

ISSN: 0213-2079 — ISSN electrónico: 2386-3889

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14201/shhmo2022442227277>

INFLUENCE AND POLITICS AT THE VIENNESE COURT 1713-1748

Influencias y Política en la corte de Viena 1713-1748

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Fecha de recepción: 7 de septiembre de 2022

Fecha de aprobación: 17 de noviembre de 2022

ABSTRACT: This article examines the relationships of the acting protagonists at the Viennese court based on major political developments in the period between 1713 and 1740. The main source for study are the personal records of the emperor himself, the diaries of Charles VI. His notes and the mention of meetings with close advisors reveal the possibilities of influence. Based on personal experiences of Archduke Charles in Spain, which set the course for the future, these years are also included in the considerations. Charles VI held the title of King of Spain until his death. In the course of this, Spain developed from his own dominion to a political opponent and finally ally, which changed again in 1729. This relationship alone illustrates the lively diplomatic (and military) activity in the years under study, which can also be traced by the changing influence of individuals and groups at the imperial court in Vienna.

Keywords: Viennese Court; Charles VI; Wars of Succession; favourites; self-testimonies; 18th century.

RESUMEN: Este artículo examina las relaciones entre los protagonistas de la corte vienesa a partir de los importantes acontecimientos políticos que se produjeron en el periodo comprendido entre 1713 y 1740. La fuente principal para ello son las notas personales del propio emperador, los diarios de Carlos VI. Sus anotaciones y la mención de encuentros con consejeros cercanos ponen de manifiesto las posibilidades de influencia. Debido a las experiencias del archiduque Carlos en España, que marcaron el rumbo del futuro, estos años también se incluyen en las consideraciones. Carlos VI ostentó el título de Rey de España hasta su muerte. En el proceso, España pasó de ser su propio dominio a ser un oponente político y, finalmente, un aliado, que volvió a cambiar en 1729. Esta relación ilustra por sí sola la animada actividad diplomática (y militar) de los años estudiados, que también puede rastrearse por la cambiante influencia de individuos y grupos en la corte imperial de Viena.

Palabras clave: corte de Viena; Carlos VI; Guerra de Sucesión Española; autotestimonios; siglo XVIII.

This study aims to trace the main developments at the Viennese Court between 1713 and 1748 based on personal records, especially the diaries of Emperor Charles VI. While the main political factors during this period are discussed, the focus will also be on the actors and influential groups in Vienna¹. By means of references in the diaries to imperial advisors political developments at the Viennese Court are to be traced and the role as well as the influence of the important characters clarified by this direct source from the hand of the emperor. Well-known characters such as Prince Eugene, court chancellor Sinzendorf, imperial vice-chancellor count Schönborn, count Starhemberg or, from the beginning of the 1730s, count Bartenstein, as well as in particular the close confidants count Althann (until 1722) or Vilana-Perlas (especially after 1722) had an impact on political decisions in Vienna and thus on events in Europe over longer periods of time. The diaries kept over three decades illustrate their influence in the respective political situation (table 1). Thus rise and fall at court become tangible in the imperial notes. Especially the references over two decades to the close relationship with the confidant Althann show the value of these continuously kept records with their unique glimpses. In this way, the study aims to demonstrate that the diaries are an important supplementary source on political developments at the Viennese Court and not merely, as occasionally perceived in

1. In addition to Virginia León Sanz, special thanks are due to William O'Reilly for his assistance. German transcriptions of passages from the diaries can be found in particular in Seitschek, 2018 and Seitschek, 2021a.

older literature, a constant repetition of the fixed corset of events at the imperial court. If one looks at the written records, especially the pedantically-kept diaries with detailed entries on daily activities, the monarch appears as hard-working and entirely aware of his responsibilities. Numerous resolutions written in his own hand, his participation in council meetings, and even the keeping of his own (secret) correspondence attest to this dedication to work². The study follows a roughly chronological structure. After the first period of rule in Spain, Charles VI's reign in Vienna and in the empire is discussed, as well as the next years, which were marked by wars. This is followed by the diplomatic efforts to achieve peace with Spain and the resulting alliances, the military defeats in the last years of his reign, finally the question of succession and the first years of Maria Theresa's reign. The chapters on concerns about the succession or the empire are chronologically broader, as these shaped the entire reign and only in this way can the essential factors and relevant counsellors become clear. Since these decades were diplomatically an extremely turbulent time, peace congresses and military conflicts characterized the era. The Spanish and Polish Wars of Succession, the Northern War and the Ottoman Wars, marked the first and last decade of Charles VI's reign³.

2. For this in short Auer, 2020: 48-50; Redlich, 1938; Seitschek, 2018; Seitschek, 2020b. The diaries are kept in the Austrian State Archives (ÖStA): Haus-, Hof und Staatsarchiv (= HHStA), Hausarchiv, Sammelbände 2 (vol. 1: 1707; v. 2: 1708; v. 3: 1709; v. 4: 1710; v. 5: 1711; v. 6: 1712; v. 7: 1713; v. 8: 1714; v. 9: 1715-1716; v. 10: 1717-1719; v. 11: 1720-1721; v. 12: 1722-1724; v. 13: 1725-1726; v. 14: 1727-1729; v. 15: 1730-1732; v. 16: 1733-1735; v. 17: 1736-1738; v. 18: 1739-oct. 1740). These volumes are the main source of the paper. The entries in the diaries are cited by date. Passages of text can be found more quickly by indicating the day in the handwritten notes due to the clear structure, since page references for specific entries of a certain day can only be determined with greater effort due to the unclear handwriting of the emperor as well as the densely written pages. There is no clue to older volumes or other forms of periodic notes by Charles before 1707.

3. In general Burkhardt and Durst, 2021; Duchhardt, 1997a. On Charles VI and his reign the biographical works Braubach, 1963-1965; Höfler, 1868; Landau, 1889; León, 2003; Rill, 1992; Seitschek, 2018; Voltés Bou, 1963. On the reign in general, with further literature, the contributions in Seitschek and Hertel, 2020. To the Spanish War of Succession Albareda, 2002; Albareda, 2010; Álvarez et al., 2007; Braubach, 1964a; Edelmayer et al. 2008; Pohlig and Schaich, 2018. To the first Ottoman War Braubach, 1964a: 302-379; Bremm, 2021: 326-340; Hochedlinger, 2003: 194-197; Ingrao, 2011; Oross, 2021; Redlich, 1962: 156-172. On the Nordic War, Russia's rise during the rule of Peter the Great with a view to the role of the Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, see Aretin, 2005: 255-262; Leitsch, 1958; Pilss, 1949; Stevens, 2013: 219-296 (for Peter's Wars). In general Black, 2002: 107-114; Bushkovitch, 2007; Frost, 2000; Haintz, 1958; Hughes, 2002; Wittram, 1964: v. 1, 191-361; v. 2, 221-345, 406-474.

1. ASCENDANCY

The death of Charles II in November 1700 and the nomination of Louis XIV's grandson as universal heir to the Spanish empire in his last will and testament provoked the War of the Spanish Succession, which need not be discussed in detail here. In late 1703 the now-proclaimed Spanish king Archduke Charles left Vienna for Spain. The journey took him via Prague, Dresden, Halberstadt, Düsseldorf (meeting with Marlborough), Holland (an audience with the Estates General), London (where he was received at Windsor by Queen Anne), and Lisbon, and from whence on to Catalonia. There, Archduke Charles, whose journey had been delayed due to heavy storms, learned the value and necessity of a powerful fleet⁴. His Spanish government does not need to be addressed here. When the archduke returned to Vienna, his experiences in Spain had an impact on his reign as emperor, when he always sought to preserve the Spanish heritage for his house. According to O'Reilly (2009: 54):

Charles was resolutely changed by his experience of life and leadership at his Spanish court in Barcelona, and his experience marked his form and style of rule in Vienna and throughout his imperial and royal lands⁵.

Considerations about the type of government which might develop can already be traced in his early letters from Spain to his trusted advisor Johann Wenzel count Wratislaw of Mitrowitz (1669-1712). In particular, in a letter penned at the end of July 1711, he laid down the principles of his rule, in which he addressed, for example, the situation of the queen in Barcelona, the regent in Vienna, the situation in the Empire, and the reform of the administration, especially of finances⁶.

4. For the journey to Spain in short León, 2003, 57-72; O'Reilly, 2009: 54-56. For building up a fleet in Naples or Friuli, Arneth, 1856: 202 (Charles July 31, 1711).

5. León, 2020. About the administration in Italy Benedikt, 1927; Capra, 2009; Reitter, 1964; Quirós, 2017.

6. Letter from July 31, 1711, f.i.: «experienced ministers necessary to start the difficult governo of both monarchies well (...) It appears, however, that the modum and system of the local states cannot or will not be understood at Vienna, which is highly necessary, since both monarchies must now be regarded as equal and all belong to one lord, nor must there be any difference between the nations, but must seek that all be united and that each country be governed to the best of its ability according to its own privileges and customs, to which also my service will require that I be soon here and soon there, and that I take some Spanish ministers as well as some German ministers with me, so that these ministers may understand both monarchies as much as possible» (Arneth, 1856: 203). To Elisabeth Christine in short León, 2020: 164-170. On the question of dual monarchies for England and Hanover f.i. Richter-Uhlig, 1992 or with regard to the rulers Duchhardt, 1997b.

Namely, with the death of Joseph I in April 1711, a male successor remained in the person of Archduke Charles, who hoped to succeed to the Habsburg legacy in Madrid and in Vienna. At first, his mother Eleonore Magdalena, crowned empress and Hungarian queen, assumed the affairs of state for her son⁷. Although Charles had granted power of attorney to his mother at the beginning of May 1711, Eleonore Magdalena withheld it during negotiations with the Hungarian Diet, likely because it referred to her as governor and not as queen. Charles regularly consulted not only with Eleonore Magdalena, but also with count Wratislaw. The latter complained, for example, about his audiences with the queen mother and about the difficulties in communication between the councillor and the governor, since she was always accompanied by ladies of the court and the doors of her audience room remained open. Several times Wratislaw also criticized their confidants who nevertheless continued to be supported by the empress (Keller, 2021: 305-309)⁸. As in earlier years, the length of time needed for communications between Vienna and Barcelona made it difficult. In addition, as Katrin Keller points out, Charles did not have access to all the necessary information in Barcelona (Keller, 2021: 310-311)⁹. This fact was necessarily accompanied by issues of trust, which was regularly emphasized in the letters. Eleonora Magdalena urged her son to leave Spain as soon as possible, as did Wratislaw. Thanks to the diplomatic skill and preparations of the empress-mother and the support of the archbishop and leading Elector of Mainz, Lothar Franz of Schönborn (1655-1729), the election of Charles was never in jeopardy, even if it related to corresponding commitments. Eleonora Magdalena was in regular contact with her brother Jan William of the Palatinate, imperial vicar (*Reichsvikar*) during the interregnum; together with the Duke of Saxony his candidacy was supported by the pope. Jan William endeavored to take advantage of the situation, for example in the interests of his wife Anna de' Medici (1667-1743). The other electors, in particular the imperial chancellor and Elector of Mainz, also sought concessions away from the 'Wahlkapitulation' (Electoral Capitulation).¹⁰ Domestically, the

7. To her government recently Keller, 2021: 297-321. Keller emphasizes that especially the dynastic legitimation as mother of the deceased as well as designated emperor paved the way for Eleonore Magdalena (Keller, 2021: 300-304, 328-329).

8. For the attorney and difficulties see Arneth, 1856: 158, 163 (Charles, May 27, 1711); 165-167 (Wratislaw May 27, 1711), 169-172 (Wratislaw June 3, 1711), 194 (Charles July 31, 1711) etc.

9. The transmission of correspondence, its mode (e.g. by courier) or even its loss, for example due to the capture of a ship (Arneth, 1856: 189, Wratislaw July 22, 1711), are regularly addressed at the beginning of the letters (Arneth, 1856).

