalition that arose on paper after the Second Treaty of Versailles in 1757, which should have swept Prussia if not into oblivion, at least into Maria Theresia’s restrained aim of “a rather small secondary small power....comparable to the other lay electorates,”⁸⁸ was not necessarily a precondition of overturning Aix-la-Chapelle.

Nevertheless, Kaunitz advocated as early as 1755 that Austria pay a steeper price to enlist actual French participation in the reduction of the upstart Hohenzollern state.⁸⁹ From the escalation of French involvement in 1757 until the reversal of Russian policy by Peter III in 1762, the Habsburg Monarchy enjoyed the position of being the linchpin and principal of a hegemonic European coalition which seemed capable of defeating Prussia by attrition if nothing else. Despite

⁸⁶ McGill, “Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles”, 233.

⁸⁷ For Kaunitz’s plans in 1749, see *Ibid.*, 234. Russian hostility to Prussia and drive towards starting combat in the summer of 1756 is discussed in Szabo, *Seven Years’ War*, 10–11 and 17–18.

⁸⁸ Ingraio, “Strategy and Geopolitics”, 59. This quote stems from a communication to Feldmarshall von Daun at the height of Austrian success in 1761.

⁸⁹ Kaunitz suggested that France and Austria seek to return Prussia to its borders from before the Thirty Years’ War. See Alfred Beer, “Denkschriften des Fürsten Wenzel Kaunitz-Rittbergs”, in *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, vol. 48, (Wien: Karl Gerold’s Sohn, 1872), 39–56.

severe financial difficulties, poor allied military coordination, and the exit of France from the war on the Continent, Austria was poised for victory at the end of 1761: Frederick II had acknowledged his impending defeat and had even, a day after the death of Empress Elisabeth of Russia, authorized his foreign minister to commence negotiations except in the fantastical event that the Ottoman Empire invaded Hungary inside of one month.⁹⁰ During the Seven Years' War, the Habsburg Monarchy saw itself as the primary architect of a new European settlement which would rein in the Machiavellian King in Prussia and reward its victorious allies with new territories and itself with peace and stability.

Had the three powers—France, Austria, and Russia—been victorious in the Seven Years' War, the treaties of 1756–1757 would have doubtlessly transformed European history. France's acquisition of Belgium—in part through annexation, in part via secondogeniture—would have greatly damaged British commercial dominance on the Continent, and a successful conquest of Hanover may have stalled British overseas gains. This is to say nothing of the domestic implications a victory would have had for the *ancien régime*. Austria would have regained absolute primacy in Germany, and the slow dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire under Austro–Prussian dualism might never have occurred. Russia still would have joined the leagues of the Great Powers, but a victorious Franco–Austrian Alliance would have been uniquely well-placed to resist its further expansion. It likely would have even been able to guarantee the Saxon succession in Poland as well as the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The three

⁹⁰ Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 371–372; 424–426.

allies would have dominated Europe in precisely the same form as the ‘Pentarchy’ did in the 19th Century, with the war-forged success of a more satiated, conservative, and moral international politics. This system as devised by Kaunitz really was “ein wahres Friedens Systema” which the Chancellor sought to save remnants of in the post-war order.⁹¹

This relatively peace-seeking intention made the transition to the post-war settlement easier. The absolute exhaustion of the Monarchy was paired with that of Prussia, such that a period of quiet could reasonably be expected and the task of significant reform could again be taken up by the Empress and the Chancellor. Unlike Aix-la-Chapelle, Hubertusburg was considered final. Next to the maintenance of the alliance with France, Kaunitz considered “den allgemeinen Frieden und das gute Ein Verständnis mit allen übrigen Mächten, und selbst mit Einbegriff des Königs in Preußen” to be the second principle of the Austrian state—provided Frederick did nothing untoward. Instead of looking outward, Kaunitz advocated that the post-war Habsburg Monarchy aim its “größte aufmercksamkeit” at the improvement of culture, manufacturing, commerce and finance.⁹² The Austrian decision was to mirror the status quo ante bellum terms of the peace settlement in its diplomacy by staying the pre-war course. Conditions in 1763 were significantly different than in 1756, however, as the alliance with France was neither new nor untested, and Russia’s dramatic and decisive swings

⁹¹ Beer, *DFKR*, 67.

⁹² The memorandum quoted is from the end of September 1764. Interestingly, Russia is not discussed. Beer, *DFKR*, 63–64 and 67.

of policy had announced its arrival as a potentially dangerous full-status Great Power.⁹³

Indeed it was likely Russia which was chiefly responsible for convincing Kaunitz that continuation of the alliance with the Bourbon courts was the only real option—it was in April 1764 that Russia and Prussia, brought together by the Polish election, finalized their defensive alliance which Scott sees as the decisive factor contributing to the perpetuation of the Franco–Austrian Alliance.⁹⁴ From 1764 until the end of the co-regency, the Habsburg Monarchy invested in the system of the Third Family Compact while remaining the ‘third power’ in Eastern Europe. In particular, Kaunitz and Maria Theresia both noted the need to stall Russian expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire during the two powers’ war from 1768–1774, and the treaty with the Porte in 1771 as well as the deeply regretted Partition of Poland were the price to pay for restraining Russia in the disadvantageous diplomatic climate of the period. Maria Theresia was famously the most deeply opposed to the Partition, writing to Kaunitz in early 1772,

We wanted to act à la Prussia and at the same time to preserve the appearance of honesty. This led us to deceive ourselves in respect of the means, as we are now deceiving ourselves about the appearance and course of events. I may be wrong....but were they to obtain for us even the share offered in the first plan of partition, were they to get us the District of Wallachia and even Belgrade itself, I should still think the price too high, for we should have bought it at the cost of our honour, of the good name of the Monarchy, of our good faith, and our religious principles. Since the outset of my unhappy reign we have at least tried always to show a true and just attitude, good faith, moderation, and loyal fulfillment

⁹³ On Russia’s emergent status in 1763, see Scott, *Eastern Powers*, 16–19. Catherine II’s machinations in Courland, despite previous Russian commitments to Saxony, were an ominous sign of future interference in Poland. Szabo, *Seven Years’ War*, 398–399.

⁹⁴ On the Polish election and its underestimated effects on the post–Seven Years’ War order, as well as the Russo–Prussian alignment’s influence on Habsburg policy, see Scott, *Eastern Powers*, 103–118.

of our obligations...In the past year this has all been lost. I admit that I find this almost intolerable, and that nothing in the world has pained me so much as the loss of our good name. Unfortunately, I must admit to you that we have deserved it.⁹⁵

Yet Joseph and Kaunitz had their reservations too, and the Chancellor in particular had sought to block Russian expansion by means of a diplomatic and military bluff—a strategy which unfortunately failed when Maria Theresa told the Prussian ambassador that she had no desire to go to war for the Porte.⁹⁶ By 1777 Kaunitz had totally despaired of preserving the Ottoman Empire, arguing that no combination of Powers had managed to halt Russian expansion, while the less pragmatic Empress still professed to ambassador Mercy, “I will never lend my hand to a partition of the Porte, and I hope that my grandchildren after me will see the Turks in Europe.” Joseph II’s succession as co-regent had little impact on this diplomatic reality, though his vigorous execution of Austrian policy during the Partition of Poland paired well with Kaunitz’s belief that the Monarchy had to gain what it could from an unfortunate situation.⁹⁷

The First Partition of Poland did little to benefit the Monarchy’s position in Europe as a whole, and detracted from its international reputation as Maria

⁹⁵ See Dyck, “Pondering the Russian Fact”, 453–454; Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 189.

⁹⁶ See Saul K. Padover, “Prince Kaunitz’ Résumé of His Eastern Policy, 1763–71,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 5, (3) (Sept., 1933): 352–365.

⁹⁷ Dyck, “Pondering the Russian Fact”, 456–457; Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 192; Joseph II’s “inclination towards Russia and against Turkey” in his “General Picture” from 1766 marked a substantive difference from the two other members of the triumvirate at the time, (Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 276) though importantly Kaunitz had effectively come round to this perspective by 1777, as Dyck notes, and Joseph had joined his mother and the Chancellor in worrying about preserving the Ottomans by 1769 (*ibid.*, 281). On Joseph, Kaunitz, and Poland, see *ibid.*, 297–302.

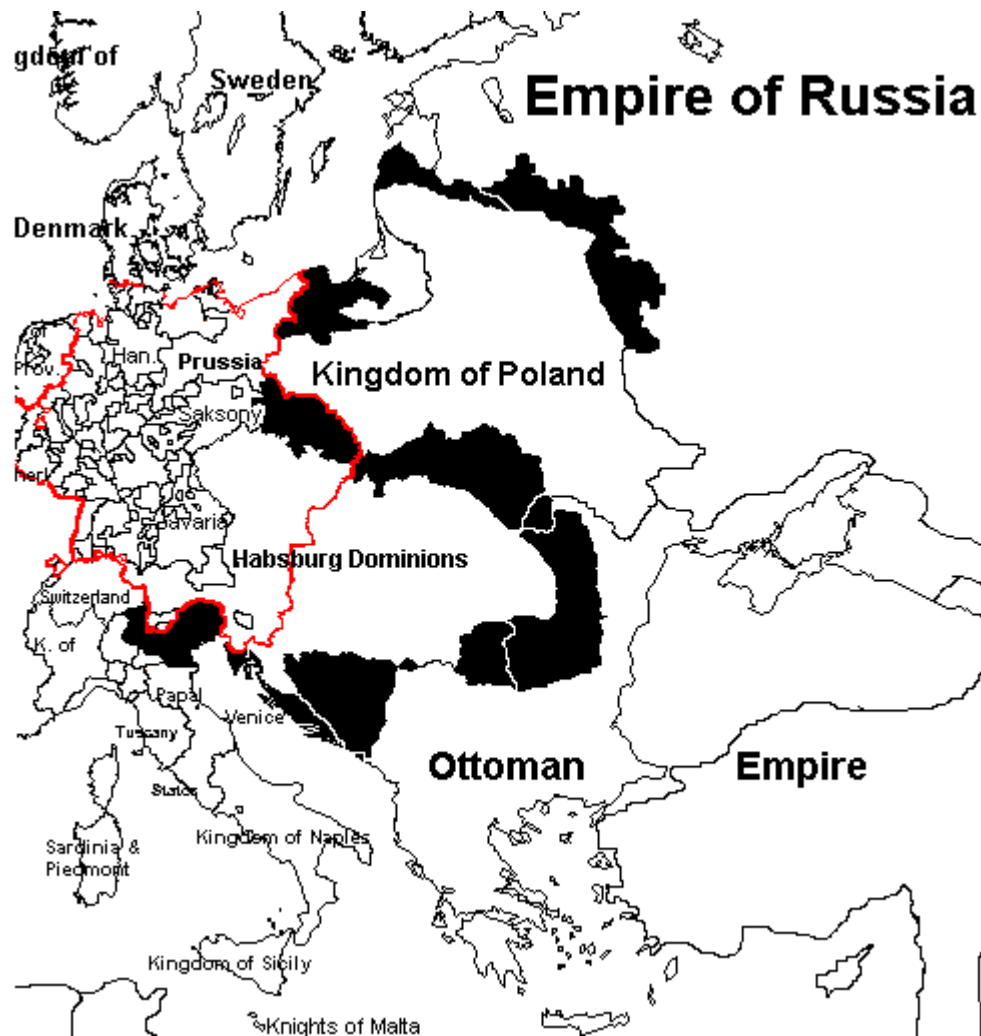


Figure I - Map of Territories Considered By Austria During the Partition Crisis, 1768–1772⁹⁸

Theresia had feared all along. The complex and protracted nature of the affair, the intermingling of Polish and Ottoman theatres, the myriad range of territories considered under discussion (Figure III), and the meekness of the Western Powers all contributed to a sense of insecurity and crisis in Vienna.⁹⁹ Despite its isolation,

⁹⁸ Adapted from source: Gerard von Hebel, “1772”, *The Historical Atlas of Europe*, <http://home.zonnet.nl/gerardvonhebel/1772.htm>, and “1748”; description and other information from Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresia*, 280–281, 286, 294–296.