10. To the election in general Aretin, 2005: 224-229; Glashagen, 2019: 81-111; Hantsch, 1929: 148-162. On the election and Eleonora Magdalena Keller, 2021: 309-319. To the election in the correspondence of Charles with count Wratislaw f.i. Arneth, 1856: 153-154 (Charles

end of the uprising in Hungary was an important success (Peace of Szatmár 1711; Pálffy, 2021: 232-240).

At the same time, Charles sought to clarify the situation in Catalonia. In a letter to the queen who had remained in Barcelona and was now about to depart the city, Charles complained about his english ally (December 29, 1712), writing that: «the [english] queen, or rather her ministry, has completely rejected said ultimatum of mine, and in particular because of the transformation of the principality of Catalonia into a free republic, moreover with scornful and insinuating words». Later he wrote:

Since the unfortunate english withdrawal from the alliance, I have been striving first of all for the whole of Spain and the Indies, then in stages for their division, then for the kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia, Catalonia and Rousillon, and pro ultimo for the principality of Catalonia alone, or if this could not be obtained, at least for its administration under my and the allies' (111v) protection into a free sovereign republic, in order to deprive it of all other sovereignty¹¹.

Illutating the constant importance of this question he remarked during the negotiations with Spain in 1725 (April 23): «Sinzendorf, because of treaty Spain, (...) serious because of Catalonia»¹².

With the return of Charles VI to Vienna and the arrival of Empress Elisabeth Christine from Barcelona, the rank and succession order of the empresses and their imperial daughters had to be clarified. In a letter to count Wratislaw in 1711, Charles had made clear that he wanted to delay this question¹³, finally, the Pragmatic Sanction was declared in 1713. Aulic chancellor Johann Friedrich count Seilern (1646-1715) played a decisive role in this process¹⁴. Some of those present at the time had died in the years after 1703, which is why the contracts were once again promulgated by Seilern in 1713. Charles himself emphasized the inseparability and indivisibility of the monarchy and laid down the order of claims to the throne and thus the order of precedence at court. After the children of Charles, Joseph's daughters were entitled to inherit. In the time before the declaration of the Pragmatic Sanction on April 19, 1713, Amalia Wilhelmine and Eleonore Magdalena made several appearances

May 4, 1711), 174 (Wratislaw, June 3, 1711), 176 (June 10, 1711), 201, 206 (Charles July 31, 1711), 208 (Wratislaw, August 5, 1711).

11. HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Spanien 14.2: December 29, 1712.

12. To Austracism in Vienna Albareda, 2008; León, 1991; León, 1992; León, 1995.

13. Arneth, 1856: 205 (Charles July 31, 1711).

14. To Seilern Turba, 1923; To the Pragmatic Sanction itself Turba, 1911; Turba, 1912; Turba, 1913.

in his diaries¹⁵. The empress-mother, in particular, still seemed dissatisfied the day before, as the emperor noted (18. April: «Seilern arranging everything because of declaring; writing, audience, minister, Schönborn; (...); Amalia; at home; empress mother letter to Seilern, not satisfied, postpone tomorrow»). Seilern apparently acted as mediator. Then, on April 19, Charles VI himself noted: «Seilern hour not changing, to mother, she cause yet content, 10 happening public, secret council, (...); meal; fief; mother with me, content; (...); Amalia with me». Here, too, it is clear that the emperor spoke directly to the emperor's widows. It was years later, between 1720 and 1725, that this succession arrangement was recognized by the estates of the Habsburg monarchy. Likewise, the renunciation of the Josephine Archduchess Maria Josepha on her marriage to the Saxon Elector Prince in 1719 was brought to the attention of the estates. This recognition by the representatives of the different Habsburg territories made it one of the basic laws of the monarchy, establishing an important link within the composite Habsburg monarchy. Even the constitutional documents of the 19th century, such as the October Diploma of 1860, refer to the Pragmatic Sanction in their preamble¹⁶.

Seilern, who had been raised to the rank of count in 1712¹⁷, had completed the important task to his satisfaction, which is why Charles's regret over his poor health and eventual death in 1715 is not surprising¹⁸. Another paternal confidant of the early years died in 1716. Already in Spain he had hoped that Philipp Sigmund count Dietrichstein would join him with the designated queen Elisabeth Christine (Arneth, 1856: 28). Regarding Dietrichstein's death in 1715, Charles noted on July 3 on his return journey from Mariazell:

Sad news that this morning my and my father's Obriststallmeister (grand equerry), whom I have loved dearly all my life, count Phillip Sigmund of Dietrichstein, died at 8 a.m., aged 65 years only, great sadness, talking to Althann.

15. April 16: «Amalia with me, talking because of succession soon; (...); mother, meal, talking about succession, she satisfied».

16. For the recognition in the Habsburg monarchy Glashagen, 2019: 148-173; Ingrao, 1981; Seitschek, 2015. For the recognition in the Empire Glashagen, 2019; Hantsch, 1929: 325-335; Whaley, 2013: 158-162.

17. AVA, Adel, RAA Seilern, Johann Friedrich, baron of, Imperial privy councillor and court chancellor, Johann Friedrich, cousin, court councillor and assessor at the Austrian Chancellery, grant of the rank of count for the empire and the hereditary lands, improvement of coat of arms, right of adoption if he died without heirs (05.11.1712).

18. January 3: «Seylern so very sad»; January 7: «Seyl(ern) without hope, sorrowful»; January 8: «Seyl(ern) dead, regret».

In a letter dated July 16, 1716, the emperor informed Prince Eugene about the replacement of the *Oberstallmeister* after Dietrichstein's death, «who has also always been quite fond of me». Count Althann alone would be suitable for him for this post and the emperor thought that he would not be doing anyone else an injustice by appointing him (Braubach, 1964b: 332-333, 452 note 115). After some deliberation, which is also illustrated in the imperial notes, Johann Michael count Althann assumed the vacant position of *Oberstallmeister*. Althann had already accompanied the archduke to Spain, where he had married Maria Anna Pignatelli, who was also close to the archduke. Charles made a note of the wedding on February 12, 1709: «Althann's marriage with Marian, both very happy, me having much fun, eternal friend until death, queen showing good, Mari[an] favo[rite?], nice, hoping it lasts, dancing until 6 o'clock in the morning». In any case, the relationship between the Althanns and the young queen was opaque. Charles had sent his confidant to meet Elisabeth Christine in 1708, who reported positive things about the bride, but probably also feared for his own influence¹⁹. Althann had continuous access to the emperor, whose trust he enjoyed, not least due to his function as *Oberstallmeister* and thus his companionship at imperial hunts. In the diary notes, he appears regularly, almost daily. If they did not meet in person, they exchanged letters. Especially in the case of illness of the imperial friend, Althann's absence at court is painfully noted. Charles referred to his distressed state of mind several times in such cases. All the greater was the joy when Althann returned. If one considers the number of times Althann is mentioned in the diaries in comparison with other family members or advisors, his dominant presence, even years after his death, is striking (see table 1, p. 259). The close intimacy between Althann and the emperor, as well as notes in the diaries, give reason to suspect at least a homoerotic relationship. For example, on his stay in Laxenburg (May 8, 1716), Charles noted: «night Althann with me in bed». The empress remained in the residence shortly after the birth of her son. This exceptional closeness to Althann was even more evident during trips without Elisabeth Christine and is apparent in the Spanish years (1710) as well as later in Vienna²⁰. Of course, it was not unusual for a chamberlain to be near the monarch when at nighttime he was away from his consort²¹. In this context, however, it

19. 25 July 1708: «Althann arriving, found the queen good, beautiful; audiences; Althann forever dear, enduring until death, writing to the queen twice each day, Althann dear».

20. In short Seitschek, 2021a: 179-181; Seitschek, 2018: 115-121. Compare Backerra, 2019.

21. The shared bedroom of the ruling couple is a Habsburg characteristic. They slept separately in case of illness or when one of the spouses was travelling. Johan Caspar count Cobenzl mentioned in his memories that he was staying in the emperor's chamber for the first time because of the Empress' illness on 6 March 1725 (ASGo, ASCC, AeD, b. 371, f.

should be emphasized that it is clear several times in the diaries that Charles attached importance to Althann's advice in political matters as well as in court affairs. As a representative of the so-called Spanish group at court²², he was certainly treated with suspicion by local «Viennese» society, even though the diplomats were aware of his importance (Seitschek, 2018: 225-230).

2. THE EMPIRE

... religious affairs in the empire, examined, delicate, but serious, making resolution; Nordic affairs, more hold [3r], tsar coming to us, well, needing, Holstein what right, serious (March 1720)²³

Several aspects mentioned in this diary note shaped the history of the Holy Roman Empire in the first half of the 18th century, which can only be briefly touched upon (f.i. Aretin, 2005; Evans et al., 2011; Klueting, 1999; Stollberg-Rilinger, 2008; Whaley, 2013). Throughout these decades, three electors of the Holy Roman Empire managed to acquire royal crowns. Augustus of Saxony was elected Polish king in 1697 and managed to retain the crown, even if he had to relinquish it briefly during the Northern war as we will discuss later. And George of Hanover succeeded to the British throne in 1714. Due to the territories of the German princes lying outside the imperial borders, which also applied to the Habsburg-ruled kingdom of Hungary, they were drawn into the conflicts in the north, east and south over the establishment of a balance of power or hegemony on land and water in Europe. In addition, the aforementioned electors, especially the Elector of Prussia, were able to exert influence in the bodies of the imperial circles and thus in the empire

1086). Cobenzl was Grand Chamberlain (*Oberstkämmerer*) since 5 November 1724. Not least for reasons of security, according to an instruction issued by Ferdinand III in 1644, the *Oberstkämmerer* should be located in the imperial chamber. See Wührer and Scheutz, 2011: 476.

22. Concise to the groups at the Viennese Court León, 2003, 251-299; Pečar, 2003: 20-140. The Spaniards at the court of Charles VI do not need to be discussed in detail in this context; in general, I am referring to the contributions by Agustí Alcoberro, Virginia León-Sanz, Elisabeth Garms-Cornides or Quirós Rosado. In short Steiner, 2007: 221-242. On the rivalling and by no means cohesive groups at the courts of Charles most recently the contributions with further literature in Seitschek and Hertel, 2020. To the Lorraine group at court in short Sprangler, 2017. In general Scheutz, 2015.

23. The Duke of Gottorp, who had been expelled from Schleswig-Holstein by the King of Denmark, stayed in Vienna in 1720 and asked the emperor for protection and for a pension, which was granted.

through dominions gained outside their hereditary kingdoms (F.i. Göse, 2020a: 372-422; Press, 1986).

While the activities of the royal electors were always a source of friction, it was primarily the smaller imperial estates that sought protection from the emperor, not least to protect themselves from their more powerful neighbours. In addition to support at the Imperial Diet, Charles VI needed financial aid, not least because of the wars against the Ottomans. In this context, Vienna sought a regular source of income from the empire²⁴. The possession of the Austrian Netherlands, too, offered the emperor an opportunity to increase his presence, at least in the north of the Empire (Whaley, 2018: 174-175). Moreover, the Habsburgs tried to gain influence on, and through, the imperial circles (Reichskreise; Kulenkampff, 2005: esp. 15-25; Neipperg, 1991). The long-time imperial vice-chancellor Cardinal Friedrich Karl count Schönborn (imperial vice-chancellor from 1705 to 1734, prince-bishop of Würzburg from 1729) wrote in 1736, «that one place after the other is patched up in Vienna every so often, not even me as its long-time imperial vice-chancellor can see how this beggar's cloak can hold any longer» (according to Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 158).

The election of the emperor was not a foregone conclusion for the House of Habsburg since the succession could not always be secured during the emperor's lifetime²⁵. Joseph had already been elected Roman king in 1690 and thus designated successor 32 years after his father's coronation in 1658 (in general Rudolph, 2021; Stollberg-Rilinger, 2008). Neither Joseph nor Charles had a son of voting age. Throughout this time, a permanent electoral capitulation was also negotiated (*Perpetua*).