⁹⁹ British policy in Poland was dominated by concern for relations with Russia, belief in the impossibility of a tripartite agreement among Prussia, Austria, and Russia, and recognition that British strategic interests were simply not significant enough to warrant intervention. See Colin Brooks, “British Political Culture and the Dismemberment of States: Britain and the First Partition of Poland”, *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, vol. 13 (1) (June 1993), 53–55. For Austrian

or more tellingly perhaps because of it, the 1770s gained the Monarchy more territory than any other from Utrecht to Sistova—Galicia in 1772, the Bukovina in 1775, and the Innviertel in 1779. Isolation among the Eastern Powers and ineffectual or nonexistent French support encouraged Habsburg participation in the brand of balance-of-power politics envisaged by Catherine and Frederick. The last great episode of the 1770s, the War of the Bavarian Succession, may have been triggered by the ineptitude of Kaunitz and Joseph, the chimerical nature of the exchange plan itself, and the unfortunate timing of the incident, but the overarching cause of the war and Habsburg failure, as Kaunitz and Joseph recognized, was the Monarchy's lack of a committed continental ally.¹⁰⁰

After the Peace of Teschen, Joseph and Kaunitz both turned towards courting Russia as a solution to Habsburg vulnerability, and by 1781, after a highly useful exercise in personal diplomacy by the Emperor, an alliance with Russia was signed with far-reaching implications for potential a Russo–Turkish War and a guarantee against Prussian attack. This was a serious departure from the policy of Maria Theresia, who had stalwartly opposed cooperation with Catherine II on the basis of her conduct, and significantly though by no means decisively changed the Habsburg position in European affairs. Yet, as Beales notes, there was little actual change in Austrian foreign policy when the Empress died in November 1780: scarcely an hour after Maria Theresia's death, Joseph

accusations of French weakness, see below pg. 56 and 70–71; also relevant is the sketch of French policy in the East provided in Denise Eeckaute-Bardery, “La diplomatie Française dans les Balkans au XVIIIe siècle”, *Etudes Balkaniques*, vol.1 (1991): 40–51.

¹⁰⁰ For the relevant sections of Beales and Bernard, see below 71–72.

wrote the Chancellor asking him to “restés mon ami, soyés mon aide, mon guide, dans le poids qui vient de tomber sur moi vous, savés sans cella combien je vous estime”.¹⁰¹ The Chancellor still dominated the conduct of foreign policy. Contrary to expectations by many outsiders, Joseph’s diplomacy as enacted by Kaunitz was neither aggressive nor particularly ambitious, and this early assertion of continuity, alongside similar ones made to France directly,¹⁰² underscored the essential preservation of triumvirate policy despite the death of the Empress.

The loss of the moralistic Maria Theresia did however open up new potential avenues for the Monarchy’s diplomacy—as the alliance with Russia in 1781 perhaps demonstrates—and Joseph certainly explored new questions during his sole reign, particularly in the case of his sovereignty over the Austrian Netherlands and relations with the United Provinces. It was no coincidence that Joseph moved towards ending the antiquated Barrier Treaty with the Dutch and opening the Scheldt River after his 1781 visit to the region; until his mother’s death, aside from their role in the Bavarian issue, the Austrian Netherlands had been a relatively quiet portion of the Habsburg territories. And indeed the prospective deaths of other German monarchs held out opportunities for Josephine Austria: either an illness of Karl Theodor—the Elector of Bavaria and the Monarchy’s partner in the Bavarian exchange project—or more generally

¹⁰¹ On the Russian Alliance, see Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 113–121; also de Madariaga, “The Secret Austro–Russian Treaty”; Roeder suggests that the alliance with Russia was likely inevitable in some form even if the Empress had lived, see Roeder, *Eastern Question*, 159–160. Beales suggests that Maria Theresia may have brokered the understanding between Kaunitz and Joseph to continue to work together before her death. Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 27–28 and 31–35. Kaunitz’s letter to Joseph: Beer, *JLK*, 20–21.

¹⁰² Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 35.

Joseph's use of the idea of the Elector's death in letters to Leopold, helped to reopen the question in 1783,¹⁰³ and the Emperor looked forward in 1783 and 1786 to working with Frederick Wilhelm of Prussia upon the death of Frederick II, a man so despicable that "the only thing to do is to say to oneself, 'I'm twenty years younger than him, I shall wait.'"¹⁰⁴

Lest the new avenues that Joseph pursued during his reign seem too much a departure from the policies of the triumvirate proper from 1765–1780, it must be stressed that Austria's position from 1781–1787 was much the same overall as between 1763 and 1778: straddled across a Western theatre dominated by colonial politics in the Americas and braced in the East against a Prussian attack and Russian expansionism. When Joseph dreamed of an alliance with Prussia in 1783 it was directed entirely against the growing Russian menace and was meant to stabilize both the Empire and Poland. Scarcely a few months later, writing to his ambassador in St. Petersburg, Ludwig von Cobenzl, in the letter which reopened the Bavarian question, he instructed the diplomat to stress the interconnectedness of the Ottoman and Bavarian issues, such that the benefit to Russia for its assistance was patently obvious:

Il me paroît qu'il est impossible que la Russie n'en sente la force et l'intérêt qu'elle auroit de concourir à l'accomplissement de son grand projet, seroit levée, me trouvant delivré des ménagemens que je dois avoir vis-à-vis de la France et contre laquelle tant que je possède les Païs Bas, la Russie avec la meilleure volonté ne sauroit m'être utile ni me couvrir.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Cesa, *Allies Yet Rivals*, 205 asserts an illness as inspiration for reopening the question in late 1782, citing Bernard, *Joseph II and Bavaria*, 147–149; Beales is silent on this issue and refers to the question only being opened at the end of November as "one of the most important of his personal initiatives in foreign policy." Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 363 and 388–389.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph quoted in Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 382; for 1786 see 398–402.

¹⁰⁵ Adolf Beer and Joseph, Ritter von Fiedler, *Joseph II und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl: Ihr Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, (Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1901), 434–436.

As Roider notes, the Russian Alliance of 1781 was far from aimed at encouraging the Russian ‘Greek Project’—alluded to here by Joseph—but rather an attempt to co-opt Russian policy and restrain it.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, the question of how to resolve Austria’s uneasy position as the third of the Eastern Powers remained fundamentally unresolved, and remained so even after the Monarchy committed itself to an unwanted and inopportune war with the Porte in 1787. Bound by his word and the need to preserve Austria’s advantage with Russia, Joseph called an unprecedented number of soldiers to the colours—almost three-hundred thousand¹⁰⁷—but the threat of a two-front war with Prussia still loomed.

And even at the end of Joseph II’s reign, Austria’s crucial role in opposing an exploitative Prussia was a fervently held axiom: upon hearing of the infamous Prussian Hertzberg Scheme, Joseph told Cobenzl that he “would rather fight a war to destruction” than accept any aggrandisement by Frederick Wilhelm II, and if this could not be avoided he would “not hesitate a moment to reach an immediate arrangement with the Porte...and leave Russia all alone in order to turn all [his] forces against the king of Prussia.”¹⁰⁸ From 1740 until 1790, this was the *sine qua non* of Habsburg diplomacy and in many respects remained the one price the Monarchy would not pay in order to compete in Schroeder’s game, optimism about Frederick Wilhelm or a change of behaviour from Frederick II notwithstanding. Over the course of Maria Theresia and Joseph II’s reigns,

¹⁰⁶ He likens this to Bartenstein’s policy in the 1730s. Roider, *Eastern Question*, 161.

¹⁰⁷ Mayer, “The Price for Austria’s Security: Part I”, 269.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Roider, *Eastern Question*, 160; similar pronouncements were made to Mercy in Paris—see Roider, “Joseph, Kaunitz and the Turkish War”, 546.

Austria attempted several answers to the dilemma posed by the evolving international state-system. Factors “*Deus ex machina*” intervened to prevent the success of allied arms in the Seven Years’ War,¹⁰⁹ when the Monarchy had attempted to pair generous cooperation with moderate aims and a police action against a transgressive polity. The peace from exhaustion bought Austria quiet in the mid-1760s, but the Empress and Kaunitz failed to avoid being outflanked by Prussia in Poland and were pulled by eighteenth-century balance-of-power logic into participating in the latter’s partition. When the alliance with France proved incapable of the slightest positive action in 1778, Kaunitz and Joseph then sold Austria to Russia in the hope that being on the more powerful side of the balance would afford the Monarchy manoeuvrability, security, and stability. They received little. Schroeder’s “improbable chance”—that Austria would by some miracle win the “power-political” game—had not yet come to pass.

¹⁰⁹ Szabo, *Seven Years’ War*, 427.

Part Two: Bourbon Other

3. A Partnership without Equal: Archenemies & Allies from Versailles to Teschen

In the late 17th Century, it was not Prussia but France which held the dubious honour—albeit in a less fervent sense—of being the cause of all ills in Europe. Philip von Hörnigk wrote, in his famous *Österreich über Alles, wenn es nur will*, that “a hundred years ago, when pressed by the Turks and others, our forefathers could still rely on the Roman Empire and its other Princes. But in our days, the guile of France has thrown all into such confusion that man can place his confidence only in God and in himself.”¹¹⁰ Leopold I told the Papal Nuncio in Vienna in 1679 that, “les jalousies de la France augmentent toujours, car elle refuse le restituer des Ville d'Alsace malgré les accords de Westphalie...la France est entierement maîtresse du Rhin....et qu'ainsi la France deviendrait la maîtresse de l'Allemagne.” France’s unilateral annexation of Strasbourg in 1681 was only one example: for Austria, Louis XIV’s France represented a restless power which was attempting to usurp Imperial institutions, and whose every initiative served only to confirm Habsburg belief in their “unbounded ambitions.”¹¹¹ This

¹¹⁰ Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 70–72. Macartney seems to have used a reprint of the work in *Oesterreich-Reihe* for his abridged translation, which makes finding the original line difficult, especially as the text varies between editions.

¹¹¹ Sheldon Shapiro, *The Relations Between Louis XIV and Leopold of Austria from the Treaty of Nymegen to the Truce of Ratisbon*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966), 24 and 154; an excellent overview of both anti-Habsburg feeling on the French side and anti-French sentiments on the Austrian side before the Seven Years’ War is Johannes Burkhardt, “Geschichte als Argument in der Habsburgisch-Französischen Diplomatie: der Wandel des frühneuzeitlichen Geschichtsbewußtseins in seiner Bedeutung für die Diplomatische Revolution von 1756”, in

axiomatic hostility to the primary Bourbon court had a longstanding history by 1748, originating in the original Habsburg–Valois wars of Charles V wherein France had been the chief antagonist among the Catholic powers towards the Habsburg imperial–universal project. It was reiterated for Maria Theresia and Kaunitz by the much more recent wars of succession over Spain, Poland, and Austria itself. Indeed, even amidst the massive reorientation of Austrian policy associated with Kaunitz, old-guard diplomats and ministers continued to insist that the Monarchy should maintain its hostile stances against its traditional foes—France and the Ottomans.¹¹²

Yet while Austria had competed vigorously with the Bourbons in the first half of the 18th Century in Spain, Italy, the Low Countries, and Germany, both Kaunitz and subsequent historians have been correct to point to the real ambiguity of the evidence for an innate Habsburg–Bourbon hostility.¹¹³ Coupled with a deep-seated disillusionment with the alliance with the Maritime Powers which

Rainer Babel ed., *Frankreich im europäischen Staatensystem der Frühen Neuzeit*, (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1995), 191–217.

¹¹²McGill lists Harrach as the main advocate of such a view during the 1749 conference, though is keen to insist the general tenor of the dispute between Kaunitz and the other councillors was muted. McGill, “Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles”, 231–232. P.G.M. Dickson suggests that the Baron Bartenstein, head of Austrian foreign policy throughout the 1730s and 1740s, was actually the original advocate of an alliance with France—and even Prussia—and Kaunitz was merely a “supplanter”. P.G.M. Dickson, “Baron Bartenstein on Count Haugwitz’s ‘New System’ of Government”, in Blanning and Cannadine, *History and Biography*, 6. For the attitude towards the Ottomans, see Roider, *Eastern Question*, 91.

¹¹³Visions of a Catholic alliance as early as during the Thirty Years’ War were—perhaps somewhat chimerically—advocated by Ferdinand II’s Jesuit confessor, William Lamormaini; Robert Bireley, S.J., *Religion and Politics in the Age of the Counterreformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini, S.J., and the Formation of Imperial Policy*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 217 and 221. France and Austria had enjoyed a good working relationship after the War of the Polish Succession, and Austro–Spanish cooperation was notable at points during the 1720s—for an overview see McKay and Scott, *The Rise of the Great powers*, 126–133 and 150–154. For Kaunitz, see McGill, “Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles”, 233–234.

developed during the War of the Austrian Succession and an awareness of its fundamental security shortcomings,¹¹⁴ a reappraisal of the Franco–Austrian relationship seemed natural. William McGill’s criticism of Kaunitz’s double-standard at Aix-la-Chapelle—willing to forgive the French their schemes, unwilling to forgive the British theirs—is unfair; there is a real sense in which the Habsburgs demanded better from their supposedly ‘natural’ allies than the same behaviour as their equally ‘natural’ enemies.¹¹⁵ The evidence from Austrian diplomatic policy since Utrecht, especially the infrequent ententes with France and Spain, presented clear alternatives to the Maritime–Habsburg alignment,¹¹⁶ and the remarkable new Prussian threat undercut older less urgent animosities in favour of significant change. The expansive, violent tenor of the Franco–Austrian rivalry masked its longevity, acculturation, and systemic routineness—features which likely contributed to the ease with which the relationship between the two powers was re-envisioned by Kaunitz in the context of the norm-transgressing and upstart Frederick II.