According to Burgdorf (2015: 22), «the Electoral Capitulations, which from 1653 also included the Peace of Westphalia, was the central document for regulating the relations between the emperor and the imperial estates and subjects»²⁶. While as late as 1690, a time of imperial power, Leopold and Joseph had been able to fix some points in their favour in the electoral capitulations, Charles had to make a

24. For this among others Müller, 1993; Press, 1988; Whaley, 2013: 120-149 or several articles in Pohlig et al., 2018. The Habsburgs themselves were accused of neglecting the collection of imperial taxes so that less influential imperial princes could not hold the imperial dignity (Müller, 1993: 167).

25. On the controversial election of Leopold Aretin, 1997: 184-201.

26. It is worth mentioning that the «constitution» of the Empire was seen as model of a written constitution by the Encyclopedists (ibidem). Above all in times without such a written constitution in France.

number of concessions²⁷. Finally, the death of the emperor in 1740 meant the end of Habsburg rule on the imperial throne. If in the 17th century Louis XIV had still been a potential candidate to replace Charles's father Leopold, now the spouses of the Josephine archduchesses and at the same time German electors represented competition. At first, Karl Albrecht of Bavaria was elected emperor as Charles VII. However, bavarian domestic power was not sufficient to exercise this dignity with the necessary resources. With the early death of the 47-year-old Charles VII, the Wittelsbach emperorship became little more than one episode in this story²⁸. The year 1745 witnessed the election and coronation of Maria Theresa's husband, Francis Stephen of Lorraine. With his son Joseph II, the short line of Habsburg-Lorraine emperors commenced but the imperial power base was permanently shaken, not least by concessions made by Charles VII, for example in the context of the electoral capitulation (Burgdorf, 2015: 88-92).

What role did the empire play for the House of Habsburg in the first half of the 18th century then? With the readmission of the Electorate of Bohemia and its voting rights, the Habsburgs had gained more influence at the Diet (Begert, 2003). At the same time, Hanover had joined the ranks of the electors in 1692, while Bavaria and Cologne had been subject to imperial ban for several years during the War of the Spanish Succession. Habsburg emperors were represented at the Perpetual Diet in Regensburg by their *Prinzipalkommissar*, *Konkommissar*, Bohemian and Austrian envoys²⁹. The Empire was represented in Vienna by the Imperial Chancellery and the imperial vice-chancellor count Schönborn, nephew of the Elector of Mainz, Lothar Franz. While the elector was still able to demand concessions in the negotiations leading up to Charles's election, some of which were included in the election capitulation, the imperial vice-chancellor increasingly lost influence at the Viennese Court. If Joseph had already excluded Friedrich Karl from the Privy Conference in matters of domestic policy, the Imperial Chancellery lost foreign policy authority incrementally vis-à-vis the Aulic Chancellery during the reign of Charles VI³⁰. The loss of influence of the imperial vice-chancellor can be illustrated by the references in the emperor's diaries. In these, we see that Charles

27. On the election capitulations Burgdorf, 2015. To the election of the last Habsburgs ibidem: 82-88.

28. About Charles VII Hartmann, 1985; A. and J. Zedler, 2017 (including further literature). Of course, his father Max Emanuel II of Bavaria had European ambitions and tried to gain a crown for his house, not least when his son was the briefly-accepted successor to the Spanish imperium (De Schryver, 1996).

29. To diplomatic representatives of the time Hausmann, 1950.

30. At first, the emperor reassigned the latter to the body (Arneth, 1856: 88. Letter from Wratislaw, March 27, 1709), imperial matters were then held in separate sessions. At the beginning of his reign, Charles continued the involvement of Schönborn. See Arneth, 1856: 145 (Wratislaw April 22, 1711), 153-154 (Charles May 4, 1711), 158 (Charles, May 27, 1711),

referred to aulic chancellor Sinzendorf relatively more often, especially in the years of the initiation and preservation of the Spanish Peace around 1725 (Seitschek, 2018: 400).

One of the imperial tribunals, the Vienna-based Imperial Aulic Council (*Reichshofrat*), also played a role that should not be underestimated. Numerous agents of the imperial estates acted as intermediaries for their clients in Vienna. The court's cases reached political dimensions, as in the case of Mecklenburg (Mediger, 1967; Wick, 1963) and Brandenburg-Prussia (Schenk, 2013; Schenk, 2020). The Imperial Aulic Council and its representatives (*Generalkommissar* or Plenipotentiary, *Reichsfiskale*) were also an instrument for enforcing imperial rights, not least in Italy³¹. The enforcement of imperial rights in Italy can be noted at the latest since the reign of Joseph (Aretin, 2005: 194-215, 351-380; Auer, 1978).

An antagonism that characterized all issues of the Empire was that between the Catholic emperor and the Protestant imperial estates. At the Diet, the Protestant interests were represented by the *Corpus Evangelicorum*, historically chaired by the Elector of Saxony. However, Augustus the «Strong» — and later his son — had converted to the Catholic faith to enable their dynasty to hold the Polish crown. Nevertheless, they were not willing to give up their role on the *Corpus*, since they continued to represent the Electorate of Saxony. However, Hanover and by extension England was particularly vocal in its opposition to Saxony's continuing role, as was Prussia which also exerted pressure, since they recognized the *Corpus* as an influential instrument in the Empire. On January 17, 1720, Hanover and Brandenburg agreed to take the directorship of the *Corpus Evangelicorum* from the Elector of Saxony; de jure, Saxony was able to maintain its position even after the conversion of the prince elector in Vienna in 1717 (Aretin, 2005: 276; Göse, 2020: 296-305). An important matter in the religious conflict was about the abrogation of the so-called Rijswijk Clause, which had confirmed recatholicization in the territories previously occupied by Louis XIV, and the actions taken by the Palatine elector in Heidelberg. The emperor's exhortations and efforts at mediation were of little avail; because of his Catholic faith, his impartiality and judicial authority in the matter were doubted³². The representatives of the Protestant powers acted skilfully in this regard, branding the Catholic action as part of a larger plan by Rome and the Jesuits to form a Catholic league to eradicate their reformed faith. In his letters,

166-167 (Wratistlaw, May 27, 1711), 197 (Charles July 31, 1711). In short Aretin, 1997: 126-128. In general Hantsch, 1929.

31. On the Imperial Chamber Court, for example Jahns, 2003-2011. To the Imperial Aulic Council Aretin, 1997: 85-97; Auer, 2011; Haug-Moritz, 2004; Hughes, 1988. To Italy Schnettger, 2019.

32. On the religious conflict, among others Aretin, 2005: 272-295; Borgmann, 1937; Göse, 2020a: 296-305; Hantsch, 1929: 239-280; Whaley, 2013: 150-157. On England Black, 2014.

Saint-Saphorin repeatedly referred to the role of imperial vice-chancellor Schönborn in Vienna in this context. Belonging to the clerical class as he did, Schönborn was personally subjected to the animosity of his Protestant opponents in the Empire, who tried to discredit him at the Viennese court. The increasingly explicit criticism of the imperial vice-chancellor illicitly exactly the opposite effect. After losing influence Schönborn was supported by the Viennese court, which perceived the action against him as an attack on imperial authority³³. Contrary to the regulations of the Peace of Westphalia, the *Corpus Evangelicorum* developed into a permanent political body of its own; the dispute therefore fundamentally affected the hierarchy in the Empire and by extension imperial influence³⁴. The confessional counterpart was also considering the establishment of a Catholic community of interest, or at least corresponding associations as a counterweight against Prussia-Hanover (Borgmann, 1937: 38-44). The diary entry of November 2, 1720 illustrates this tense atmosphere in religious matters: «about Empire, otherwise C-ardinal Saxony, bad Imperial Diet»³⁵. In any case, Vienna and London were anxious to prevent a religious war if possible; nevertheless, the conflict remained.

The rise of Prussia and its relationship with the Empire and the emperor in the first half of the 18th century will not be discussed here³⁶, however a key year for future relations will be considered. In 1732, the Pragmatic Sanction was accepted as part of an imperial recess (*Reichsschluss*) that was not without challenge (Aretin, 2005: 326-331; Glashagen, 2019: 286-484). Prussia and references to the imperial representative there, Seckendorf, appear several times in Charles VI's notes in this year. First, the entries concern the marriage of Crown Prince Frederick (the later Frederick II) to Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Bevern (1715-1797), which Charles discussed with Prince Eugene on several occasions. Frederick had agreed to the marriage on February 22, 1732, and the engagement ceremony took place on March 10, 1732. The emperor noted (March 6, 1732): «Prince Eugene because of Prussia marriage Bevern, correct». And soon after (March 17, 1732): «whole morning nothing new, whole morning nb [= notabene] courier, Seckendorf, promise marriage Bevern with Elector Prince, good, paying attention to England, delicate, how to

33. Borgmann, 1937: 69-70; Hantsch, 1929: 213-228, 265-290.

34. Aretin, 2005: 284-285; Borgmann, 1937: 82-84; Naumann, 1936: 43-120. The use of the minor imperial estates as instruments ended when the political interests of England-Hanover and Brandenburg became apparent in the establishment of the Corpus.

35. Saxony refers to Christian August Cardinal of Saxony-Zeitz (1666-1725). Compare January 11, 1721: «peculiar imperial affairs delicate, no war, prevent».

36. For this Göse, 2012; Göse, 2020a, to the Empire espec. 372-422. Göse points out the respect that Frederick William had for the imperial office and its insignia, as well as the fact that the Prussian king exercised his rule solely during the reign of Charles VI from 1713 to 1740. Ibidem: 375. In general Göse and Kloosterhuis, 2020.

do». The marriage finally took place on June 12, 1733 in Salzdahlum after further diplomatic entanglements. At the end of the year, news of the unfortunate course of the affair, as well as possible consequences for the Viennese court which had also promoted the marriage, were discussed. For example, Charles noted (December 31, 1732): «Afternoon Bartenstein, much because of Seckendorf, nb prince after how to do, this way bad, serious, considering»³⁷. In fact, the involvement of the Viennese court in the matter of this marriage remained memorable for the later Frederick II. Otherwise, the meeting of Charles VI with Frederick William I (1688-1740) is mentioned in the diaries. The austerity of the king, who had ruled since 1713, and his administrative policies ultimately created the army and framework conditions that his son Frederick (II) was then able to use after his death in 1740. The emperor and his advisors paid special attention to the ceremonial during this encounter in 1732. The advice of Prince Eugene, Bartenstein and count Seckendorff, among others, was regularly sought in this matter. To this end, a conference was held on July 12, 1732. They discussed, amongst other topics, whether the emperor should shake hands with the king. Such questions were of particular importance regarding the relationship with other European sovereigns, even though it was assured on the part of Seckendorf in the conference that the Prussian king would «by no means aim at the delicacy of the ceremonial, but solely that he may have the happiness and honour to become acquainted with your imperial majesty»³⁸. In addition to ceremonial matters, the court conference also discussed the journey and reception of the Prussian king. Whereas ceremonial issues were already of importance for the choice of route during the young archduke's journey through the Empire to England and Spain (incidentally, this also applied to the arrival of Elisabeth Christine: Koch, 2004; Körper, 1975), this applied even more to the meeting of the emperor with one of the «royal» electors. It was therefore no coincidence that the meeting took place in Kladrup and not in the residence in Prague, in order to avoid ceremonial difficulties as far as possible³⁹. On July 31, Charles VI noted the issue

37. For marriage proceedings see Oster, 2011: 172-178. For the engagement or marriage among others Braubach, 1965: 371-374; Kunisch, 2009: 58-64. On the preceding negotiations between the English court and Prussia briefly Backerra, 2018: 321-322. On the role of Seckendorf Kuntke, 2007. On the marriage policy of Frederick William in general Göse, 2020a: 443-456. Compare f.i. December 12, 1732: «empress because of Prussia, Bartenstein, writing, much (...) afterwards audience, much, prince Eugene talking because of Prussia, he this way, Bevern, talking seriously»; December 15, 1732: «Starhemberg, because of marriage Prussia, prince Eugene».