If France was going to be persuaded to join Austria against Prussia, Kaunitz argued in the summer of 1755, the rational interest of the Bourbons

¹¹⁴ Kaunitz’s initial disdain for the Maritime Powers was born of frustrations he witnessed first-hand in both Italy and the Austrian Netherlands during the war. McGill, “Kaunitz in Italy and the Netherlands”, 143. Maria Theresa’s attitude toward British behaviour is best summarized in her interview with their ambassador, Robert Keith, in 1756: “I cannot conceal, that the cessions which Great Britain extorted from me at the peace of Dresden, and of Aix-la-Chapelle, have totally disabled me. I have little to fear from France; I am unable to act with vigor and have no other recourse than to form such arrangements as will secure what remains.” Roeder, *Maria Theresa*, 64. See also the lengthier discussion in Schilling, *Kaunitz und das Renversement des alliances*, 52–73.

¹¹⁵ McGill, “Kaunitz and Aix-la-Chapelle”, 161 and 164; McGill, “Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles”, 229–230.

¹¹⁶ Impulses towards the Diplomatic Revolution were already evident from the 1715 settlement onwards. See Max Braubach, *Versailles und Wien von Ludwig XIV. bis Kaunitz: Die Vorstadien der diplomatischen Revolution im 18. Jahrhundert*, (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1952).

would have to be satisfied. The primary inducements in Kaunitz's plan were dynastic, revolving chiefly around the installation of Don Philippe and Louis XV's eldest daughter Louise Élisabeth in the Austrian Netherlands and support for the candidacy of the prince de Conti to the Polish throne. The Bourbons were, like the Habsburgs themselves, one of few great European dynasties whose geopolitical interests could be seen to be advanced by cadet branches in far flung territories as well as by central acquisitions. Beyond this, France could be offered mastery over the Flemish towns of Ostend and Nieuwpoort, and as Kaunitz noted—although not as an explicit inducement to be offered—an alliance with France would also entail accepting the as-yet-unaccomplished incorporation of the Duchy of Lorraine. Such concessions would not fail to appeal to both French and Bourbon ears simultaneously.¹¹⁷

Yet, as Maria Theresia's secretary Ignaz von Koch pointed out to Kaunitz years earlier—in September 1751 when Kaunitz was the Habsburg ambassador in Paris—convincing the French of positive Austrian intentions required more than mere inducements: it required the establishment of trust. Koch explained that France's foreign policy was conducted based on of three principles: "*l'un que l'Angleterre veut luy faire la guerre et nous y entrainer, le second que notre intérêt nous oblige à ne pas nous séparer de l'Angleterre, et le troisième que tout ce que nous leur disons, n'est qu'un jeu concerté avec l'Angleterre.*"¹¹⁸ Such a conception

¹¹⁷The plans for offers to France are discussed at length by Kaunitz in an explanation in Beer, *DFKR*, 42–50.

¹¹⁸ Italics as printed. Hanns Schlitter, *Correspondance secrète entre le comte A. W. Kaunitz-Rietberg et le baron Ignaz de Koch, 1750–1752*, (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et C^{ie}, 1899), 117.

of French thinking was why Koch felt France's drift towards a sly Prussia completely understandable, and the secretary suggested the very same conspirational logic the French saw in British and Austrian policy laid at the heart of French duplicity. If this was to be overcome without serious risk to the Habsburg Monarchy's security, Kaunitz would have to overcome the "soupçons et préjugés si profondément enracinés" of the court at Versailles. In 1751, as perhaps throughout the tenure of the Franco–Austrian Alliance, such a feat was "aussi difficile à espérer qu'à exécuter."¹¹⁹

By contrast to Koch, Kaunitz was more optimistic about French intentions, writing to warn Maria Theresia of French double-dealing but insisting that they would not necessarily oppose and may even welcome the election of the young Archduke Joseph as King of the Romans—the primary diplomatic issue of his ambassadorship in Paris. He also remained relatively stalwart in his belief that Habsburg–Bourbon cooperation must and could be achieved.¹²⁰ From this early stage of the negotiations onwards, there was a persistent hope among the chief Habsburg policymakers, though certainly increasingly hedged as time went on, that investments in trust, cooperation, and goodwill with the French would eventually pay dividends. Koch identified the problem; Kaunitz sought the solution.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 117–118.

¹²⁰ McGill, "Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles", 236–237; Kaunitz's doubts in late 1751 and turning away from actively seeking an alliance with France discussed in *ibid.*, 238–239 and Schlitter, *CSKK*, 126, where Kaunitz expressed hope that connections he made at Versailles might one day mean that "cette Cour ne dirigera pas éternellement contre nous seuls tous ses coups politiques, comme il est arrivé jusqu'à présent."

Yet while many of the memoranda and other pieces written by Kaunitz up until late 1755 deal with the transactional costs and conditions of the imagined *renversement des alliances*, relatively little is said directly about France as a potential ally. Kaunitz places France in much the same category as England as a different variety of great power, distinct from Austria and other continental leaders; in the same vein, he suggests, that “die Cron Frankreich ist bekanntermassen die einzige Europaeische Macht, vor welcher die Englische Nation und ihr commercium in Sorgen zu leben, und sich zu verwehren nötig hat.”¹²¹ While undoubtedly the greatest of the continental powers, Kaunitz thought her policy—as a result of her size or other unstated factors—lacked a certain manoeuvrability, making the particular moment in 1755 when France seemed “sur le point de prendre un Systeme[sic]” all the more urgent lest the decision be against Austria.¹²² Still, in direct comparison to the ‘factional’ British, ‘frivolous’ France comes off well: Kaunitz discusses the downsides of dealing with a parliamentary system at length but leaves France and her government entirely out of the picture—despite his intimate knowledge of the French court derived from his time as ambassador there.¹²³ France was at least a consistent, rational actor capable of being persuaded of its own geopolitical interests. By the end of the Seven Years’ War, however, the allied experience with France had begun to disabuse Kaunitz and other Habsburg policy makers of such an illusion.

¹²¹ Beer, *DFKR*, 24. See also H.M. Scott, “Kaunitz and the Western Powers after the Seven Years’ War”, in Klingenstein and Szabo, *Staatskanzler: Neue Perspektiven*, 91–116.

¹²² Beer, *DFKR*, 56.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 58–60. A brief overview of his busy time as French ambassador is Milena Lenderova, “Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, ambassadeur d’Autriche en France”, in Klingenstein and Szabo, *Staatskanzler: Neue Perspektiven*, 47–56.

France's ignominious retreat from the continental war after the psychologically humiliating, if strategically less than decisive, defeat at Rossbach in 1757 through the Third Treaty of Versailles in early 1759 effectively excluded most significant French gains promised by earlier treaty; no territory in the Austrian Netherlands would be ceded to the House of Bourbon. The only real advancing of French interests by this arrangement was a significant reduction in French arms in the Empire towards a renewed focus on the disastrous war with Britain, Maria Theresa's final relinquishing of rights to Parma, Piacenza, and Gustalla, and the arrangements for the marriage of Isabella of Parma to Joseph II.¹²⁴ In 1760, despite its retreat from the war on the Continent, France's chief minister, the duc de Choiseul, irritated Kaunitz and the Empress by harshly criticizing the Habsburg war effort and requesting an immediate peace—going so far later in the year to suggest that France alone negotiate with Britain on a peace settlement for all parties. Kaunitz, and after him Russia—just as forcefully—rejected this suggestion outright.¹²⁵ Coupled with all this was France's failure to apply lessons from the War of the Austrian Succession through prioritizing its invasion of Hanover in order to strengthen its bargaining hand against Britain later.¹²⁶ Between France's abandonment of its interests and the war, insulting language and suggestions, and strategic mismanagement, the Austrian impression of France and the value of the alliance suffered greatly.

¹²⁴ Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 94–101 and 210–213

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 309–311 and 324–327.

¹²⁶ See Szabo, "Perdre l'Amérique en Allemagne", 39–63.

When the Cardinal de Bernis encouraged Choiseul to feel out for peace in September 1758—part of the preliminaries to the signing of the Third Treaty of Versailles—Kaunitz listened calmly, though he mused openly with the Empress whether the new French terms, with their abandonment of almost everything envisioned in the Second Treaty of Versailles, were even worth accepting.¹²⁷ Maria Theresia informed Choiseul, “Qu'elle mourait de peur d'avoir plus compté qu'elle ne devait sur la puissance française,” and “si le Roi voulait la paix avec le roi de Prusse, il pouvait la faire...et que si le cas arrivait que le Roi l'abandonnât toute seule, elle devait en honneur [Choiseul] prévenir qu'elle prendrait ses arrangements.”¹²⁸ If the Empress was pessimistic about France and the policy of Louis XV and the Cardinal de Bernis in 1758, scarcely two years into the alliance, she was still far from disparaging. In late 1763, however, Maria Theresia suggested to Maria Antonia, Electress of Saxony, that she had nothing to fear of a weak France or its potential candidate for the newly vacant Polish throne, and later, that Louis XV's representatives were not to be trusted: “Nous sommes au mieux avec [la] cour [de France], mais avec les particuliers—surtout cette nation étant si légère et avantageuse—je ne saurois dire que nous y avons la même confiance ; c'est aussi la raison que tout nos affaires se traitent à Paris par notre ambassadeur, et point ici avec les leurs.” Ironically, the Polish election of 1763–1764 was one of the rare occasions that formal French policy and *le secret*

¹²⁷ Richard Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans: Histoire Diplomatique et Militaire*, vol. II (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1899), 460–461. Bernis was decidedly for peace, and was at this juncture being eclipsed by Choiseul, who returned to Paris at the end of November. Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 210–211.

¹²⁸ Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans II*, 463.

du roi—so much a part of why French policy seemed so incoherent or untrustworthy abroad—matched.¹²⁹

By contrast, Kaunitz remained much quieter about the disappointments with the French during the Austrian experience of the Seven Years' War, and continued to believe that France and the Alliance could still be useful for both the Monarchy and Europe. In a major memorandum on the diplomatic situation of the Monarchy in September 1764, Kaunitz essentially restated all of his reasons for deciding upon the Franco–Austrian Alliance in the first place, arguing that,

Es hat sich aber diese widrige Gestalt der Sachen durch die Oesterreichische Verbindung mit Frankreich auf einmahl und in den meisten Stücken sehr Vergnüglich abgeändert; da dem Ertzhaus statt der Vorhingen Vielen Feinden nur die gefährliche nachbarschaft des Königs in Preuszen und der Pforte übrig geblieben ist.

The geopolitical advantages for Kaunitz were simply unassailable, even in the post-war era. Rather than turning away from the alliance with France, Kaunitz entertained acceding to the Third Family Compact, or if that failed, having Spain join the Treaties of Versailles; he even suggested the alliance held out opportunities for cooperation with France inside the Reich.¹³⁰ Most importantly, however, Kaunitz viewed France—and Austria's relationship with it—through the lens of the European system as a whole:

¹²⁹ Many accents appear to be missing in the transcription. In the earlier of the two letters, Maria Theresia also insists that Austria has never had any “liaison” with Madame de Pompadour. She writes of France and her perceived candidate, the Electress of Saxony's brother-in-law: “ce que vous me marquez pour la cour de France, d'abord que le prince Xavier n'est point sur les rangs, vous n'avez rien a craindre de ce coté que la foiblesse de cette monarchie.” Woldemar Lippert, *Kaiserin Maria Theresia und Kurfürstin Maria Antonia von Sachsen: Briefwechsel, 1747–1772*, (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1908), 185 and 193; on the convergence of the two French policies, see Scott, *Rise of the Eastern Powers*, 110–111.

¹³⁰ Beer, *DFKR*, 65 and 67–73.

Nichtweniger ist die Oesterreichische Verbindung mit Frankreich als ein wahres Friedens Systema anzusehen und so beschaffen, dasz alle Höfe, so nicht im Trüben fischen wollen, sondern ihr Vorzügliches Augenmerck auf den allgemeinen Ruhestand und ihre eigene Sicherheit richten, die Fortdauerung dieser Allianz zu wünschen alle Ursach haben; dann weder das Oesterreichische noch das Französische Staats Interesse könnte mit gleichgültigen Augen ansehen, wenn sein Allijrte auf ungerechte Vergrösserungen fürdenken, und die Balance auf einer Seite überwiegen machen wollte.¹³¹

Kaunitz's carefully argued memorandum and rational analysis of Austrian interests were doubtlessly decisive in convincing Maria Theresia to stay the course in the post-war years. There were however, other positive developments between France and Austria during the course of the Seven Years' War—even after 1758—not least of which was the successful but ultimately tragic marriage of Joseph and Isabella in late 1760. The Austrian state conspicuously glorified the occasion with a series of five massive paintings detailing the event and its attendees (Plate I), commissioned with the court painter Martin van Meytens.¹³²

Nevertheless the war had strained the Alliance. There had been significant French disappointment both before and after the Peace of Paris: the French *parti dévot* had opposed the Alliance from its inception, and the French Minister of War—as early as 1756—went so far as to commission a rebuttal to the Alliance from the particularly anti-Austrian Jean-Louis Favier for Louis XV. Thomas Kaiser suggests this Austrophobic treatise, published in 1778 by the comte de Vergennes—then Foreign Minister and highly influential with Louis XVI—

¹³¹ Ibid., 67. This represented Kaunitz's attempt to salvage some of the envisioned European system dependant on an allied victory, as discussed above, pg. 38–39.

¹³² A brief overview of the wedding—with reference to the paintings—and the image used in Plate I can be found at Martin Mutschlechner, “A Wedding Album – the Marriage of Joseph II to Isabella of Parma”, on *Die Welt der Habsburger*, accessed June 7th, 2014, <http://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/wedding-album-marriage-joseph-ii-isabella-parma> .



Plate I - “Einzug der Braut” from the Marriage of Isabella of Parma and Crown Prince Joseph¹³³ was actually seen in manuscript by a substantial Parisian audience following the debacle at Rossbach.¹³⁴ French commentators persistently blamed the Alliance for the failure of the French war effort. Similarly, not all Austrian voices were as sanguine as the Chancellor. The young and recently married (if not yet influential) Joseph II felt the alliances of the war had proven particularly disappointing, openly expressing this sentiment to his mother in a long, formal memorandum. By contrast especially to the reign of Charles VI, Joseph assessed the Austrian situation in 1761 as bleak:

¹³³ The level of detail in the massive painting is remarkable; many individual aristocrats are identifiable with their carriages. Martin van Meytens, *Einzug der Braut*, Oil Painting, after 1760, accessed June 7th, 2014, <http://www.habsburger.net/en/chapter/wedding-album-marriage-joseph-ii-isabella-parma> .

¹³⁴ See Kaiser, “Who’s Afraid of Marie Antoinette?”, 243–247; more on Favier and his influence in Gary Savage, “Favier’s Heirs”, 225–258.

Si nous ne pouvons forcer le Roi de Prusse à quitter la Saxe, ainsi qu'il y a apparence, puisque cinq cent mille hommes y travaillent inutilement déjà depuis cinq ans, quelle paix pouvons nous espérer ? La plus avantageuse sans doute sera s'il rentre dans les mêmes bornes où il était avant cette guerre. Mais qui nous mettra désormais à couvert des insultes de cet ennemi aussi redoutable qu'irréconciliable ? Nos alliances ? Non certainement. Nous éprouvons que les plus grandes monarchies de l'Europe ne font que de vains efforts pour le réduire, ce qui est encore d'une très-mauvaise conséquence pour l'avenir.

Where once all of Europe had trembled before the combined might of the Monarchy's alliances, now Prussia had shown that it was possible, "non seulement de s'opposer à leurs forces réunis, mais même de les contraindre à rechercher une paix désavantageuse, il n'est plus à espérer que le pouvoir de ces mêmes monarchies soit dorénavant respecté!"¹³⁵

Though apt and in the service of arguing for thorough reform of the Austrian administration, this assessment—which came even before the catastrophic death of the Empress Elisabeth in 1762 and the subsequent confusion of Russian policy—ignored the difficult diplomatic realities of coalition-warfare which Kaunitz and Maria Theresia experienced and understood in greater detail. Thus, despite these disappointments, Kaunitz could still begin his analysis of Austrian policy in 1764 with the first principle that,

so hat...der Kaiserliche Königliche Hof für einen Haupt-Grundsatz angenommen, die mit dem Haus Bourbon und insbesondere mit Frankreich obwaltenden Defensiv-Allianz und Einverständnis in so lang sorgfältigst aufrecht zu erhalten, als dieses Haus die Pflichten der Freundschaft und Verbindung getreulich erfüllet und den Wienerischen Hof nicht zwinget, andere Masznehmungen einzuschlagen.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Arneth, *MTJI*, 2–3.

¹³⁶ Beer, *DFKR*, 63–64.

The alliance with France was still very much secure in the aftermath of the Treaty of Hubertusburg, as was underlined by Kaunitz's declining of seemingly generous British overtures made by Prince Louis of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in the last stages of the war, and by the continuing denial of a return to the 'Old System' in the proceeding decades until Sistowa.¹³⁷

While the perceived bellicosity of the duc de Choiseul after the Peace of Paris in regards to Britain's overseas possessions and, by 1766, also against Russia in Eastern Europe, concerned both Kaunitz and Joseph II,¹³⁸ Austria's desire for peace meant that the alliance with France was relatively stable during the 1760s. Thus Habsburg policy-makers could observe the French annexation of Corsica in 1768, a unilateral gain which would not have been permitted to either of the other leading Continental powers, without any particular alarm, if perhaps still disapproval.¹³⁹ Similarly, the earlier reversion of the Duchy of Lorraine to France (in 1766), proceeded smoothly, and a likely ambivalent—if nevertheless also anti-ultramontane—Austria tacitly conspired along with France and Spain to bring about the suppression of the Jesuits.¹⁴⁰

The 1760s were not, however, merely a decade of quietude and forbearance. They also witnessed the most famous manifestation of the alliance: the marriage of Maria Antonia, youngest daughter of Maria Theresia, to Louis XV's grandson, Louis-Auguste, in April/May 1770. It was the final of four

¹³⁷ Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 376–377; Scott, "Kaunitz and the Western Powers", 106–108.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 104–105.

¹³⁹ Arneth, *MTJI*, 232; Beales discusses briefly the Habsburg attitudes towards Pasquale Paoli, but omits any discussion of Austrian attitudes towards the annexation itself. Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 262–263.

¹⁴⁰ See Scott, "The Attack on the Society of Jesus", esp. 43–44.

marriages (see Figure IV), occurring in quick succession, between the scions of the Houses of Habsburg and Bourbon—the other three being that of Leopold and Maria Luisa of Spain in 1765; Maria Amalia and Ferdinand of Parma, the brother of Joseph II's first wife, Isabella, in 1768; and Maria Carolina and Ferdinand IV of Naples in 1769. The marriage between the young Archduchess and the Dauphin of France was naturally seen as the most important: it represented not merely a recognition that Austria had enemies in the French court—chief among them the *parti dévot*—and therefore needed an influential ally in a potentially structurally-powerful position, but also a serious commitment by the Empress to the perpetuation of the Alliance through family ties. This is not to suggest that Maria Theresa felt serious qualms about sending her children to foreign courts or had special affection for Marie Antoinette—she wrote in her “political testament” of 1749–1750, cobbled together by modern historians, that “I love my family and my children, so that I spare no effort, trouble, care or labor for their sakes, yet I would always have put the general welfare of my dominions above them.”¹⁴¹ Both Maria Theresa and Joseph II used their (gendered) family connections to the French Queen in order to justify and excuse their lengthy ongoing interference in her life and the Bourbon court. Maria Theresa and Joseph II alike worried about the grave political consequences of Marie Antoinette's failure to produce an heir, and the most important result—and likely objective—of the Emperor's visit to France in 1777 was to solve this issue. There was of course attachment and affection too: Maria Theresa told her daughter on the day of her departure,

¹⁴¹ Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 99–100.

Habsburg-Bourbon Marriages and Genealogy in the 18th Century

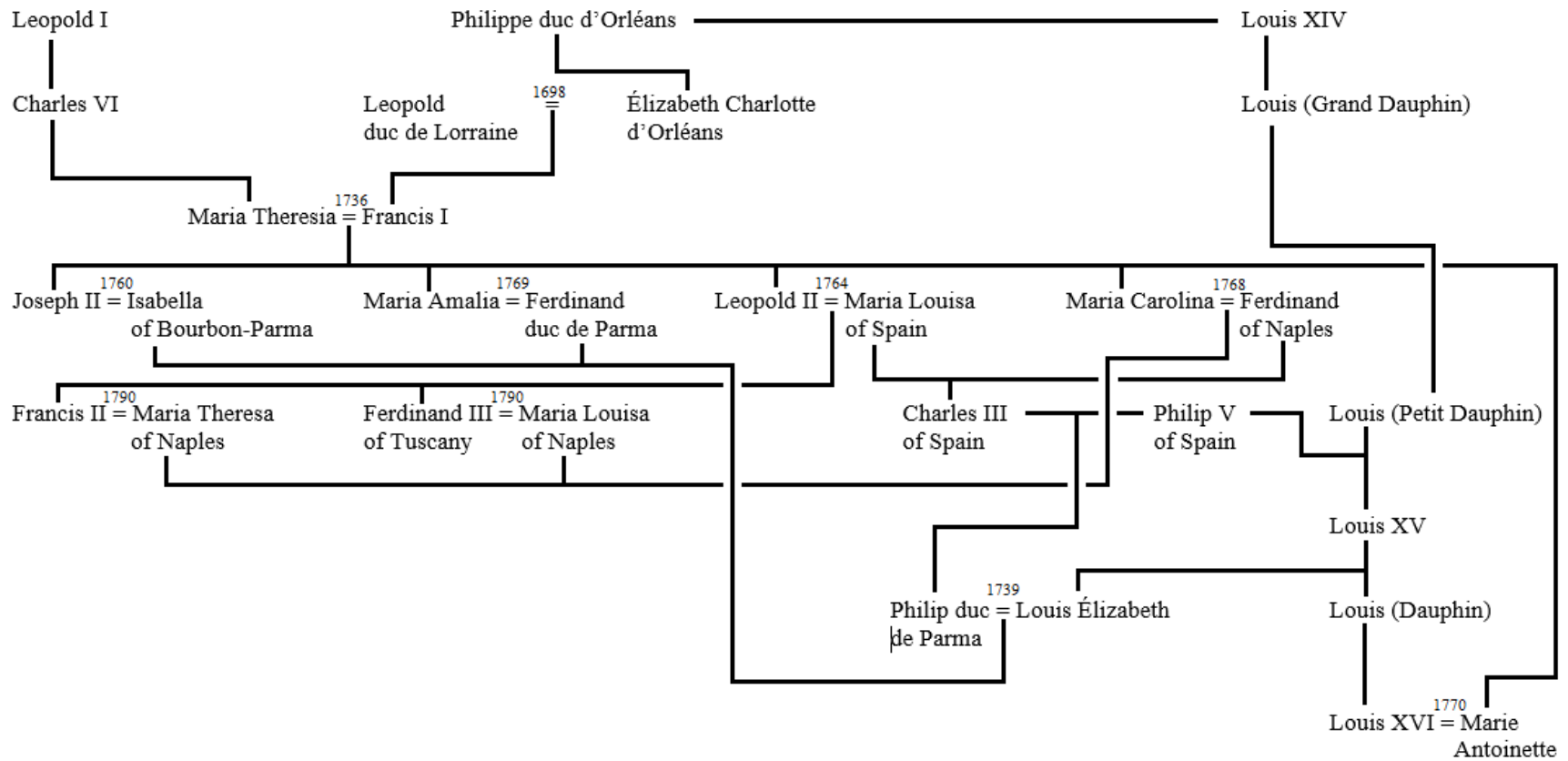


Figure III– Habsburg–Bourbon Marriages and Genealogy in the 18th Century

“N’oubliez jamais l’anniversaire de feu votre cher père, et le mien à son temps: en attendant vous pouvez prendre celui de ma naissance pour prier pour moi”, and weeks later, “n’oubliez pas une mère qui, quoiqu’éloignée, ne cessera d’être occupée de vous jusqu’à son dernier soupir.”¹⁴²

When Marie Antoinette departed for France in 1770, she was slated to become the primary Habsburg agent in Versailles along with her ‘handler’, the ambassador Mercy. Maria Theresia, Kaunitz, and Joseph all had various reservations about relying on the young Archduchess too much as the Austrian lever in French politics, largely on the basis of her ability to be effective; Mercy was more optimistic, while Kaunitz felt her power best exercised in influencing appointments.¹⁴³ The Dauphine quickly became associated with the *choiseuliste* faction at court, though she would much later build her own party as Queen.¹⁴⁴ This was a foray into French court politics which rested on an assumption of commensurability between the French and Austrian foreign-policy decision-

¹⁴² Alfred, Ritter von Arneth and M.A. Geffroy, *Marie Antoinette: Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau*, vol. I, (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1874), 1–3 and 6–8. Beales’ discussion of Maria Theresia and Joseph’s concern and his visit in 1777, using the imagery of mother and brother monarchs, is demonstrative of this tendency. See Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 372–375. Whether or not the pressure placed on the Queen by her relatives was “tantamount to emotional blackmail”, as Vivian Gruder suggests, is open to interpretation—it seems slightly too cynical. See Vivian R. Gruder, “The Question of Marie Antoinette: the Queen and Public Opinion before the Revolution”, *French History*, vol. 16 (3) (2002), 292.

¹⁴³ Kaiser, “Who’s Afraid of Marie Antoinette”, 253–254. Kaunitz’s views are explicated in a memorandum to Maria Theresia in 1774 on the effects on Vienna of the accession of Louis XVI; see Alfred, Ritter von Arneth and Jules Flammermont, *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l’empereur Joseph II et le prince de Kaunitz*, vol. II, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1891), 453–455.