38. HHStA, ZA Prot. 15 (1732-1734), fol. 57v-58r.

39. To the conference HHStA, ZA Prot. 15 (1732-1734), fol. 56v-60r. Several times during his stay in Karlsbad Charles VI already referred to the developments with Prussia. E.G. July 4: «dispatches, Prince Eugene, Starhemberg, a lot, especially because of Seckendorf much»; July 6: «Bartenstein, because of empire in the future»; July 10: «Starhemberg because of Prussia, journey, Seckendorf etc., much (...); afternoon Bartenstein much, about Prussia too, Seckendorf,

of handshaking, the repeated visits of the horses, the joint dinner with the omission of hand washing as well as conversations with the Prussian king⁴⁰. On August 3, he visited the art collection with the emperor:

Starhemberg afterwards because of Prussia, much, tomorrow making visit, will see, 6 king gallery, pictures, coming, me there too, there (...) without set up ceremonial talking, he taking a leave of absence, afterward with empress.

Charles VI thus considered the visit a success, which other entries also seem to suggest (August 5: «king at 9 away (...) reading, he well, satisfied, all good, well, praise God [...] Prussia well»). In fact, in contrast, the meeting did not result in the support Frederick William I had hoped for his claims to Jülich-Berg, which ultimately soured long term relations with Charles VI, especially since the archducal house laid claim to Jülich-Berg itself (Aretin, 2005: 333; Göse, 2020a: 396-398).

In conclusion, it is very much the case that the Empire was important for Habsburg policy and that the Habsburg emperors tried to use the resources of the Empire:

Within the Empire, Charles VI appeared as an intensive ruler, determined to use the instrument of Imperial authority, such as the Aulic Council, to enhance Austrian power. Charles was widely accused of seeking to establish a despotism within the Empire» (Gestrich: 1994, 316 note 59; according to Black, 1982: 21).

Perhaps the term «despotism» owes more to the attitude of the opponents of the time; it is quite true that the Habsburgs insisted on their imperial rights and tried to enforce them. At the same time, the imperial diplomats in the Empire illustrate that the very fact of being constituted with powers of varying strength meant that it was always a matter of negotiation, showing a strong presence, reaching a consensus and gaining the support of the imperial estates. The latter were even needed for such crucial issues as the Empire's entry into war, which also depended on the real threat to its borders, and could not be determined by the emperor alone who needed the consent of the Diet. Such *Reichskriege* were the Ottoman Wars, the Spanish War of Succession, the Polish or the Austrian Wars of Succession (then against Prussia; Hochedlinger, 2003: 153-264).

pay attention to journey Prussia, much» etc. To the meeting Braubach, 1965: 373-374; 2020b; Rausch, 1949: 151-154.

40. HHStA, ZA Prot. 15 (1732-1734), fol. 69v-72r.

3. WARS IN EAST, SOUTH AND NORTH

The Peace of Karlowitz with the Ottoman Empire, concluded in 1699 for a period of 25 years, had brought Austria substantial territorial gains (recently Heywood and Parvey, 2020). In 1714, Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1737, his reign is better known as the Tulip Period) commenced a war with Venice. In the run-up to the war, the Ottomans had succeeded in militarily forcing Tsar Peter to conclude a peace (Pruth 1711). The reason for the Russian war was the flight of Charles XII to the Ottoman Empire after the Battle of Poltava as we will discuss later. In their battles against Venice, the goal of the Ottomans was the conquest of the Republic's Greek possessions, which had turned to the emperor for assistance. Efforts by the Porte to prevent or delay the emperor's entry into the war failed. Early preparations for war allowed the head of the Aulic War Council Prince Eugene to intervene quickly after the Ottomans began their advance from Belgrade at the end of July: the battle of Peterwardein on August 5, 1716, brought a victory for the imperial army and even the chancellery and the ceremonial tent of the fallen Grand Vizier were captured. Charles wrote in his diaries (August, 8 1716):

... after 2 Khevenhüller with 6 Postille arriving from Hungary, happy news, the 5th enemy completely beaten, tents, cannons, flags, everything obtained, great news, me writing prince thanks, remains what one knows to particular: Breuner general, Lang general, Gelen, Odorvar, Goldaker obrist, nothing else, all mad with joy⁴¹.

The war was ended on July 21, 1718 with the Peace of Passarowitz, securing for the monarchy, in addition to Belgrade and the Banat of Temesvár, western Wallachia and territories south of the Sava River. The Catalans had supported the archduke not least because of possible advantages in Atlantic trade, several of Charles's measures in Vienna were subsequently aimed at promoting maritime trade: the founding of trading companies, the declaration of Fiume or Trieste as free ports, or even the establishment of colonies overseas⁴². Thus, the peace with the Ottoman Empire and with Spain (1725) were not coincidentally linked to trade agreements (Lebeau, 2017). Infrastructural improvements, and particularly to the roads (Semmering Pass, Via Carolina), were of great importance in this context (Helmedach, 2002).

Ending the conflict with the Porte was of particular interest to the Spanish group at the imperial court in Vienna, and according to the emperor's notes, the councillors

41. Battle report from August 8 in Matuschka, 1891: 72-76. Wenceslas Siegfried von Breuner was captured just before the battle and subsequently found beheaded at the Grand Vizier's tent.

42. On the trading companies and colonial efforts recently Auer, 2018; Dhondt, 2015b; Meisterle, 2014. In short Auer, 2020: 44-48; O'Reilly, 2009: 57-70. On the Atlantic Dimension of Habsburg Rule Singerton, 2022; O'Reilly, 2022.

in the emperor's entourage had approached Charles on this matter several times. With the capture of Sardinia in 1717, as well as the threats to the other formerly Spanish territories in Italy, especially Savoyard Sicily, by the Spanish fleet, the Viennese Spanish council's sources of income were threatened. Securing the hard-won balance summoned the other European powers into action⁴³. Those advisors were oriented more toward Italy and they highlighted the lack of funds, hoping for an end to the conflict in the east. The emperor discussed the matter several times with Prince Eugene in advance of, and between, the latter's campaigns (Seitschek, 2021c: 43-67). These struggles may be illustrated by the note from August 22, 1717:

... dispatches, Perlas because of Sardinia, enemy sighted, what more, Milan, Naples, put in state, with Althann much, nb because of d'Ansou, in v[?] country, also Parma, Piacenza, secret, at 10 happy news Belgard surrender, thank God.

Prince Eugene served three emperors successfully and not only on the battlefield (Braubach, 1965). Trust and respect for the Prince are expressed in the comparatively long entry on his death (April 21, 1736):

... half past 8 nb note Prince Eugene who had served my house since 83 on the battlefields, since 97 as commander, great services rendered, 703 appointed president of the aulic war council, serving me since 711 in all areas, found dead in his bed after long illness, nb may God have mercy on his soul, in his 73rd year; now considering how to adjust everything properly, establishing better system, nuncio audience, much, until 11 council; meal; afternoon negotiating, Partenstein, writing, working whole afternoon, aulic chancellor; praying for Prince Eugene too, [...]. † of Savoy.

Eventually, Philip V acceded and joined the Quadruple alliance, which was also noted by the emperor (January 27, 1720): «Peace d'Ansou want to accept, evacuate Sicily, Spain I cede, hard, now elaborating how, protecting Spaniards in peculiar, maintain, marriage, creating benefit». He still referred to the latter as the Duke of Anjou; a peace between Vienna and Bourbon Madrid had not yet been reached. In any case, the end of the disputes and the obtaining of the kingdom of Sicily in exchange for Sardinia was the prelude to diplomatic approaches, in which England and France in particular acted as mediators between the two powers.

Conflicts with Rome were initially ignited by the question of Charles's recognition as Spanish king, which took place after some pressure in 1709, as well as the associated military activities of the imperial troops in Italy. If one considers the papal support in the context of the Holy League around the siege of Vienna in

43. The formation of the Quadruple Alliance and the ensuing conflict cannot be traced in detail here. See Dhondt, 2015a: 106-184; Gibbs, 1968: 287-305; Kamen, 2000: 133-171; Seitschek, 2018: 374-390; Weber, 1887.

1683, as well as the campaigns against the Ottomans, an ambivalent relationship can be observed, not least in the question of the county of Comacchio which was occupied by the imperial army as a former imperial fiefdom (1708). This was a question that was to occupy the courts until 1724/1725. Charles was interested in maintaining a good relationship with Rome, not least because of his experiences in Spain, which is why he showed particular interest in papal elections. In his diaries he noted (March 29, 1721): «Courier from cardinal Althann arriving; talking with Althann a lot, also Schonbohrn as how to do it to get good pope». The conclave of 1721 proved difficult for the emperor, but Cardinal Althann played a decisive role, making use of an exclusion in the case of Cardinal Fabrizio Paolucci (1651-1726), who was close to Spain (April 10, 1721): «Courier Rome, Paulucci hard Pope, Althann give exclusive». Vienna was by no means alone in its conflicts with the head of the church, however⁴⁴.

The Northern War began in 1700, in which initially an alliance of Saxony-Poland, Denmark-Norway and Russia attacked the Swedish kingdom. The first two were members of the Empire, which is why the conflict also affected the Viennese court. More, because the young but militarily-gifted Charles XII of Sweden was able to hold his ground, defeats were inflicted on the Allies and Denmark and Saxony were initially forced to temporarily withdraw from the dispute. Vienna succeeded in averting the Swedish threat in the north of the Empire with the Peace of Altranstädt in 1707 (Conrads, 1971; Wolf 2008). With the defeat of Charles XII at Poltava (1709) by the Russian Tsar Peter, the latter fell behind in the conflict. As in the war against Sweden, Peter had to accept defeats in his battles against the Ottomans (Pruth 1711), but he also managed to score diplomatic and territorial successes against the Porte⁴⁵. In the following decade, the tsar and his army were perceived as a threat to the Empire. The aftermath of the Northern War lingered in Mecklenburg for years after. The duke of Mecklenburg had supported the tsar and taken in his troops, nevertheless in doing so he incurred the opposition of his own estates. The estates brought several actions against their lord before the Imperial Court. On February 8, 1724, this matter also found its way into the imperial notes: «Imperial Aulic Council, affairs about Meklenburg»⁴⁶.

44. Aretin, 2005: 206-215; Hantsch, 1929: 91-120, 183-207; Huber, 1967; Marcos, 2011. In short Seitschek, 2018: 414-424. In a letter to Wratislaw, Charles explicitly referred to the pope as an enemy (Arneth, 1856: 50, letter from November 11, 1707).

45. To the conflict with the Ottoman Empire in short Bremm, 2021: 315-325. On Peter the Great and Diplomacy, and his visit to Vienna, see also: Hennings, 2016.

46. A sentence against the duke had already been passed on December 24, 1714, but its execution was delayed until the beginning of 1719 due to the turmoil caused by the Northern War, the Russian troops in the duchy, and the duke's stalling negotiations. In the middle of

The brother-in-law of Charles was Tsarevitch Alexei (1690-1718), son of Tsar Peter the Great. Peter feared for his lifetime achievements because of his son's advisors, who seemed not to share his views. Consequently, Alexei fled Russia and arrived in Vienna in November 1716. He immediately visited the imperial vice-chancellor Schönborn, who was responsible for Russian affairs and who reported on this visit to the emperor. Unfortunately, there are no references to this in Charles VI's personal notes, as he suspended diary-keeping until the end of the year after his son's death on November 4. Tsarevitch Alexei's arrival coincided with difficult times: the Habsburg Monarchy was confronting the Ottoman forces in the east, Spain would invade Habsburg Sardinia in 1717, and Russian troops were stationed within the Empire in the Duchy of Mecklenburg. Moreover, at the end of 1718, the irreconcilable opponent Charles XII of Sweden, who had fought bitterly to the end to maintain Sweden's supremacy in the Baltic region, was shot dead during the siege of the Norwegian town of Frederikshalds. Charles hid his brother-in-law, first in the Habsburg monarchy in Tyrol (until May 1717), and then Naples (14 August 1717: «negotiations, minister Moscow with me, from tsar, wants son, knows where is, delicate, considering what; Althann not seeing, very sorry, his opinion»). Peter's envoys finally discovered the Russian prince and convinced him to return to Russia, where he and his supporters faced trial and Alexei eventually died in prison in 1718 after renouncing his claim to the throne⁴⁷.

Emperor Charles VI was thus involved in Russian affairs for family reasons. On January 27, 1720, he referred to the tsar's approach to him, as well as to the clarification of the Holstein question. The engagement of Karl Friedrich of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf (1700-1739), who had resided in Russia since 1721, and Peter's daughter Anna took place in St. Petersburg on June 1, 1725, after the latter had renounced his claims to the throne. Tsar Peter had died only a few months earlier on February 8. Russian politics sought the restitution of Schleswig and thus interfered in imperial affairs, not least because of the kinship delete⁴⁸. In any case, the affairs *in nordicis* determined the conferences in Vienna in addition to the Quadruple Alliance and its implementation⁴⁹. Should one enter into an alliance with the tsar, as suggested by imperial vice-chancellor Schönborn; or should one take action

1720, the duke personally stayed in Vienna for several months (Aretin, 2005: 256-260; Mediger, 1967; Pilss, 1949: 131-144).

47. On these events see the contributions in Schwarcz, 2019.

48. The Holstein question brought Russia into an antagonism with England after the peace treaty with Sweden. On the other hand, had guaranteed Denmark the duchy that had fallen to it (Black, 2002: 114-118; Dhondt, 2015a: 274-275; Leitsch, 1958: 38, 44-46, 53-54, 66-72).

49. For the Nordic War and its influence on the Empire, for instance Aretin, 2005: 255-262; Black, 2002: 107-114; Duchhardt, 1997a: 237-258; Hantsch, 1929: 208-238; Kalisch and Gierowski, 1962; Pilss, 1949; Wittram, 1964: v. 1, 191-361; v. 2, 221-345, 406-474.

against him, which the conference in Vienna advised against. It was hoped that the Brunswick Congress would be revived to clarify these issues (Braubach, 1965: 98; Pilss, 1949: 186-188, 190, 194-198). The Peace of Nystad was finally concluded between Sweden and Russia on September 10 and August 28, 1721, respectively. The emperor noted, on October 2, a certain disgruntlement of England: «dispatches, England letter, angry, peace Moscow Sweden, all look bad, delicate, serious, wait and see.» In fact, a possible alliance between the emperor and the tsar was not only under discussion in Vienna (Hantsch, 1929: 273-274; Leitsch, 1958; Seitschek, 2018: 408-414). England-Hanover's opposition in the religious conflict, as well as in matters relating to the Ostend Company, caused the imperial advisors «not to simply reject the offer of George's bitterest enemy» (Leitsch, 1958: 48). News of Russia's possible contacts with Prince Rákóczi in 1724 led only to a brief disgruntlement after their clarification, nonetheless the concern of a possible alliance between the Tsarist Empire and the Hungarian opposition remained (Leitsch, 1958: 49, 51-56)⁵⁰. Peter's death on February 8 1725 was noted (March 1, 1725): «Schönborn, minister, message Tsar dead, consequences awaiting, young one helping». Although Alexei, son of Tsar Peter, had died in 1718, probably through his father's actions, Alexei's son was still alive and therefore had rights of inheritance. On March 3, Schönborn instructed the imperial diplomat Hochholzer to search with utmost secrecy for a possible last will of Peter⁵¹. Because of the sensitive reactions of the Russian court and concerns about possible disadvantages for the imperial nephew, Vienna accepted Catherine I's succession and sought to avoid any resulting diplomatic conflicts as much as possible. Despite, or perhaps because of, the efforts to reach a settlement with Spain, Moscow remained important (April 5): «nb Moscow dispatching, under hand see how little one will help». Thus, secret support for the nephew may have continued to be considered by the emperor, although he soon decided on a passive wait-and-see approach. Even after the conclusion of the peace with Spain, the north and Russia were not forgotten, which they wanted to win for an alliance⁵². In the end, the imperial court sought a broad alliance in order to assert its own interests and to escape English influence. The emperor joined the Russo-Swedish alliance in April 1726, not least in order to bind Sweden to the imperial court, to a certain extent at least, since it was not interested in joining the Peace of Vienna and thus obviously taking sides against England⁵³. In fact, in the treaty signed in Vienna

50. Already during the War of the Spanish Succession there were relations between the Hungarian rebels and Russia, which fuelled distrust in Vienna (Roider, 1982: 32-33). To his exile Koekenyesdi de Vetes, 1855; Tóth, 2011. To Rákóczi in short most recently Soós, 2021: 710-717.

51. Leitsch, 1958: 58. To Katharina I. for instance Hughes, 2004.

52. June 28, 1725: «dispatches, negotien, much, especially because of Moscow like to bring in, all yes, also Portugal».

53. On these negotiations in detail Leitsch, 1958: 33, 49-91.

on August 6, 1726, Russia recognized the Pragmatic Sanction and mutual troop assistance was assured (Köster, 1986; Leitsch, 1958).

4. FAMILY BUSINESS AND BALANCE OF POWER

Ruling in the early modern period also meant securing and expanding the influence of one's own dynasty. In a dynastic Europe, the question of succession continued to smoulder, especially among the ruling dynasties of the Habsburgs and Bourbons, which were related by numerous marriages. In the middle of the 17th century, the lack of heirs in Paris and Madrid and the organization of the government until the age of majority were the primary concerns⁵⁴. Charles's very name already marked out his path to Spain, where his sickly godfather Charles II ruled at the time (León, 2003: 22; Seitschek, et al., 2011: 10). The *Pactum mutuae successionis* and Leopold's and his brother's Joseph's renunciation of their claims to the Spanish monarchy (1703) in favour of Charles signaled a dynastic division of labour. If one thinks of the family treaties between Charles V and his brother Ferdinand (e.g., 1522 Worms), such agreements had tradition as they did in other leading dynasties of the Empire. Finally, the Bourbons in Paris acted in a comparable manner when they accepted the testamentary will of the late Charles II of Spain in favour of Philip (V) a little earlier (Albareda, 2002; Kamen, 2000: 14-17; León, 2003, 39-44). At the end of August, in the presence of Emperor Leopold and Joseph, Charles was declared king of Spain in Vienna (most recently Kalmár, 2021). The Pactum also included a reciprocal succession in the event of the extinction of one of the two branches of the family in Madrid or Vienna, thus preserving the Habsburg claims to power. The lack of an heir in Vienna was hence also discussed in the correspondence between Charles and count Wratislaw. Wratislaw referred in letters to the fact that no male heir was to be expected in Vienna and that Joseph himself had not yet had smallpox. The count therefore recommended an imminent marriage of the young Habsburg prince. Wratislaw and the Spanish pretender to the throne exchanged ideas about possible candidates in their correspondence. At first, the archduke was unhappy about the proceedings (December 15/16, 1706): «As for you touching the point of marriage, the best soup has been spilled, God forgive the one who did it; basta». And more:

the W [Wolfenbüttel] heard all relations yet quite favourable, have also seen two portraits, which are not the prettiest but still beautiful. But a big matter in these

54. Louis XIV was born in 1638, the sickly Charles II in 1661. Louis XIII died in 1643, and after the death of Philip IV in 1665 a council of regency took over the government (León, 2003, 15-22). Leopold I succeeded his father in 1657/1658, his first son Joseph was not born until 1678. On Spain García García and Álvarez-Ossorio Alvaríño, 2015; Storrs, 2006.

lands is the religion and do not know how it will be interpreted and is hard to resolve without proper news and information, because the two portraits do not appear to much, or even at all, look alike⁵⁵.

Elisabeth Christine was then indeed chosen as the future Spanish queen, even though there were concerns about the necessary conversion and the opinion of the future Spanish Catholic subjects about it. After her conversion in Bamberg (May 1, 1707; Peper, 2010), the wedding took place *per procuram* in Vienna and the departure for Spain could then occur. They regularly exchanged letters, as the diaries of Charles prove (Seitschek, 2018: 128). In July 1708, the future queen's ship anchored off the coast of Catalonia (Koch, 2004; Körper, 1975; León, 2007). The young king himself rode out to see her even before her official entry into Barcelona, and in his notes he showed himself pleased with the consort (28 July 1708: «else riding to Mataro, queen so beautiful, very content»). Shortly after her official arrival in Barcelona, Charles already had hopes for a pregnancy (6 August 1708): «wife ill, vomiting, talking, hope pregnant, talking Garelli»⁵⁶. However, the couple's first child was not to be born until 1716 in Vienna (Leopold Johannes).

As pleased as Charles was about the birth of his son, the greater was his grief after the early death of the son at the beginning of November. On the day of the birth Charles VI noted (April 13, 1716): «empress after hard going happily giving birth to a perfectly strong son, me antecammer sub galla, jubilation, joy indescribable, city»⁵⁷. When the son became seriously ill, the empress was already known to be pregnant again, so she stayed away from the sickbed and the imperial couple did not attend the infant's funeral, in accordance with the ceremonial model⁵⁸. On the day of Leopold Johannes's death, 4 November 1716, he wrote:

... meal; wife, bed, caution because of pregnancy; end, my first child Leopold (...) angel, God has taken home at (-) in the afternoon, very sad, fiat voluntas Dei; nothing. Born April 13, 6 months and 22 days old, angel (...) above us, praying but sad; nothing. From this day on until the end of the year I have forgotten everything.

55. Arneth, 1856: 27. About succession and a future bride for instance Arneth, 1856: 20 (Wratisslaw August 9, 1705), 21-22, 24 (Wratisslaw January 26, 1706), 27, 29-30 (Charles December 15/16, 1706), 32 (Wratisslaw December 16, 1706), 34-35 (Wratisslaw March 16, 1707), 42 (Charles July 17 1707) etc.

56. And later (January 19, 1715): «wife else thinks pregnant».

57. About the pregnancies and the related worries of the emperor Seitschek, 2020a: 360-364; Seitschek, 2018: 137-140.

58. To the funeral HHStA, ZA Prot. 9 (1716), fol. 231v-241r. On the concern for the pregnancy, for example, the note of the emperor on the day of death (November 4).

Maria Theresa was born on 13 May 1717, only half a year after Leopold's passing: «at half past 4 message empress unwell, me arriving at Vienna, at 6 empress bad, everything fortunate, at 7 and 20 minutes a daughter Maria Teresia Walburgis Christina born, Empress, child well, me a meal in public, great joy because of dead son, thanks to God, gala, afternoon baptism». Concern for the children, as well as the memory of the deceased family members, is constantly evident in the diaries, despite their brevity⁵⁹. An interesting document for educational matters is a handwritten letter from Charles at the end of his Inner-Austrian journey to his younger daughters who had remained in Vienna. In it, he addressed his elder daughter Maria Anna (1718-1744), whose virtuous, God-fearing and obedient behaviour was reported to him from all quarters. The father was particularly pleased about the health of the daughters and their «gaining weight all the while». Neither did Charles forget his younger daughter Amalia.

Tell your sister from me too, I heard that she is quite well and clever, which pleases me very much, should now be tall and no longer a child, diligent and devout, pray especially for papa, be obedient, learn well, mannerly and keep herself up straight.

She should not become angry and she should heed the instructions of the «Fels» (Maria Elisabeth, countess Colonna of Fels) and the chamber staff (*Kammerleute*), «so she will become my dear Amalerl». At any rate nicknames like *Mariandl*, *Amalerl* or *papa* illustrate the cordial tone within the family. In the case of both, Charles referred to their writing activities. Regarding Maria Anna, he noted right at the beginning: «Your letter and diligence in writing is very dear to me». He tells Amalia that she should «also write to him once in her own style»⁶⁰.

Charles VI had several sisters: one sister, Queen Maria Anna (1683-1754) was married to King John V of Portugal (1689-1750) and there are scattered worried comments about his sister in the diaries. March 10, 1725: «Vasquez from Portugal, there bad, king fool, living rampant, nb my sister sorrow, little help». Maria Elisabeth and Maria Magdalena initially remained in Vienna despite repeatedly debating different projects⁶¹. They were regularly mentioned in the *Wienerischen Diarium*,

59. April 18, 1736: «preparing, devotions, grievous, nb Amalia child anniversary, commending to God, fiat voluntas, invoking, praying, mass.» A few days earlier, he had referred to his dead son (April 13, 1736).

60. Archives of the Ursulines of the Roman Union, Monastery Archives Vienna, 8. selects, 8.1. letters, private letters of Charles VI.: «Brif bey den meer dem 12ten 7ber 1728». I am very grateful to Nora Pär, who brought this letter to my attention in the Ursuline Archives.