¹⁴⁴ This party consisted of several ministers, such as Castries, Ségur, Brienne, and less straightforwardly, Necker. Ironically, the Queen’s own social circle, dominated by the Polignacs, was aligned with her ministerial enemies and the *parti dévot*. See John Hardman, *Louis XVI*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 56, 63, and 124–125; and the section on Marie Antoinette’s politics more broadly in John Hardman, *French Politics, 1774–1789: from the Accession of Louis XVI to the Bastille*, (London: Longman, 1995), ch. 10.

making structures: that the monarch and his minister could execute a personal and rational policy—read pro–Austrian—if they were so inclined, over and above the popular opinion of the French public or the petty politics of Versailles. It was not that Austrian observers completely disregarded the opinion of the French public. Indeed, after an exchange where Maria Theresia wrote to her daughter asking about the news circulating around Paris in regards to several expensive bracelets—to which Marie Antoinette meekly replied, “Je n'ai rien à dire sur les bracelets; je n'ai pas cru qu'on pût chercher à occuper la bonté de ma chère maman de pareilles bagatelles”—Mercy wrote to Maria Theresia giving advice on how the Empress might broach the issue of expenses with the Queen.

Dans le cas ou il plût à Sa Majesté de donner quelques avis à la reine sur l'article de la dépense, on a rapproché ici les faits principaux qui ont trait à la matière. Parmi les bruits qui s'élèvent contre la gloire et la considération essentielle à une reine de France, il en est un qui paraît plus dangereux et plus fâcheux que les autres; Il est dangereux, parce que, de sa nature, il doit faire impression sur tous les ordres de l'Etat, et particulièrement sur le peuple; Il est fâcheux, parce qu'en retranchant les mensonges et les exagérations inséparables des bruits publics, il reste néanmoins un nombre de faits très authentiques auxquels il serait à désirer que la reine ne se fût jamais prêtée: on se plaint assez publiquement que la reine fait et occasionne des dépenses considérables. Ce cri ne peut aller qu'en augmentant si la reine n'adopte bientôt quelques principes de modération sur cet article. Il n'a commencé que depuis la mort du feu roi, mais il est déjà bien considérable.¹⁴⁵

Ambassador Mercy had also sought to make use of Marie Antoinette's initial reputation as an innocent people's Queen, “like Princess Diana”, so that she could

¹⁴⁵ Alfred, Ritter von Arneth and M.A. Geffroy, *Marie Antoinette: Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau*, vol. II. (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1874), 485, 487, and 493. Thomas Wynn mentions this passage in regards to concerns about the extravagance of a fête in Marie Antoinette's honour held by the comte de Provence in 1776, though the two do not appear related. On that event see Thomas Wynn, “Voltaire, Marie Antoinette, and the Politics of *Galanterie*”, *French Studies*, vol. 65 (1): 17–29, esp. 20.

“s'attirer de plus en plus l'attachement et l'amour du peuple,” and use this to Austria's advantage at Versailles.¹⁴⁶

Still, if the French King could not pursue an unpopular policy, it was attributable not to the limits of the French absolute monarchy or the stresses on the *ancien régime*, but to ingrained prejudices or the characteristic weakness of Louis XV and his successor. The stress on the “feeble personality of Louis XV” as a cause of the Alliance by French critics was rampant and remained part of the discourse of Austrophobia right through to the Revolution, while later Mercy thought Louis XVI inactive. Marie Antoinette complained in 1784 of the King's exclusion of her in foreign affairs, blaming his “natural mistrust” on his governor as a child and asserting that Maurepas—the leading minister of Louis XVI's early administration—felt it advantageous to foster this mistrust. She also accused Vergennes of using “the foreign correspondence to support falseness and lies”; the root of the problem as she saw it appears to have been her inability to convince the King that “his minister has been deceived or is deceiving him.”¹⁴⁷ The Austrian answer to this problem was nevertheless to rely on an effective counter-influence at court—now hopefully Marie Antoinette, previously a figure such as Madame de Pompadour¹⁴⁸—who might be able to persuade the French King to support any Habsburg plans on the Continent, or at the very least insure the

¹⁴⁶ Kaiser, “Who's Afraid of Marie Antoinette”, 250.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 245 and 253–254. Marie Antoinette's letter is quoted in Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 96.

¹⁴⁸ The actual degree of de Pompadour's influence in foreign policy under Louis XV is disputed, though she was enthusiastic about the Franco–Austrian Alliance, was familiar with Kaunitz, and likely played some role. Thomas E. Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot”, 583.

Monarchy from attack should they go awry. In exchange, Austria would do likewise.

And outwardly, both at the time of the Alliance's initial signing in 1756/1757 and again upon the marriage of Louis Auguste and Marie Antoinette, French policy did seem to aim at reciprocity with Austria in both ceremony and politics. Thomas Kaiser underscores the Alliance's origins in the personal affection and loyalty held by both of Louis XV and Maria Theresia to one another, as well as the language used in 1756, akin more to a "marriage vow" than any preceding French arrangement with Prussia. Both parties stressed their "amitié et correspondance réciproque" and conviction not to "altérer à l'avenir l'union et la bonne intelligence heureusement établies entre Elles... et en dormant au contraire tous leurs soins à procurer en toute occasion leur utilité, honneur et avantages mutuels." Although meant as a criticism, a foreign ministry memorandum from 1768 which calls the Franco–Austrian Alliance 'precarious' because "il suppose aux deux Monarques de ces vastes états l'esprit de modération de justice et de tranquillité porté au plus haut degré, et toujours soutenu dans une mesure parfaitement égale," also inadvertently points to the importance of parity in the Habsburg–Bourbon union.¹⁴⁹ The intricate ceremonial surrounding the marriage itself that Kaiser discusses is just another manifestation of this trend, as are the various pieces of porcelain sent by Louis XV to the Empress in 1756 from

¹⁴⁹Kaiser, "A French 'National' Foreign Policy," 171; Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie Antoinette", 244 and 249. Szabo also considers Louis XV's "highly developed sense of honour, a strong commitment to the alliance on principle, and a good deal of personal affection for Maria Theresia" important for the survival of the Alliance. Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 210.



Plate II - Two Putti Prepare For War, Sèvres Porcelain 1756, Silberkammer von Hofburg Wien Sèvres. These included interlocking bands in a unique green colour and floral designs by François Boucher, with representations of the arts and—most significantly—depictions of France and Austria as two putti variously preparing for war (Plate II) or freeing the dove of peace (Plate III). In 1777, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette gave Joseph II another official set of Sèvres porcelain (Plate IV) which echoed the original—using the same green tint and more rococo designs by Boucher (a gifted set of chairs from Louis XVI also borrowed from the then-dead Boucher).¹⁵⁰ On these later gifts, however, there is no overtly political imagery,

¹⁵⁰ Photos of the Sèvres Porcelain and some of the details of their artwork were taken from the permanent exhibitions in the Silberkammer and Kaiserappartements at the Hofburg complex in Vienna. Many of the details and other representations of the pieces under discussion can be found in Ingrid Haslinger, Olivia Lichtscheidl, and Michael Wohlfart, *The Vienna Hofburg: Imperial*



Plate III - Two Putti and the Dove of Peace, Sèvres Porcelain 1756, Silberkammer von Hofburg Wien



Plate IV - Dish from Sèvres Porcelain Set of 1777 Given to Joseph II, Silberkammer von Hofburg Wien

Apartments, Sisi Museum and Imperial Silver Collection, 4th edition, (Vienna: Schloss Schönbrunn, 2010), 67 and 96–97.

which points to the decline of the language of reciprocity under Louis XVI and Joseph II in the late 1770s.

Prior to then however, and especially prior to Marie Antoinette's marriage and the dismissal of the duc de Choiseul in 1770, the Austrian attitude towards the relationship was neither as strained nor as active as on the French side. Of course, Habsburg financial weakness and desire for peace played a large part in militating against any sort of vigorous or dangerous policy which might have called on French support in early years of peace. By the time of the French annexation of Corsica, however, events in Poland and the Ottoman Empire far overshadowed between Catherine II and Frederick. France's longstanding special interest in its any strategic manoeuvrings of an Austrian ally in Italy—especially as the Habsburg Monarchy remained isolated in these theatres by the 1764 alliance 'Eastern Barrier' as well as strong dynastic connections to Saxony—the Dauphin's wife, Maria Josepha, was a daughter of Augustus III of Poland—meant that Bourbon policy was of significant importance from a traditional perspective, even if the election of Stanislaw Poniatowski to the Polish throne in 1764 had cast serious doubts on whether this interest was capable of still being sustained, as Maria Theresia had informed the Saxon Electress.¹⁵¹ In April 1772, Joseph wrote to his brother Leopold, urging him to keep secret the not-so-mysterious Habsburg intentions in Poland, "quoiqu'il commence à percer et que les Français ont déjà eu

¹⁵¹ See above, pg. 56; Cesa, *Allies Yet Rivals*, 193. The dynastic connection to Saxony played an important role in French public and court opinion at the opening of the Seven Years' War—even forcing anti-Austrian figures like Favier to suspend criticism of the Alliance. See Kaiser, "A French 'National' Foreign Policy," 173; Szabo, *Seven Years' War*, 49.

vent de la mine à Berlin.”¹⁵² The more cautious Maria Theresia wrote to the comte de Mercy in June, mentioning among other things that she felt it likely that the Austrian participation in the Partition of Poland would have caused a “sensation” in France; her ambassador wrote her back two weeks later, stating he had received confirmation from Louis XV that he was still firmly attached to the alliance.¹⁵³ As H.M. Scott notes, this moment marked a particular form of low-point in the Franco–Austrian Alliance: the duc de Choiseul, considered the greatest friend to the Alliance, had been recently replaced; his eventual—and rather inexperienced—replacement, d’Aiguillon, had gone so far as to make overtures to Prussia for an alliance; France had become, through its lack of a foreign minister for six months, a complete non-entity; and Kaunitz simply ceased to consider Bourbon attitudes during the Partition crisis. Both the Chancellor and the Empress blamed French weakness, in part, for Austria’s role in the unfortunate debacle.¹⁵⁴

This increasing disregard for France on the international stage may have played a role in the rather chimerical-seeming schemes of Joseph II and Kaunitz to acquire the electorate of Bavaria in the late 1770s. Far from anticipating the significant French resistance to the plan, Kaunitz and Joseph seemed to hope a *fait accompli*, the logic of the alliance, and Bourbon weakness would allow Austria to pull off the exchange project. Slight and inchoate expressions of willingness to negotiate over Bavaria and trust in Marie Antoinette’s influence fuelled Austrian confidence that France would, at least, remain neutral, and it was not until near to

¹⁵² Arneth, *MTJI*, 367–368.

¹⁵³ Arneth and Geffroy, *CSMTMA I*, 307 and 315.

¹⁵⁴ Scott, *Rise of the Eastern Powers*, 220–224.

the outbreak of an unwanted war with Prussia that Kaunitz and Joseph experienced the grim reality that their belief in French generosity was unwarranted.¹⁵⁵ Maria Theresa appeared to have been consistently more preoccupied with knowing France's reaction: she wrote to Marie Antoinette in early January 1778 expressing fear over the death of the Elector of Bavaria and reminding the Queen about how important the alliance was—for Austria and for Europe.¹⁵⁶ Once the initial stages of the war ended in stalemate, Maria Theresa's more pessimistic and moralistic line of policy then finally emerged from mere resignation and, allied with Kaunitz's reservations about the potentially disastrous war, usurped Austrian policy by going over Joseph II's head to conclude peace.

Scarcely a year and a half after the Treaty of Teschen which ended the War of the Bavarian Succession, Maria Theresa died. Her death marked a key turning point in the Monarchy's relationship with France, largely through the turn towards a much more positive working relationship with Catherine II. During the 1780s, Joseph II and Kaunitz would continue to encounter both French intransigence over Bavaria, and later the United Provinces, while also coping with an increasing French domestic weakness which saw Versailles almost totally excluded from serious diplomatic consideration until the Revolution. Over the course of Maria Theresa's reign, however, Austria's relationship with Europe's

¹⁵⁵ On both France's gestures and rebuttals, and the ill-conceived plans of Kaunitz and Joseph II, see Bernard, *Joseph and Bavaria*, 33–34, 58–59, 86–87; also Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa*, 392–393 and 400–401.

¹⁵⁶ She wrote again in early February again exhorting Marie Antoinette to save the alliance, placing a new emphasis on France's role as an effective deterrent to Prussia. Bernard, *Joseph and Bavaria*, 44 and 58; original letters in Alfred, Ritter von Arneth and M.A. Geffroy, *Marie Antoinette: Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau*, vol. 3, (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1874), 151–153 and 161–162.

former premier great power had been radically re-imagined and reshaped, and it is a testimony to the success of this reconceptualization that the Alliance—and its architect, Kaunitz—outlived her and governed foreign policy during the sole reign of her energetic son and beyond. Despite the numerous disappointments proceeding from French weakness in the Seven Years' War, the Partition of Poland, and the War of the Bavarian Succession, France the traditional enemy had become a peer and an equal which Austria was almost always willing to at least tacitly support. As an honourable ally, France warranted the benefit of the doubt, and could still expect a sympathetic if far from uncritical ear in Vienna. If there was a high cost to doing business with the Bourbons, it was evidently now considered—and hoped—to be worth the expense.

4. *Perpetuum Mobile: Joseph II's Administration & France until the Crisis, 1780-1789*

For Vergennes and Louis XVI, Maria Theresia's death was a nightmare. Joseph was presumed responsible for all Austria's ill-choices, relentlessly expansionist—even one of the Queen's ministers, the Baron de Breteuil, went so far as to say in 1784 that “he seems to think that the man who annexes the most territory will go down as the greatest prince in history”—and even hostile to the alliance with France.¹⁵⁷ French forecasts for Joseph's sole reign were far from optimistic. For his part, Joseph also expressed disenchantment with the alliance with France as a result of the failure of the Bavarian Exchange project, telling Kaunitz in early November 1778:

De la part de la France on peut compter qu'il n'y a rien à espérer en secours réels en hommes, encore moins en pécuniaires, et puis ces 24,000 hommes qui seraient tout ce qu'on pourrait leur arracher, que feraient-ils et qu'en ferait-on? Leur détresse d'argent, leur guerre si follement entreprise avec les Anglais, qui ruine leur commerce sans leur donner un avantage, la faiblesse du ministère et en partie sa mauvaise volonté, sont de sûrs garants de ce que j'avance.¹⁵⁸

This was an expression of disappointment during the War of the Bavarian Succession over the lack of French aid, and a scathing indictment of French policy in the colonial theatre which was so important to Versailles. 1778 was of course a particularly bitter moment for Joseph, having done so much with the

¹⁵⁷ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 95 and 98; Joseph was aware enough of his reputation to tell Louis explicitly at the death of the Empress that “toutes les absurdités que mon cher voisin Frédéric pourra encore inventer ou débiter”—in particular his leaning towards England, projects for expansion, and desire to ruin the Empire—were patently false. The letter to Louis and the French King's response in Alfred, Ritter von Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II und Leopold II: Ihr Briefwechsel*, (Leipzig: K.F. Köhler, 1866), 22–24. Beales labels Joseph's letter, “somewhat disingenuous”—Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 35.

¹⁵⁸The entire letter is printed in the notes in Arneth, *MTJ II*, 184–189.

Chancellor to spearhead Austrian policy and negotiations with the Elector of Bavaria. While Maria Theresia treated the whole affair as a giant misstep and was therefore more lenient on Vergennes and Louis XVI, Kaunitz wrote to Mercy as bitterly as Joseph:

nous n'en sentons pas moins qu'ainsi que dans tous les événements relatifs à la succession de Bavière nous avons eu sujet d'être très mécontents de la conduite de notre allié, et surtout de la mauvaise volonté à notre égard qui en a toujours été et en est encore le principe. Il est abominable d'avoir abusé de notre confiance au point où le ministère de Versailles se l'est permis dès le premier pas que la France fait comme médiatrice. Il y a de l'impudence à nous avoir demandé notre consentement à ce que l'on pût proposer tout de suite notre *ultimatum* pour première ouverture; de la gaucherie à n'avoir pas voulu se faire un mérite vis-à-vis de nous d'un peu mieux au moins, qu'elle eût pu proposer et désirant accélérer le succès de la négociation...¹⁵⁹

This tone was the result of French policy in the last major international crisis before Joseph's ascension. Yet despite initial French fears, both Joseph and Kaunitz's irritation, and a host of major diplomatic confrontations, the Habsburg–Bourbon partnership outlasted the Emperor's entire reign.

It should be noted that the Habsburg Monarchy did not have to wait long to exact fitting revenge on France: in May 1779 Kaunitz offered Maria Theresia's mediation in the Anglo–French war in America to the British ambassador in Vienna, “acting with any other power Britain might choose”. Spain's entry into the war by the Treaty of Aranjuez a month earlier provided the excuse for both the British and Vergennes to reject Kaunitz's offer gracefully, but it was a fitting sort of spite in the immediate aftermath of Teschen.¹⁶⁰ Though he rejected the unsubtle

¹⁵⁹ Italics as printed. Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK II*, 535.

¹⁶⁰ Isabel de Madariaga, *Britain, Russia, and the Armed Neutrality of 1780*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 99–101.

British suggestion to open the question of the Scheldt in the summer of 1780, Kaunitz renewed the offer of mediation to the British when they inquired later in the year—days before the Empress’ death—after rumours of an impending Russian offer. Austria’s accession to the Neutral League in October 1781 should likely be seen in the context of its new relationship with Catherine II than with France, as already in 1780 Joseph had declared himself, “Français de coeur”,¹⁶¹ and Kaunitz seemed to defend both Joseph’s character and the Alliance with the Bourbons in a letter to Mercy:

Je vous avoue, mon cher Comte, que j'ai peine à accorder la contradiction manifeste, que je trouve dans l'assurance que vous me donnez que M. de Vergennes n'est pas la dupe du roi de Prusse, et dans l'aveu confidentiel que ce ministre vous a fait, que l'on était cependant un peu alarmé sur la façon de penser personnelle de l'Empereur relativement à l'alliance, ainsi que sur les prétendus vastes projets de ce monarque; tandis que l'une et l'autre de ces deux suppositions n'a d'autre fondement et d'autre titre pour mériter quelque croyance, que les assertions du roi de Prusse... Tout le monde sait que l'Empereur a beaucoup d'esprit et une très bonne judiciaire, et vous conviendrez qu'il faudrait qu'il n'eût ni l'une ni l'autre de ces deux qualités, pour penser que, pour la maison d'Autriche ainsi que pour la France, il pourrait y avoir un système de politique préférable à celui qui existe entre elles actuellement, et en même temps je vous demande s'il est possible de croire aux prétendus vastes projets de l'Empereur, lorsqu'on réfléchit un moment de sang-froid sur l'impossibilité de leur exécution avec la puissance du roi de Prusse à nos côtés....¹⁶²

When writing to inform Mercy of the Monarchy joining the Neutral League via the Russian court, Joseph expressed his hope that the move would reassure France, rather than damage relations: “je crois réellement avoir assez fait pour que

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 264–266 and 340–341; T.C.W. Blanning, *Joseph II*, (London: Longman, 1994), 137 (original letter in Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK II*, 550).

¹⁶² Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK II*, 547.

l'on ne puisse plus douter de ma façon de penser au sujet de l'alliance."¹⁶³

Tensions between the two allies had largely abated, and Joseph was once again envisioning a positive application of the French Alliance.

Permanently closed by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the Scheldt River which ran from Antwerp to the border of the Austrian Netherlands and the Dutch Republic was one of two sovereignty issues for the Habsburg Monarchy in the region. The other, that of the obsolete Barrier Fortresses, was successfully done away with by an assertive initiative of the Emperor's, with little negotiation—exemplified by Kaunitz's comment to the Dutch ambassador in 1782, “no treaty lasts longer than the state of affairs in which it was concluded...The Barrier exists no longer. The emperor wishes to hear no more of it.”¹⁶⁴ The Monarchy's sudden suggested willingness to disregard international norms surrounding treaties notwithstanding, the Scheldt was a significantly more intractable issue. Joseph felt that “c'est par la voie de la France que le plus sûrement on pourrait arriver à ce projet,” since France had a vested interest in freeing the United Provinces from any continental struggles so that they could become a more effective maritime ally. He hoped to owe “ce joli cadeau” to the “crédit et à l'amitié de la Reine et enfin à la France.” Kaunitz and Mercy warned Joseph that it was highly unlikely that France would support the Emperor's policy in Amsterdam, even with his newly uncovered claims to Maastricht which he intended to pawn off to the Dutch

¹⁶³ Alfred, Ritter von Arneth and Jules Flammermont, *Correspondance secrète du comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec l'empereur Joseph II et le prince de Kaunitz*, vol. I, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1889), 69.

¹⁶⁴ Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 373–374.

in exchange for the river's opening.¹⁶⁵ Luckily for the Chancellor and the ambassador, the Crimean crisis erupted and proved a serious distraction from negotiations over the Scheldt.

Despite having signed the alliance with Russia in 1781, by the time the Russia's impending annexation of the Crimea came to the head in mid-1783, Joseph and Kaunitz had still refrained from informing their longstanding French allies of their new arrangement with St. Petersburg. When Mercy was instructed to share with Vergennes news of both the annexation and the alliance in the same breath, the ensuing French reaction was a mixture of shock and fury—Blanning alludes to “lively exchanges” between the French foreign minister and Mercy, Beales suggests Vergennes suffered from “something like a nervous collapse.”¹⁶⁶ France had little to fear from the Monarchy, however, as Joseph was quite adamant—despite Kaunitz's opposition—that there would be no Habsburg equivalent, even if both he and the Chancellor agreed Austria was entitled to one.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, while this represented a serious breach of trust and a betrayal of France's traditional interest in supporting the Ottoman Empire, Joseph had made use of his alliance with Louis XVI to stall ambitious Russian plans or at least secure for Versailles the compensation of Egypt in the event of a “Greek Project”-

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 374–376; Arneht and Flammermont, *CSJMK I*, 128–130. Joseph rejected the idea of acquiring an island in the Americas in this letter to Mercy as well. In his response, Mercy warns that such a move would likely cause Vergennes to worry about the expansion of Joseph's power, but very delicately suggests that there may be domestic support within the fragile United Provinces which could be fostered, especially in Zeeland. Ibid., 132–135.

¹⁶⁶ Blanning, *Joseph II*, 137; Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 385–387.

¹⁶⁷ On the decision, which Joseph made “like a gallant knight”, to abstain from taking an equivalent for the preservation of European peace, see Ibid., 383–388; Roider, *Eastern Question*, 165–168. On Kaunitz, see above pg. 27.

style partition.¹⁶⁸ He raised the prospect to Kaunitz of serious repercussions across the Austrian Netherlands, the Rhine, and Italy if a Habsburg equivalent to the Crimea was taken, effectively using the Chancellor's primary pro-Bourbon Alliance arguments against him. Throughout the crisis, Joseph strove to ensure there would be no Russo-Turkish War, and in that sense provide for the security of the Porte. Kaunitz was rather more eager to establish the parity of Austria and Russia in their new alliance, likely as much for a Russian audience as a broader European one.¹⁶⁹ In the end, Joseph's plan did not work for long; it is impossible to know for certain if his Chancellor's would have either.

Shortly after the Crimean debacle, the rather restless Joseph once again reactivated the question of the Scheldt, though this time in connection with a renewed effort to affect the Bavarian Exchange project. Using the goodwill of the Russian Empress and a great deal of secrecy, Joseph and Kaunitz manoeuvred to open negotiations again with the Bavarian Elector and his successor, the Duke of Zweibrücken. In the initial stages it remains somewhat ambiguous what role the Emperor thought France should take in this new attempt at exchange; Beales and Bernard both point to Joseph's letter to his ambassador in St. Peteresburg in late 1783, in which he argued Russia's support would free him from France, and "seroit aussi le seul moyen de renouer mes liens avec l'Angleterre que

¹⁶⁸ The literature on Catherine's infamous Greek Project is substantial; on the Austrian side the best discussions are largely the relevant sections of Beales and Roider, used here, but also the intelligent discussion in Dyck, "Pondering the Russian Fact", 463–469.

¹⁶⁹ Roider points to Joseph's harsh letter to Leopold about Kaunitz, where he says to follow his advice would be to invite war with the Porte, Prussia, France, and the Bourbons in Italy, "in order to gain a miserable, deserted morsel of Bosnia or of Serbia. I am unable to conceive of how this man of intelligence has been able to get this into his head." Roider, *Eastern Question*, 166–167.

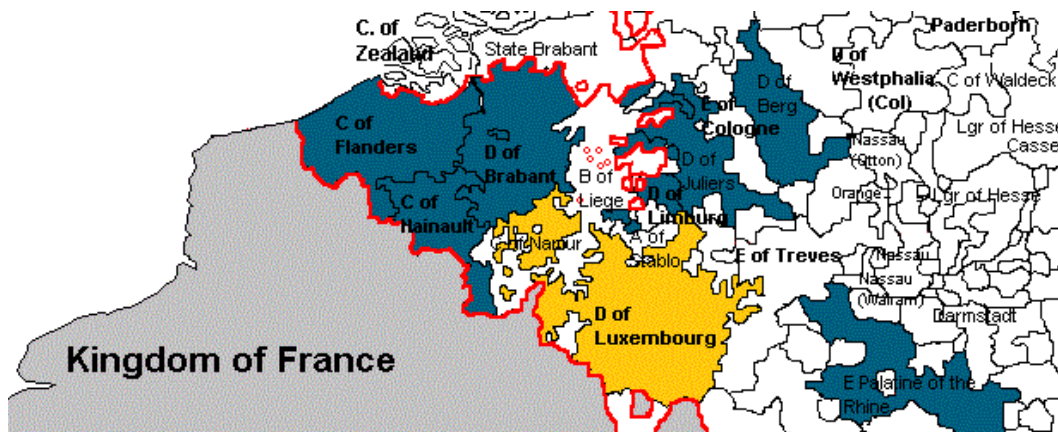


Figure III - Austria's Final Proposal on the Bavarian Exchange, with the exclusions of Namur and Luxembourg highlighted¹⁷⁰

l'Impératrice paroit tant desirer,” as evidence that the Emperor wanted to proceed without Versailles.¹⁷¹ Beales sees it part of a ‘smokescreen’ diversion, as Leopold painted it from Tuscany; Bernard views it as frustration with the Alliance and conviction that even “malevolent neutrality” could not stop the Monarchy with Russia’s backing. In all likelihood it seems neither is correct: Joseph’s letter to Cobenzl makes explicit connection to Catherine’s Greek Project, and seems much more in the vein of arguments to convince Russia to support the Exchange than any meaningful explication of Imperial policy. Furthermore, as Beales notes, this initiative was simultaneous to a reopening of the Scheldt question—which was thoroughly linked to the Bavarian issue, even “subordinate” to it, in the Emperor’s mind—through Mercy, making use of France’s good offices.¹⁷² Joseph even went so far as to suggest that if Vergennes convinced the Dutch, it “serait là une occasion bien simple et bien naturelle, de me faire oublier entièrement les

¹⁷⁰ Adapted from source. Gerard von Hebel, “1713”, *The Historical Atlas of Europe*, <http://home.versatel.nl/gerardvonhebel/b1713.htm>

¹⁷¹ See above for more of the letter, pg. 46; Beer and Fiedler, *Joseph II und Cobenzl*, 435–436.