61. On considerations of possible marriages of Mary Magdalene briefly Hertel, 2014: 193-194. A possible Portugues marriage of Maria Magdalena is discussed by Charles in 1709 (Arneth, 1856: 103, February 11, 1710; later on he mentions Maria Elisabeth, *ibidem*: 105). Possible marriages in association with the peace efforts were then a frequent topic in the

the twice-weekly newspaper of the royal city. Until the death of their mother Eleonora Magdalena in early 1720, for example, they accompanied her to church or other festivities. Later they regularly appeared in the entourage of the imperial family⁶². On her birthday, Charles VI referred to Maria Elisabeth only briefly as «*erz(herzogin) Lis*» (December 13, 1720). In 1732 and 1736, the emperor referred to Mary Magdalene on her birthday (March 26, 1732): «10 1/2 archduchess Madl gala, congratulations»⁶³. Leopold's daughters were well educated, including learning several foreign languages (Hertel, 2014: 180-193; Kalmár, 1988: 55-78, 86-91; Weiss, 2008: 64-77, 81-124).

Indeed, Maria Elisabeth was to perform an important role in government after 1725. Already with the annexation of the former Spanish Netherlands to the Habsburg monarchy, a representative from the imperial family was desired there. In fact, this role was taken over from 1716 by the meritorious commander Prince Eugene, whose military and then political duties, however, did not allow him to leave Vienna. From 1716 onward, the Marquis de Prié (Hertel, 2014: 65-69; Van Gelder, 2016: 331-336; Zedinger, 2000: 140-141), who was increasingly suffering from ill health, represented him there, coming into conflict with the aristocratic elites, although he was supported by Prince Eugene and, in his function as chairman of the Council of State, by Charles VI. (Van Gelder, 2016: 196-201, 331-336)⁶⁴.

correspondence with Wratistaw (f.i. *ibidem*: 181, Charles July 12, 1711; 193-194, marriage to duke of Modena, Charles July 31, 1711; or Savoy 208, Wratistaw, August 5, 1711; 212, Wratistaw August 31, 1711). During the War of the Spanish Succession, Charles discussed in his correspondence with Wratistaw the possible role of his mother as governor in Italy too (Naples; Arneth, 1856: 40-41, Wratistaw May 2, 1707; 44-45, Charles July 17, 1707), critically commenting on Maria Elisabeth as a possible other candidate too (Charles November 8, 1707): «The Archduchess Elisabeth is my dear sister, has the virtues and qualities that are known, but it is not enough to pray the rosary and listen to masses if one has not the slightest light in the government and is the case and matter like with my mother. In addition, as you well see that a single woman in a country that always demands to have its own king, not to approve and in a word now the *guberno* must be in resolute men's hands and not with scrupulous and good women» (*Ibidem*: 55). In any case, the possibility remained, for instance in Spain itself (Arneth, 1856: 183, Charles June 24, 1711; 205, Charles July 31, 1711).

62. To the *Diarium* Duchkowitsch, 1978; Gestrich, 1994; Seitschek, 2011. Two themed issues have recently been published on the *Wienerischen Diarium* in *Wiener Geschichtsblättern*, 74/(2 and 3), 2019. In the period between 1720 and 1725 they are mentioned in the newspaper in almost 1300 cases (Seitschek, 2018: 162).

63. *Madl* is therefore also likely to be a nickname of his younger sister, if it is not a reduction of the actual name Maria Magdalena.

64. Charles VI was already in contact with Prié during the War of the Spanish Succession, when Prié represented Habsburg interests in Rome (e.g. 15 January 1709): «*junta cabinet where Moles at it because of Rome, reading all letters from Prie and instruction, Moles trying much, (...) after instruction Prie how adjusting, all way close, indeed something, afterwards how order to Prie, Saturday sending*». The appointment of the prince is not least evident in the diary

The dissatisfaction of the Dutch nobility was prompted not least by an intrigue against Prince Eugene in Vienna in 1719/1720, headed most prominently by count Bonneval⁶⁵. If the confidence in the prince was increasingly affected, the criticism against his representative in Brussels did not cease neither. The emperor noted, for example (August 27, 1724): «all morning much, Prince Eugene about Netherlands, handing me a memorandum, obtaining funds, seeing an end, change, keeping prince but salvaging land, a lot.» The increasing difficulties in establishing the Ostend Company, of which Prince Eugene had been quite critical due to the imperial privilege, as well as continuing conflicts in implementing administrative reforms, finally led to Eugene's resignation in November 1724 and to de Prié's overthrow; he tried in Vienna to defend himself but died in 1726. Charles VI (November 14, 1724): «prince here, renouncing Netherlands, but feeling firm, sister, Daun». Despite these events, Prince Eugene retained the confidence of the emperor (January 15, 1725): «Prince Eugene better this way, speaking freely much»⁶⁶. Field Marshal Wirich Philipp Lorenz count Daun (1669-1741) was entrusted with the government on an interim basis (Van Gelder, 2016: 343-364). Maria Elisabeth was appointed as governor, thus following a long tradition of Habsburg female governors. In any case Charles's intuition that he might never see his sister again was to prove correct (September 4, 1725):

... because of Archduchess Elisabeth journey, preparing, talking much, aulic chancellor, else audience, also with archduchess herself, much, after talking, taking leave, me, her, quite saddened, dear sister, perhaps never seeing again, nb; meal; afternoon again taking leave, me quite saddened, finally she ¾ on 4 with God's blessing in Netherlands away; me afterwards with wife, much, she also weeping.

The Habsburg monarchy and its lands continued to be an important factor in European equilibrium politics, not least because of Charles's role as Holy Roman Emperor. In particular, the claims of Elisabeth Farnese, wife of Philip V, and her children in Italy caused unrest in the councils of Madrid, Vienna and thus Europe.

notes (for instance March 13, 1715: «talking with Althann a lot, heart, dear, because of prince Netherlands, don't want to see whom vice and he himself also because foreign»).

65. Claude Alexandre count Bonneval (1675-1747) had participated in the conquest of Belgrade in 1717, his later involvement in an intrigue against Prince Eugene and his conviction after its discovery led him to flee to the Ottoman Empire and to convert as Ahmed Pasha (1729). Charles had mitigated the death sentence to one year imprisonment in Brno. He wrote in his diaries (26. Dezember): «also because of Bonneval, prince dishonor, how to make». As Ahmed Pasha, Bonneval initiated reforms in the outmoded Ottoman military system (Benedikt, 1959; Braubach, 1965: 184-215; Stockinger, 2008).

66. In any case, the prince was not unhappy with his resignation (December 1724, 5): «prince here because of vicar Italy, else much, open heart, talking, well, satisfied because of Netherlands, archduchess too». Seitschek, 2018: 425-437.

The latent conflict briefly erupted with Spain's attack on Sardinia and Sicily. The recognition of the Farnese claims were then part of the Quadruple Alliance agreements, which provided for the succession of the infant Carlos in Parma and Piacenza and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in the event of the extinction of the ruling lines. This implementation, in the form of an *enfeoffment* (*Eventualbelehnung*) by the emperor, as well as possible troop deployments, remained a subject of discussion. In Italy, the family and political interests of the Spanish royal couple met with Habsburg and imperial claims as feudal overlord. The war of the Quadruple Alliance, the peace provisions in detail, the years of negotiations for their implementation, as well as the diplomatic skirmishes surrounding the start of the congress planned for this purpose in Cambrai, the rapprochement of France and England with Spain in 1721, changes of government and deaths, such as of the regent of France in 1723 or of the Spanish King Louis in 1724, as well as the increasing isolation of Vienna are not of immediate interest here, however individual perceptions of the emperor in this regard are, not least because they can also illustrate the closeness of Perlas Marquis of Rialp to the emperor (see table 1). On the Spanish side, it was Johann Wilhelm of Ripperda (1680/1682-1737) who was to lead the negotiations and who left, incognito, for Vienna with instructions in November. His arrival was also noted by the emperor, who immediately consulted his advisors (January 29, 1725): «afterwards nb aulic chancellor that Ripperda, Holl(and), from Spain, commission peace negotiating, secret arrival, delicate, yet see, not bad, make England jealous, prince writing, further reflection, important, see» (to this Dhondt, 2011; Dhondt, 2015a; Koopmans, 2001; León, 2003: 317-341; Mur Raurell, 2011; Seitschek, 2018: 374-404).

The emperor's entries clearly show the influence of the aulic chancellor count Sinzendorf and the Spanish universal secretary Vilana-Perlas (1663-1741; Albareda, 2008: 332-339; Cota, 2016; León, 1995; León, s.d.; Lluch, 2000; Quirós, 2017: 58-60; Sardiné, 2013; Seitschek, 2018: 242-247). Their mentions in the emperor's diaries increase significantly during the negotiation period (table 1); the imperial vice-chancellor Schönborn, otherwise, is not mentioned by name until the day of signing. Aulic chancellor Philipp Ludwig count Sinzendorf (1671-1744) could in any case look back on a long career, which led him, among other things, as a diplomat to the court of King Louis XIV. Lieselotte of the Palatinate, wife of Philip of Orleans, drew an unflattering picture of him in her letters (Orleans, 1789: 47-48, letter from November 16, 1717). Again and again, reference is also made to the latter's willing acceptance of (monetary) gifts⁶⁷. Sinzendorf succeeded Seilern as aulic chancellor in 1715, and although he suffered losses of authority due to restructuring within

67. Saint-Saphorin, a diplomat in English service, referred to this. Mentioned by Gehling, 1964: 151.

the chancellery, he succeeded in pushing back the influence of the imperial vice-chancellor Schönborn. He discussed imperial matters with the emperor (December 2, 1723): «Aulic chancellor, empire (because of election, Bavaria)» or talked about Schönborn himself (January 31, 1724: «nb aulic chancellor because of Schönborn, otherwise powerful, much»). At times he supported English policy or approached the «Spaniards» at court in the run-up to the Spanish Peace. Braubach (1965: 85) paints this changeable picture of the chancellor:

There was Sinzendorf, clever and experienced, but of astonishing weakness [...] a selfish opportunist, always anxious to keep the favour of the emperor, who was more favourable to him than to his colleagues, but all the while considerate of the influential people around him, therefore often ready to advocate a policy that did not correspond at all to his actual opinion⁶⁸.

In fact, the emperor was also critical of his aulic chancellor. In his notes, he criticized his verbosity (Backerra, 2018: 131). In the 1720s, Sinzendorf succeeded in rising to become one of the most influential people at court, not least because of his affiliation with the Spanish group and Althann. The marriage of his daughter Maria Josepha countess Sinzendorf with the son of Perlas Marquis of Rialp, and the fact that his son Johann Wilhelm was the only member of the Spanish Council who came from the nobility in the hereditary lands, are an expression of this closeness (Pečar, 2003: 55, 86-87, 90). Foreign diplomats also noted the increase in power of the aulic chancellor after the death of Althann, who, according to St. Saphorin, met the emperor two or three times a day. Ripperda described him as the mouth of the emperor («la boca del emperador»; Mur Raurell, 1, 2011: 256. See Gehling, 1964: 72-74). The failure of the Spanish alliance as well as of the negotiations with France saw Sinzendorf's position weaken, albeit while personally representing the interests of the emperor at the congress of Soissons; this was all the more evident as Bartenstein's star was rising (Backerra, 2018: 127, 131-132; Braubach, 1965: 292-310; Pečar, 2003: 89-91; Seitschek, 2018: 265-267; for the congress of Soissons Lingens, 1991).