¹⁷² See Bernard, *Joseph II and Bavaria*, 149–151; Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 388–390.

démarches louches pour l'alliance que la France s'était permises à l'occasion des troubles de la Russie avec la Porte.” It seems unlikely that Joseph intended to use his dispute with the Dutch as a true diversion when he ultimately intended to propose the Bavarian Exchange as the solution to France. In any event, an able French agent discovered Austria’s plans, and Vergennes blocked the Habsburg bid to gain the support of the Duke of Zweibrücken by granting him the enormous sum of six million livres, as well as an annual subsidy.¹⁷³ Austria directly propositioned France, with Mercy exceeding his instructions in offering France Namur and Luxemburg as compensation (see Figure V)—though the Monarchy essentially endorsed this deal a few weeks later.¹⁷⁴

Despite the furor surrounding the plot’s public revelation and Prussia’s spearheading of the *Fürstenbund*, France had very clearly stopped the project dead in its tracks by itself. Louis XVI and Vergennes also managed to bring the complex Dutch issue to a settlement by agreeing to pay Austria half of the Dutch indemnity in the Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1785. These were very likely the last diplomatic victories of the *ancien régime*, as two years later French policy in the United Provinces completely collapsed, and when the Emperor was forced by Russia into declaring war on the Ottomans, there was little worry over the reaction of Versailles. Recounting his audience with the new French foreign minister, the comte de Montmorin, Mercy informed Joseph,

je m'étais particulièrement occupé à tâcher de calmer ici les esprits en présentant l'objet sous des aspects plus conciliables avec les vues de la France, et à mesure que cette méthode m'a réussi, j'ai cru en voir

¹⁷³ Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK I*, 234–235; Bernard, *Joseph II and Bavaria*, 183–185;

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 194–199.

distinctement les bons effets, au point même que, si on pouvait s'en fier à une entière bonne foi dans le langage que l'on me tient maintenant, il ne laisserait presque plus rien à désirer sur les sentiments delà cour de Versailles. En effet, sans que j'eusse articulé sur aucune localité, le comte de Montmorin m'a parlé clairement des limites fixées par le traité de Passarowitz, comme d'une convenance raisonnable et juste pour V. M. L'extension de Chotym, même celle de toute la Bosnie n'offusquera point ici, et dès lors que l'on concourrait réellement aux moyens nécessaires à amener les Turcs à de pareilles cessions, V. M. aurait obtenu de la France ce qu'Elle en a désiré. Il est assez remarquable que le comte de Montmorin m'ait observé de lui-même la nécessité de commencer par s'emparer des districts qui seront à garder, et cette seule observation semblerait prouver que l'on est bien résigné à voir morceler l'Empire ottoman, pourvu que le noyau en soit conservé en Europe.¹⁷⁵

A weakened France may finally have been willing to permit Austrian expansion on Habsburg terms—even beginning to strengthen its relations with Russia—but ironically the Emperor despaired of the war, bluntly labelling the destruction of the Ottoman state as “simply impossible.” It was certainly the war that Frederick II had died waiting for.¹⁷⁶ France’s weakness was both worthy of bitter celebration and deeply unwelcome—by all measures, its active participation would have been worth so much more. By the waning years of his reign, Frederick’s “Perpetuum Mobile”,¹⁷⁷ had made several important attempts to involve France directly in schemes to solidify Austrian security and primacy in the Empire and Europe more broadly. Consistent disappointment and frequently

¹⁷⁵ Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK I*, 163.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph described it as such to Mercy, adding that “the French do not need to worry about the Turks being expelled from Europe; they will remain there for a long time.” As the letter shows, Montmorin’s terms to Mercy concede almost everything envisioned in Joseph’s instructions. Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 558–559; Frederick II’s conviction that a war between the Monarchy, Russia, and the Porte would weaken the allies on *ibid.*, 385. See also the more detailed discussion in Hochedlinger, *Krise und Wiederherstellung*, 191–195, which further notes that “das uralte Gespenst einer französisch-preußisch Diversion” was no longer a significant factor.

¹⁷⁷ “The geometers have sought the *perpetuum mobile* in vain, but I believe we have it now in the person of the emperor, whose projects never dry up.” Italics as printed. Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 420.

tense relations, as well as a few notable policy blunders, did little to affect the underlying value of the Alliance itself. Thus the Monarchy was still intimately connected to the court at Versailles as the *ancien régime* began its final descent into dissolution and the European state-system petered on the brink of full transformation.

5. *Schroeder's Exceptional: Austria and the French Revolution from Joseph to Leopold*

As the *ancien régime* dissolved in France from 1787 onwards, the Habsburg reaction was inexorably conditioned by the dramatic diplomatic situation unfolding in the East as a result of the declaration of war on Russia by the Ottoman Empire. The Emperor and Kaunitz both understood that any active policy was really ruled out by the need to guard against a Prussia attack which was assumed to be coming after intercepting incriminating Prussian mail, scarcely a few months after the *casus foederis* had arisen.¹⁷⁸ Habsburg policy was then—and thereafter—one of non-intervention. Advice was naturally given to the royal couple in Versailles and Paris through formal and informal channels, and there was consistent familial worry over and sympathy for the pair, such as with the unfortunate death of the Dauphin in 1789 or the various threats to their personal security which Leopold was attempting to safeguard against in 1791.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Joseph wrote to Leopold on August 30th, 1787 to concede that war had become inevitable as a result of Ottoman actions (see above, pg. 29), while he wrote to Cobenzl in St. Petersburg in early January 1788 after Austria intercepted a Prussian letter to Constantinople outlining the infamous Hertzberg scheme. The Emperor “would rather fight a war to destruction” than accept even the slightest of Prussian gains from their extortion plan. See Roider, *Eastern Question*, 179–180.

¹⁷⁹ For letters about the Dauphin, see Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJMK II*, 240–250; Joseph wrote Mercy in May after reports of the prince’s ill health, “J’attends d’un moment à l’autre la nouvelle de la mort de mon neveu, le Dauphin, que vous me disiez déjà très mal dans votre dernière lettre; c’est une cruelle situation pour la Reine que de voir tout ce qui arrive,” (242) and upon hearing of the news of the Dauphin’s death, wrote, “Je vous laisse juger, par le tendre attachement que vous me connaissez pour ma soeur, combien j’étais touché de la perte qu’Elle vient de faire de son fils, surtout dans des moments si critiques et si fâcheux.” (249) Mercy had drawn connection between the impending death and the turbulent political situation for the Queen (247–248). On the effects of the timing of this death on the French Revolution, see Munro Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy: Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Baron de Breteuil*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), 56–57 and 59. Joseph’s letter to Leopold breaking the news of the death, among other issues—such as the Emperor’s own ill-health—labels the situation in France with the Estates-General “impossible de le deviner. Toujours le Roi s’est mis dans une triste situation, don’t il ne sortire pas facilement avec honneur.” Arneth, *Joseph II. und Leopold*, 255.

Still, the Habsburg policy against interventionism was not solely a product of the Monarchy's geopolitics, nor a failure to recognize the outmoded nature of 18th-century style diplomacy in responding to the French Revolution. Far from it; Joseph and Kaunitz had both dealt with Austria's very own revolution in the Austrian Netherlands, as well as increasing unrest across the Monarchy but especially in Hungary. There is evidence to suggest that the experience in Belgium in particular helped to shape Habsburg policy in France. This point should not be taken too far, for, importantly, a French loyalist was a Belgian insurrectionary. Austria's was a counter-revolution; Joseph's purported sympathy for the early revolutionary politics of Paris was notorious.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, there was a significant extent to which the Chancellor and Joseph's problems of governance—for which Joseph turned towards censorship and police suppression¹⁸¹—where not of an altogether different nature to those of France. The crisis of 'Enlightened Absolutism' had come at precisely the same moment

¹⁸⁰ On accusations of the Habsburg policies against the French Revolution being conducted "not only with conventional means but also for perfectly traditional war aims," as well as a very different conception of Austrian diplomacy and statehood in this period than the one presented here, see Hochedlinger, "Who's Afraid of the French Revolution?", 294–296. Kaunitz and Joseph had a particularly strong falling out over Habsburg policy in the Netherlands, after the Chancellor supported the decision to not use force against the revolutionaries despite Joseph's explicit orders. Beales calls Kaunitz's letter telling the Emperor of this course of action "a monument to his courage as well as to his statesmanship". Joseph still resorted to force and intimidation in Belgium, and this policy likely was mirrored by the Habsburg bafflement at Louis XVI's inability to control the situation in Paris. The French monarchist turned Belgian revolutionary was Simon Linguet. See the excellent section in Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 516–520, 584–586, 604–605, and 615–616. The history of the issue in Belgium is covered in far greater detail in Walter W. Davis, *Joseph II: An Imperial Reformer for the Austrian Netherlands*, (the Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

¹⁸¹For a brief overview see Ernst Wangermann, *The Austrian Achievement, 1700-1800*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 157–169.

for the Habsburgs as the crisis of the *ancien régime* had come for the French Bourbons.

In this sense Kaunitz and Joseph II proceeded to criticize the French Revolution but were largely unable or unwilling to proffer any concrete assistance to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, or to the émigrés who were their erstwhile enemies at Versailles. Kaunitz told Leopold in 1789 that “il vaut mieux dépendre d’un seul tyran que de plusieurs,” and complained to the French ambassador in April 1790 that “Il serait difficile d’être partisan de votre Constitution actuelle.” When the diplomat assured him that the King had taken his place at the head of the Revolution, Kaunitz simply turned to other subjects.¹⁸² Towards the end of the constitutional monarchy in France, Kaunitz took the time to pen a lengthy analysis of the new French system, ending his introduction with the rather negative assessment that,

le projet de se faire abandonner les rênes du gouvernement, en flattant la vanité de la multitude, en lui présentant l'appas de l'espoir, de la licence qui s'empare si facilement de la place de la liberté régulière, a fait adopter une marche tout à fait différente. On a présenté d'abord le fantôme séduisant d'une liberté imaginaire, ainsi qu'impossible, et la chimère d'une égalité chimérique qui ne l'est pas moins, n'y ayant et ne pouvant pas avoir deux hommes parfaitement égaux, ni moralement ni physiquement; de ces deux principes également faux, on en a tiré nécessairement de fausses conclusions, et moyennant tout cela cette constitution est devenue un rassemblement d'articles dans lesquels il n'y en a pas un seul, auquel il n'y est pas des objections très fondées à y opposer.

¹⁸² Hochedlinger, “Who’s Afraid of the French Revolution?”, 302; the discussion of the French ambassador de Noailles’ memoirs—including the quotes above—are in Gehrard Wolf, “Quelques Remarques Concernant la Politique étrangère de Vienne, de Paris et de la Faction Duport-Lameth après le 20 Avril 1792,” *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, (288) (1992), 225.

The Chancellor held out little optimism for the Revolution and its new brand of politics as they stood, though he felt that objectively France would be best served by the British constitution, which had already proven stable and effective.¹⁸³

Joseph's opinions were similarly negative. While in April 1787 the Emperor was merely "bien curieux" about the results of the Assembly of Notables and whether it might lead to some sort of ministerial responsibility along the lines of the British model,¹⁸⁴ by August 1789 he could not believe the disgrace to which the French king had been subjected and the degree to which the situation seemed out of control. What was happening in France Joseph related directly to what was happening in the Austrian Netherlands, "dont les habitants font depuis des années le métier d'être les singes des Français", and after the fall of the Bastille, the Emperor was once again,

bien curieux de voir comment cette constitution s'établira; ils sont déjà bien loin et au delà de la constitution anglaise, et les Etats généraux, en connivant ou peut-être même en excitant cette émeute populaire à Paris, n'ont pas réfléchi que ces mêmes portefaix, décrotteurs, garçons de boutique, etc., qui ont obligé le Roi par leur révolte à céder de son autorité, pourront d'autant plus facilement, et le voudront pour sûr, donner la loi aux Etats généraux et à toute la France.¹⁸⁵

The Emperor's 'curiosity' however, remained the limit of Austrian intervention. Ambassador Mercy frequently reported back on events in France, and Kaunitz and Joseph continued to prioritize the expensive war in the East and Prussian

¹⁸³ Vivenot, *Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserpolitik Oesterreichs*, vol I, 290–291 and 301–302.

¹⁸⁴ Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJKM II*, 92; Hochedlinger, *Krise und Wiederherstellung*, 135–138.

¹⁸⁵ Arneth and Flammermont, *CSJKM II*, 259–260.

manoeuvrings, or else domestic concerns in Hungary or the revolt in Belgium—which was reaching ever-more-alarming proportions.

It was the Monarchy's own considerations which dominated Habsburg politics at the death of Joseph and the accession of Leopold. It remains somewhat of a controversy as to the exact nature of Leopold's brief reign from 1790–1792, especially in regards to who was ultimately responsible for saving the Austrian state from obliteration. Leopold has been lionized as a 'Hirtenkönig' or 'Friedensfürst'; not only rescuing the Monarchy but unique among the Habsburgs for being "willing to use remarkably liberal means to preserve the integrity of the Empire, not merely accepting the idea of constitutional monarchy but actually aiming for one in the long run." His political commentary sent to his sister Marie Christine in the Austrian Netherlands as part of his strategy to quell unrest there spoke glowingly of the rule of law—even over monarchs—and popular sovereignty, which the people "can never renounce...nor can [they] be robbed through any desuetude or tacit or forced consent of an inalienable right that is a natural right."¹⁸⁶ In their own light, and despite modern sympathies, such political programmes of the former Grand Duke of Tuscany mark a sharp political distinction between him and both his predecessors and successors. Some historians, especially Matthew Z. Mayer and Michael Hochedlinger, have persuasively cast aspersions on so glorifying an image of Leopold. Mayer points

¹⁸⁶ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 63–65; More directly applicable to Belgium was Leopold suggestion that the sovereign, "is only the delegate of the people for whom he is appointed, and he should devote to it all his cares, efforts and night watches...that if the sovereign in fact does not keep the law he has *de facto* abdicated from his position...his subjects are no longer bound to obey him." [translator's italics] Both quotes in Macartney, *Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties*, 205.

to several considerations which undermine Leopold's credibility as a historical source, particularly in his correspondence. He could agree to Joseph while simultaneously criticizing the Emperor's policy to Marie Christine, to whom he was also quite capable of either lying to or manipulating the truth.¹⁸⁷ Leopold deliberately avoided his brother on his deathbed, coldly asserting this was to avoid any association with his policy, and within months of coming to the throne had the agreement signed with Joseph in 1784 over the reunion of the Tuscan Secondogeniture with the Monarchy destroyed. Of course, Leopold had originally opposed his brother's plans for Tuscany, and there had been little doubt as to what would happen should Joseph die first. While from a centralist perspective this move was a disaster for the Monarchy, it should be admitted that Kaunitz, not sharing Joseph's centralist predictions, put up little resistance and had no interest in the joining of Tuscany to Austria directly.¹⁸⁸

Ultimately, these reservations about Leopold as portrayed by Hochedlinger and Mayer, as well perhaps as by Marie Antoinette—who called her brother “a petty Tuscan Grand Duke on the Austrian throne”—¹⁸⁹ do not seriously

¹⁸⁷ In the case of Marie Christine, Leopold wrote to her during the Belgian crisis to assert that “His Majesty never keeps me informed of state business of any kind”, when this was manifestly not the case, or at the very least hyperbole. See Mayer, “The Price for Austria's Security: Part II,” 487–490. Hochedlinger suggests that Leopold was far less liberal than assumed, instead being quite the counter-revolutionary—“devious and enigmatic” (Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence, War, State and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy 1683-1797*, (London: Longman, 2003), 418), he was more interventionist than Kaunitz and likely relatively conservative. Hochedlinger, “Who's Afraid of the French Revolution?,” 299–300 and 313.

¹⁸⁸ Hochedlinger, *Krise und Wiederherstellung*, 383. Adam Wandruska, Leopold's primary biographer, says very little about the decision, though he recounts the circumstances in which Leopold requested the agreement from Kaunitz and subsequently had it torn up. Adam Wandruska, *Leopold II*. vol. II. (Wien: Herold, 1965), 291–292. The actual treaty of renunciation can be found in Neumann, *Recueil des traités et conventions conclus par l'Autriche*, 422–431.

¹⁸⁹ T.C.W. Blanning, “An Old but New Biography of Leopold II,” in Blanning and Cannadine, *History and Biography*, 59. This piece discusses Paul Mitrofanov's partially completely biography

detract from Schroeder's image. Leopold sincerely desired to lead Austria not only to peace in the particular crisis of 1787-1792, but even more to "a complete and durable escape from war in general."¹⁹⁰ Such a program was at heart in agreement with Kaunitz's "Friedens Systema" of 1756–1757 and consistent with the tenor and objectives of policy pursued by both Maria Theresia and Joseph. Delionizing Leopold and placing him in the context of the tradition of Habsburg foreign policy in the 18th Century gives credit to the key role of earlier actors at the same time that it does not undermine completely Leopold's integral place within the emergence of 19th Century international politics. Crucially, it reduces the differences between the Emperor and Kaunitz to matters of opinion on method and strategy, rather than principle.

And as Schroeder himself admits, towards the ends Leopold lost control of the international situation, even if such a result was largely the consequence of circumstance. More generally, Leopold did not live to see his diplomatic policy of *rapprochement* with Prussia—opposed by Kaunitz—and moral–political pressure on France collapse, with the declaration of war by French National Assembly and the *note verbale* at Merle respectively. Instead, his much-maligned successor Francis II was left to deal with them.¹⁹¹ Under Leopold the Monarchy's decades-

of Leopold, which can be seen in some ways as supporting Schroeder's thesis—especially vis-à-vis his efforts at ending war—and at the same time slightly less positive about Leopold's character. More negative assessments in Hochedlinger, "Who's Afraid of the French Revolution?"; 300; and Mayer, "The Price for Austria's Security: Part II," 489.

¹⁹⁰ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 65;

¹⁹¹ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 97; the *note verbale* of Merle, wherein Prussia effectively abandoned Austria in its war with France in favour of a Polish partition is discussed in Karl A. Roider, *Baron Thugut and Austria's Response to the French Revolution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 96–97 and 101. The French declaration of war is in Vivenot, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Deutschen Kaiserpolitik Oesterreichs*, I, 469.

old relationship with France finally deteriorated to the point where the Treaties of Versailles were fictions just as much by Austrian policy as by the unfortunate decisions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Varennes spelled the end of the Diplomatic Revolution.

It was the end of a particularly difficult international relationship between the two leading Catholic dynasties of Europe. The Habsburg Monarchy in particular both gained very little in a positive sense from its French ally, and had many schemes of its own foiled by successive foreign ministers and diplomats of Versailles. Even the generally pro-Austrian Choiseul—despite his intimate acquaintance with the Habsburg court—had thought that the Monarchy did not “love us and would sacrifice us for its slightest interest” as if Austria was a fickle “mistress” who might at any moment resume the old arch-rivalry. With remarkable similarity, another former French ambassador to Vienna took up the pen decades later to denounce Austria during the French Revolution, writing:

La Cour de Vienne n'a jamais été sincèrement attachée à la France : elle l'a toujours regardée au contraire comme le seul obstacle qu'elle rencontrait partout et surtout dans l'Empire. Son penchant véritable a été pour l'Angleterre, alliée utile et nullement à craindre pour l'Autriche, puissance purement continentale et militaire...Il ne faut que rappeler la marche de la Cour de Vienne. Elle se servait de nous en 1788, elle nous abandonna en 1789, nous regarda comme dans un état de nullité en 1790, et se tourna contre nous en 1791.¹⁹²

Despite the lingering and destructive French hostility, there were manifestly beneficial geopolitical justifications for the Alliance: the security advantages of a Habsburg–Bourbon *entente* in Italy and the Austrian Netherlands,

¹⁹² Kaiser, “A French ‘National’ Foreign Policy,” 171; Wolf, “Quelques Remarques Concernant la Politique,” 225.

when coupled with the neutralization of French activities in the Empire, were so obvious that they could still be formulaically articulated by Kaunitz as late as 1787.¹⁹³ Yet the historical scholarship which focuses on the frustrating restraint and checks which seemed to characterize the Franco–Austrian Alliance, as well as the hostility and mistrust so evident from policymakers in France, fails to appreciate the Habsburg conception of the relationship. Far from seeking to block Bourbon gains on the Continent or overseas, the history of Austria’s diplomacy vis-à-vis France demonstrates a notable tendency towards at least tacit support, and in critical instances the Monarchy was willing to buy the support of its chief ally in territory. There was never any serious concern over the French being too successful against their primary rival, Britain, despite Kaunitz and Joseph overestimating the losses London had suffered in America.¹⁹⁴ Austria achieving primacy in the Empire and reining in Prussia remained, however, a key problem that *parti dévot* traditionalists in France continued to attempt to prevent.

While historians have seen French and Austrian interests as completely antagonistic, there is strong evidence to suggest otherwise. And this evidence goes beyond the merely geopolitical into a shared concern for the state of the European state-system and the apparent weakening of law and norms in the diplomatic arena. Louis XVI had considered the origins of the “breakdown of international morality” to be Frederick II’s invasion of Silesia in 1740, instructing Vergennes in 1775 that “honesty and restraint must be our watchwords.”¹⁹⁵ Louis XV had

¹⁹³ Beer and Fiedler, *Joseph II und Cobenzl*, 454.

¹⁹⁴ Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 397.

¹⁹⁵ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 92–93.

considered himself a guardian of peace in Europe, and his participation in the great Habsburg project of the Seven Years' War was itself a product of outrage at the duplicitous and transgressive policy of Prussia as well as a chivalrous and reciprocal esteem for Maria Theresa. Together with the Bourbon courts in Italy and Spain, France and Austria formed a diplomatic system with a culture of foreign policy apart from the emergent powers in the East or the quasi-popular government in Britain.

Despite this, the two allies continued to misunderstand each other's position. Austria was primarily guilty of assuming too much of the French political system, as its attempts at influencing policy through Marie Antoinette in some ways demonstrate. The members of the Habsburg triumvirate failed to appreciate fully the extent of hostility towards the *Erzhaus* in the court circles of Versailles. They also failed to understand the colonial difficulties of France at key junctures, such as with the necessity of the Dutch Alliance in the early 1780s.¹⁹⁶ They did however fundamentally recognize the French lack of interest in territorial aggrandizement, and the general Bourbon predilection for stability, peace, legitimacy, and law. These were concerns that, as Schroeder suggested and this project has sought to articulate, lay at the core of the Habsburg diplomatic culture. Myopically fixated on a longstanding history of hostility to Austria as the literature on Austrophobia has shown, France likely neither understood the degree of coincidence in the two powers' interests, nor the truly dangerous regional 'game' that the Monarchy faced with expansionist powers in the East.

¹⁹⁶ Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World*, 392–393.

These misunderstandings have generally been shared by historians who confront 18th-century Austrian foreign policy. While ultimately identifying the transformative impulses which shaped the 19th Century with Habsburg diplomats and policymakers, Schroeder suggests that the true quandary of the Monarchy's existence in the face of a "balance-of-conquest" system was only 'sensed' or 'thought through to' by Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Kaunitz. It would take Leopold II to attempt to "transcend [the problem] with a new kind of politics."¹⁹⁷ However, as this analysis of the 'Habsburg self' has sought to underline, the diplomacy of the Empress, her chancellor, and later her son did aim at a permanent settlement for Europe—predicated on the chastisement of the wicked King in Prussia. The wider image of this settlement was shaped by the history of the Habsburg dynasty, especially since Utrecht/Ratstatt, and the commensurable Bourbon dynasty was its natural counterpart. It would only take the French Revolution and the final victory of Austrian arms and arguments in 1814–1815—Schroeder's "improbable chance"—to secure it.

So strong was Austria's association with a politics founded in *ancien regime* preoccupations and discourses that it became a refuge for those who were to become the victims of the encroaching successes of the nation-state and democratic ideals of 19th-century domestic—and finally international—politics. It was thus no coincidence that the Monarchy served as the final resting place of several generations of French Bourbons, from daughters of Louis XV to Charles X and in 1884 even, finally, the comte de Chambord, last of his House. These

¹⁹⁷ Schroeder, *Transformation of European Politics*, 34.

politics of restraint, moderation, and monarchical legitimacy—of treaty sanctity, limited war, and aristocratic honour¹⁹⁸—of the Habsburg dynasty and its experience, were carried by the increasingly ‘archaic’ Austrian state into a hostile 20th Century.

¹⁹⁸ On the pre-revolutionary conception of war and its limitations shaped by aristocratic cultural scripts of self-control, as well as a refutation of some of Schroeder’s assertions about the nature of 18th vs 19th century warfare, see David A. Bell, “The Culture of War in Europe, 1750-1815,” in Swann and Félix, *Crisis of the Absolute Monarchy*, esp. 149–158.

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