Besides the Italian claims of the Spanish queen, other difficult questions presented, for example the form of the Spanish king's renunciation of the former Spanish territories in Europe, and matters regarding the Order of the Fleece, as also illustrated by entries in the diaries (e.g., Feb. 19, 1725: «Aulic chancellor because of Spain, see, Toison alone, notabene not yield, difficult for me, patience, God, much»; see Quirós, 2021). The insulting return to Madrid of the Spanish Infanta once promised to Louis XV after the death of the regent changed the situation. Charles (April 10, 1725): «Message France, Spain angry all, duchess send back like

68. To the opinion of the English diplomat Waldgrave, see Backerra, 2018: 131.

war declaration, paying attention, negotia, profit, much reasoning»⁶⁹. Louis XV was to marry Maria Leszczyńska (1703-1768). Charles's notes make it clear that he hoped to gain advantages from this diplomatic scandal and that the Spanish royal couple was incensed⁷⁰. Unsurprisingly, the notes document the struggles towards reconciliation of the negotiating points until the very end. At the time of the peace treaty, it was primarily the negotiation of a possible marriage between the infantes and the archduchesses that consumed time, even if this was, initially, not seriously pursued by Vienna (f.i. 29. April: «much Perlas, ordinari, also because of Spain, well end, because of marriage not postponing, waiting, afterward time»)⁷¹.

The peace of 1725 with Spain was built on the foundations of the Quadruple Alliance, not least in the hopes and expectation of winning over the English and French allies. The views of England and France become clear in the emperor's entries, as do the ever-changing moods (April 23): «[Prince Eugene] afterwards with, see, Sinzendorf because of treaty Spain, delicate, yet yes marriage, generally, France not joining, England, considering, make advantage, yes, serious because of Catalonia». In any case, the notes suggest the communication of peace and concern for its acceptance by the other European powers, especially England. Already on May 1, the emperor noted: «waiting for Perlas, yesterday all approving, even all enemies, fortunate peace, especially without England, attention to it». Here, Perlas appears once again and due to his function and his trustworthiness for the emperor, he was probably the most important contact person in the context of the negotiations. The reference to Schönborn makes it clear that the emperor hoped for recognition and probably also support from the Empire. Bavaria, for example, joined the alliance and Prussia also drew closer to Vienna (treaties of Wusterhausen and Berlin in 1726 and 1728, respectively), not least because of the Russian alliance with the emperor⁷². France at first also seemed satisfied, which a courier from Cambrai appeared to confirm (May 26): «Letter France, courier, peace, Camerick, much, all praise, aprobaton, Deo laus». In any case, Charles's notes confirm Braubach's (1965: 222) assessment:

69. To this episode briefly Horowski, 2018: 459-519.

70. March 27, 1725: «Court, message France, little queen in Spain send back, nb careful»; April 2: «France big change Spain, careful, can benefit».

71. Compare April 27, 1725: «aulic chancellor, peace Spain, Ripperda, right, comerci all well too, peace honest, signed in 4 days, praise God, marriage still privati, (...), court, thank, now benefitting, put in place»; April 28, 1725: «Prince Eugene here because of Spain, careful, time, marriage what Spain, otherwise well, approving, put troops in place, well, much talk».

72. On the diplomatic efforts for recognition with regard to the imperial notes Seitschek, 2018: 396-404. For the treaties see Aretin, 2005: 319-321; Braubach, 1965: 281-311. To the politics of the other powers for instance Black, 2014; Israel, pb 1998: 959-1037; Kamen, 2000; Storrs, 2016.

Hence the surprising turn of Austrian policy in 1725 was not due to Eugene or to decisions of the conference, but rather to decisions which Charles VI had reached together with Perlas and Sinzendorf.

Ultimately, and for various reasons, the peace agreement caused Europe to split into two alliance systems and brought Madrid and Vienna closer together, for example by making marriage arrangements more concrete⁷³. Charles noted (October 1, 1725): «Prince Eugene much talking because of negotia here, world, careful, England, serious, there also considering, Spain marriage careful, Moscow especially far». However, it was precisely the question of future marriages which Saint-Saphorin hoped would break the alliance. He had been aware of further secret negotiations in this matter since early June. He advised stopping the Spanish silver fleet, which the English fleet succeeded, at least temporarily, in doing. With the lack of funds for Vienna, the armaments of the imperial army were bound to fail and at the same time Spain was disappointed because of the lack of military support (Gehling, 1964: 212-242)⁷⁴.

Although Ripperda had negotiated the rapprochement, he increasingly fell under a negative light in Vienna. The emperor complained about his chattiness (May 5, 1725: «continues jabbering»). With the arrival of the French ambassador, the Spanish representative left the residential city. Charles considered Ripperda's departure immediately before the French ambassador arrived as *good* (November 7, 1725), probably because it helped to avoid the problems of ceremonial difference which it may have prompted. The Dutchman Ripperda returned to Madrid, where he was initially able to convert his success into an increase in status as well as influence as first minister with far-reaching powers at court, but soon fell out of favour, was captured and, on escaping, fled. His turning to England, as well as his role as a not-always-entirely-reliable informant on the peace between Vienna and Madrid. A pawn, he was not long secure in his position and he had to return to the Netherlands. Eventually he left for Morocco, where he died in disgrace, not least after military failures against Spain. Like Bonneval, several contemporary printed

73. May 14: «Aulic chancellor as yesterday with Perlas, Starhemberg also; (...); afternoon aulic chancellor because of Ripperda, much because of England, angry, careful, not Gibraltar, much moderating, because of marriage old, even delicate, nb careful, Sinzendorf, unhurriedly»; June 28, 1725: «Aulic chancellor because of Ripperda here, marriage persistent, unhurriedly, like his article impossible, unhurriedly»; 5. November: «signing treaty, nb marriage Spain». On the marriage matter in the diaries in more detail Seitschek, 2018: 186-190.

74. In fact, a lack of funds was supposed to hamper Vienna's armament preparations. Cf. on the planning after the peace treaties and military armaments as well as the demand for the funds by the imperial court and the failure of the silver fleet to arrive in time Mecenseffy, 1934: 43-55, 77-102; Mur Raurell, 2011: v. 1, 277-280.

works are dedicated to his adventurous life. Ripperda's biography also embodies the figure of adventure, which confronts us in several actual and fictional *memoirs*⁷⁵.

However, the alliance with Spain remained intact. The imperial ambassador Josef Lothar count Königsegg-Rothenfels was able to exercise an influential position in Madrid from the beginning of 1726. Relations with England remained strained (December 5): «Aulic chancellor because of England, Spain, careful, profiting, much, reading letter». It is no coincidence that the pretender appears several times in the emperor's notes of 1725, probably as a possible pawn against England. Ultimately, the policy moved away from the maritime powers. The reference to Holland and the Netherlands in the notes may also indicate the continuing dissatisfaction over the Barrier Treaty⁷⁶. As late as 1727, Charles ordered the imperial diplomat in Holland Karl Ferdinand count Königsegg-Erps to print and distribute 500 copies of the treaty text to prove the defensive nature against rumours to the contrary (Mur Raurell, 2011: v. 1, 223). In these years, the European powers came dangerously close to a new war, as could be seen with events around the suspension of the Ostend Company in 1727 (Aretin, 2005: 299-317; Backerra, 2018; Braubach, 1965: 281-291; Gehling, 1964: 229-274; Hochedlinger, 2003: 197-202; Mecenseffy, 1934: 37-55, 77-135).

Not least because of the failure of the marriage and the political disappointment on both sides, the Peace of Vienna failed. The increasing diplomatic difficulties are tangible in the imperial notes (February 18, 1728): «forgotten these days, nothing special, Spain bad, France, so still congress, serious, with prince Eugene, otherwise much». Spain united with its opponents in 1729 in the Treaty of Seville (November 9, 1729), thereby isolating the imperial court (Auer, 1969; Braubach, 1965: 291-311; León, 2003: 317-342). Considering their developments, Leopold Auer concludes that: «Charles VI's foreign policy was not predominantly guided by pragmatic considerations, as was the case with Louis XIV, for example, but it often took legal positions without regard to their enforceability» (translated from Auer, 2020: 43).

5. SECURING SUCCESSION AND TERRITORIAL LOSSES

Since Poland was an elective monarchy, Augustus the Strong of Saxony could not determine his succession before his death. With his death in Warsaw in 1733, the already fragile European balance tipped. Vienna decided to support the candidacy

75. For instance Massuet, 1739 (dedicated to Bonneval!). To his fall and escape Gehling, 1964: 201, 212-240; Mecenseffy, 1936: 43-55; Mur Raurell, 2011: v. 1, 90-94, 260-265, 281-283.

76. November 23, 1725: «dispatches, archduchess, because of England, Holland, Netherlands, careful, Perlas, aulic chancellor, much». To the pretender and Jacobites for instance Corp, 2011; Szechi, 1994.

of Augustus's son and now Saxon Elector Frederick Augustus II. (1696-1763), who had been married to the archduchess Maria Josepha since 1719 and had recognized the Pragmatic Sanction. Father and son had converted to Catholicism, not least in expectation of the Polish royal crown. Louis XV, in turn, supported the claims of his father-in-law Stanislaus Leszczyński (1677-1766) who had already been elected king in the first years of the Nordic war. In reality, the Polish War of Succession was more about the future role of Lorraine and the emperor's designated son-in-law Francis Stephen, as well as the Habsburg possessions in Italy. If the war in Poland proceeded favourably, not least thanks to Russian assistance, then Lorraine, Tuscany, Parma, Milan and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily could be occupied by French, Spanish and Piedmontese troops. The war therefore provided an occasion to resolve territorial issues that had been lingering since the War of the Spanish Succession. Since the Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy had to act without the support of their allies, especially England, peace was inevitable after the defeats in Italy. The great transfer of territories began. The Spanish infante Charles received Naples and Sicily; in return, Parma and Piacenza fell to Charles VI. Francis Stephen of Lorraine was to relinquish his ancestral land of Lorraine, but was compensated with the prospect of succession to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany after the death of the last Medici. By forfeiting Lorraine, Francis Stephen stood to lose his status as sovereign as long as the duke of Tuscany was alive. The conflict is illustrated in an entry on 2 March 1736:

... afternoon note Partenstein about duke, wants to be sovereign, do nothing, nb aulic chancellor carefully, nb his men considering peace bad, ending, afterwards empress, telling duke mad, focus on sovereign otherwise nothing, dead duke, nb coming by personally, [duke] talking entirely mad, me being serious, nice, talking about what to do, one house, damaging himself, progress of peace, concluding etc., I strong, remaining so, afterwards Partenstein arriving, long, his answer about talk, tomorrow leaving, otherwise bad, talking.

The issue of the cession was therefore by no means settled with the marriage of the Duke of Lorraine to Maria Theresa on February 12, 1736. Charles obviously tried to persuade him to agree to the peace treaty with references to the interests of the common house. In any case, the road from the preliminary peace in October 1735 to the publication of the Peace of Vienna in November 1738 was long. In particular, the loss of status as sovereign ruler made it difficult for Francis Stephen to renounce it; the death of the last Medici in July 1737 solved Francis Stephen's problem. That questions of rank were important to the young couple is illustrated not least by the fact that Maria Theresa herself designated her husband as co-regent as heiress of the Habsburg monarchy (on the role as co-regents not least due to rank issues Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 69-70, 150-157; Zedinger, 2008: 79-95). Although the southern Italian kingdoms, which were important not least for the

question of building a fleet, had been lost, the Habsburg influence in the north of the peninsula could at least be expanded. The emperor's grip on Italy at the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession continued into the second half of the 19th century, not least through the promotion of a particular marriage policy (to Italy and Habsburg rule for instance Quirós, 2017; Benedikt, 1927; Gallo, 1994 and 1996; Schnettger and Verga, 2006).

In the negotiations between the emperor and Francis Stephen, the name of Johann Christoph of Bartenstein (1689-1767) appears several times (table 1)⁷⁷. The convert had quickly won the emperor's trust and established a career at the Viennese court, with his role as minute-taker of the Privy Conference, the closest imperial advisory body, illustrating the confidence placed in him. After 1732, Charles VI also developed a lively correspondence with his diplomat in London through Bartenstein, separate from the official channels⁷⁸. Against the background of Charles's extensive correspondence, this channel through Bartenstein to London does not seem to be 'new' for Charles's lively writing activity. The question remains, whether the correspondence with London with the important topics concerning the recognition of the dynastic succession and a possible reconciliation between Hanover and Berlin was a particular possibility for Bartenstein to gain the emperor's trust during these years, not unlike the trust which the Spanish Secretary of State Perlas enjoyed. If one considers the reference to Bartenstein in Emperor Charles VI's notes for the years 1732 and 1736, one notices their comparatively high number and Bartenstein's regular access to the emperor; Charles even showed concern about the advisor's health in personal letters⁷⁹. Envoy reports show a less flattering picture of Bartenstein, which can be explained by his anti-Prussian attitude (Walter, 1951: 26-28).

77. On Bartenstein, see Arneth, 1871; Backerra, 2018: 19-20, 128-133; Braubach, 1953; Hrazky, 1958; Peper and Wallnig, 2009.

78. See Backerra, 2018: 119-121. To Bartenstein *ibidem.* and Hrazky, 1958.

79. Walter, 1951: 24 (translation): «I have heard that you were not well the day before yesterday (which I did not know) with some sore throat and some discomfort. This bothers me more than anything else that can happen unpleasantly, because as long as you are well, I can be sure of a faithful and sincere support in everything, which I otherwise lack». Charles's concern for the well-being of his close confidant Althann has already been addressed; letters from Charles with corresponding content on the state of his health and recommendations to take it easy have also been preserved, for example, to Prince Eugene. For instance Seitschek, 2020b: 306-307.

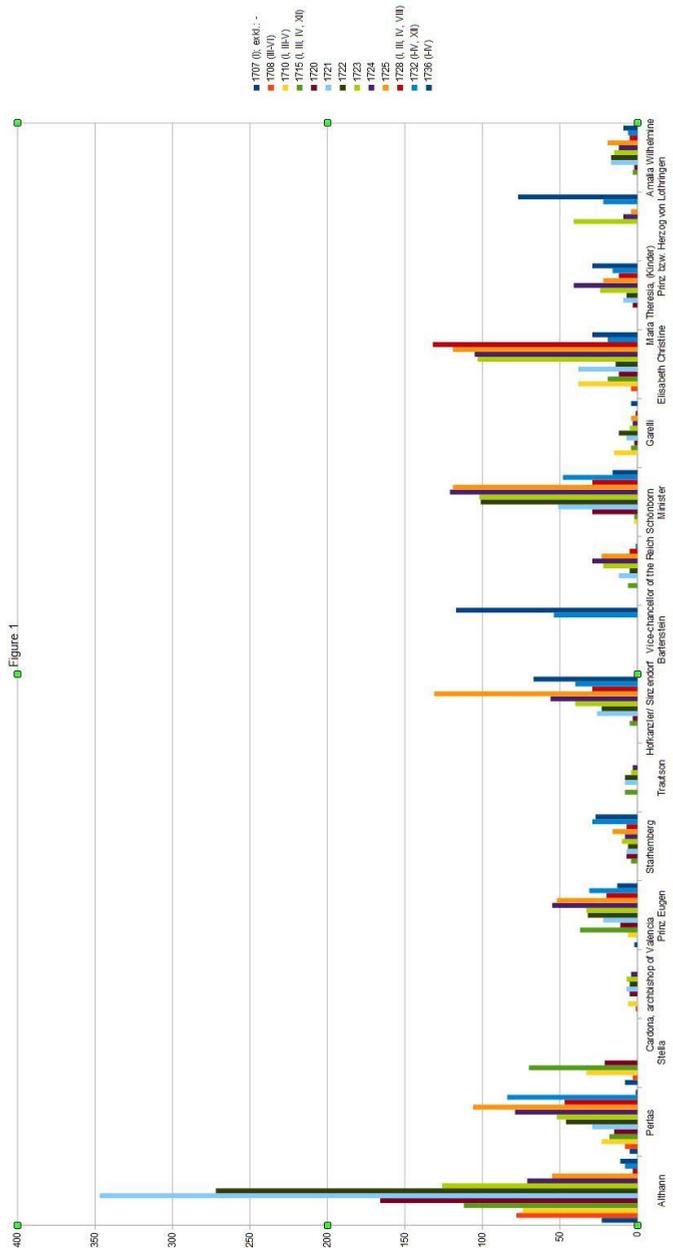


Table 1. Mentions (influence) of personalities of the court in the imperial diaries.

The aforementioned alliance concluded with Russia in 1726 forced participation in another Ottoman war from 1737; Prince Eugene had died in 1736. At the beginning of the conflict the Protestant Friedrich Heinrich of Seckendorff (1673-1763) held supreme command of the imperial army: already in the first phase of the war, the Austrian troops ceded territory after initial successes, which is why Charles VI, after the unfavourable course of the war⁸⁰, nominally appointed his son-in-law Francis Stephen of Lorraine as commander-in-chief; the emperor seemed thoroughly convinced of his son-in-law's military abilities. Francis Stephen fell ill as early as 1738 and returned from the front, only to once again set off for the front for a good period of time (Zedinger, 2008: 96-97). One reason for the failures was the lack of unity with the Russian ally. Count Neipperg, who had been appointed governor of the Banat of Temesvár in 1737, was given far-reaching powers as a negotiator at the peace talks in Belgrade in 1739. In a handwritten letter dated August 11, 1739, the emperor authorized Neipperg to cede Belgrade as well as the territories beyond the Sava and Danube rivers as a last resort (Zedinger, 2008: 97-98). Nevertheless, an unfavourable peace was finally negotiated by Neipperg, which meant the loss of almost all the territories gained by Prince Eugene's campaigns including Belgrade. This was due to the unusual modalities of the agreement, e.g., the imperial negotiator was held captive for eleven days and was therefore cut off from news on the improved diplomatic situation (Regele, 1954; Zedinger, 2008: 96-99). The persons involved bore the consequences: Joseph Lothar of Königsegg-Rothenfels (1673-1751) resigned as president of the Aulic War Council⁸¹, and Neipperg also had to answer for their behaviour. Formerly involved in the education of Francis Stephen of Lorraine in Vienna, Neipperg was rehabilitated after Charles's death (Bremm, 2021: 341-353; Redlich, 1962: 211-225; Rill, 1992: 313-330).

The kingdoms of Naples and Sicily were lost in 1735, as already mentioned (Benedikt, 1927; Gallo, 1994; Garms-Cornides, 1993; Schütze, 2020). Without going into detail about the Two Sicily's importance in the structure of the Habsburg monarchy under Charles VI, we will briefly focus on one of the viceroys who resided in Naples as representative of the king. Aloys Thomas Raimund count Harrach (1669-1742) served as viceroy in Naples from 1728 to 1733. In Vienna, for example, he was part of the Secret Financial Conference, which was responsible for coordinating Habsburg finances. He also played an important role as Lower Austrian land marshal (Godsey, 2018: 197-201). In short, as a member of the 'Spanish' group at court, Harrach enjoyed the confidence of Charles VI and was

80. Seckendorff was imprisoned in Graz, was then to enter Bavarian service after the end of the investigations under Maria Theresa, and was to have acted conciliatorily between the two powers after the eventful course of the war (Peace of Füssen 1745).

81. He was appointed *Obersthofmeister* of Empress Elisabeth Christine.

able to exert influence at the Viennese court. The nobility played an important role not only in the countries of the Habsburg monarchy, for example as fundraisers for the strapped Habsburg treasury (Godsey, 2018; Hyden-Hanscho, 2019), but also as diplomats at the European courts. It is no coincidence that diplomatic missions were accorded certain interested and costly reports printed, especially when they involved extraordinary events. What applied to the European travels of Peter the Great (1698, 1717; Firmin et al., 2017) or the audience of Siam's representatives in Versailles (1686), ultimately also applies to the peace negotiations of Karlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718; Heywood and Parvev, 2020; Ingrao, 2011) as well as the associated legation of Damian Hugo count Virmond (1666-1722). On March 8, 1720, Charles VI noted in connection with the ambassador at the Porte, for example, «Virmond badly behaved», perhaps referring to reports of a rather unfavourable course of count Virmond's mission, although he certainly had successes (Milošević, 2011; Strohmeier, 2013). Less spectacular but more important was the network of correspondence at the European courts carried on by the imperial diplomats, which has already been mentioned. Prince Eugene and Charles VI developed a type of secret diplomacy (Braubach, 1962; Braubach, 1965: 240-262). In more recent discussions, the focus has also been on pairs of brothers or relatives in general, who were diplomatically active and coordinated among themselves. For the Viennese court, for example, reference can be made to the brothers Stephan Wilhelm count Kinsky (Paris, St. Petersburg) and Philipp Joseph count Kinsky (London); or the Harrach family, for England Robinson or Horatio (Paris, The Hague) and Robert Walpole⁸². The importance of the imperial diplomat Seckendorff in Vienna or the influence of the English representative Saint-Saphorin in Vienna has been mentioned several times.

6. DEFENDING THE PRAGMATIC SANCTION

Philipp Ludwig count Sinzendorf, Aloys Thomas Raimund count Harrach, Philipp Joseph count Kinsky (1700-1749), Fridrich count Harrach, imperial vice-chancellor Rudolph Joseph Prince Colloredo (1706-1788), the *Obersthofmeister* Ferdinand Leopold count Herberstein (1695-1744), who already served the archduchess, or the financial expert Gundacker Thomas count Starhemberg (1663-1745; Holl, 1976), who was suggested to her in the emperor's last will formed the advisors of the young heiress alongside count Bartenstein after the death of Charles VI. Szabo points to an age of around 70 years for a majority of

82. To this Backerra, 2018: 111-188. Monographs on diplomatic missions in the sphere of the imperial court, for example Backerra, 2018; Gehling, 1964; Hantsch, 1950; Kuntke, 2007; Pretsch, 1970; Steppan, 2016. In general Müller, 1976.

her ministers. «[When] Maria Theresia ascended the throne in the fall of 1740, the entire Conference presented a picture of creeping senility» (Szabo, 1994: 41). During the marriage negotiations between Maria Theresa and Francis Stephen and the latter's renunciation of Lorraine, Bartenstein played a mediating role that was not always pleasant for the archduchess. If Bartenstein initially offered Maria Theresa his resignation, she soon learned to appreciate his abilities and shared with him the intransigent attitude toward Prussia⁸³. Maria Theresa's complaint about the lack of preparation for her role by her father was formulated in various places, for example in her second memorandum (Walter, 1951: 7). The almost topos-like complaint of a lack of trustworthy and sincere advisors is known not least from Charles VI himself⁸⁴. A decisive declaration or election of Maria Theresa as successor during the lifetime of Charles VI would have been unthinkable⁸⁵, especially since the emperor could not officially abandon the hope of a male heir and, if a grandson had been born before his death, other measures would probably have been taken regarding guardianship⁸⁶. In fact, the longed-for grandson was born barely half a year after the emperor's death in March 1741. Maria Theresa was educated according to the customs of the House of Habsburg (Weiss, 2008). As already mentioned, in a letter to his younger daughters, he was pleased with their progress in writing and reading. During his rule the monarch travelled throughout his lands, not least to receive homage⁸⁷. After phases of ignoring and deliberately avoiding the «inaugural rites» under Leopold and Joseph I, for example, the safeguarding of the succession probably forced Charles VI to hold homage ceremonies as late as 1728 (Inner Austria) and 1732 (Upper Austria)⁸⁸. Such journeys gave the opportunity to present the emperor's oldest daughter Maria Theresa to the estates (for example to Prague in

83. ÖStA, HHStA, Familienurkunden 1902 1740 X 18 (Charles' will). To the beginning of the government with regard to the counsellors summarizing Walter, 1938; Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 70-129; Walter, 1951: espec. 7-38. Francis Stephen, Sinzendorf, the counts Harrach or even Gundacker Count Starhemberg were much more willing to come to an agreement with Frederick in 1741 (ibidem: 31-33). To the group of consultants with further literature the research overview Van Gelder, 2017.

84. On the desired qualifications Arneth, 1856: 51-52 (Charles, November 8, 1707), 194 (Charles July 31, 1711); on bad courtiers 104 (ibidem: 104, February 11, 1710). The impression of still having to learn the «ABC of rule» in the first years of government was also shared by her confidant Sylva-Tarouca (Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 120).

85. Even though a special form of enfeoffment (*Eventualbelehrung*) was discussed (for instance Backerra, 2018: 310-324).

86. Case studies are provided by the contributions in Wunder, 2002. In short Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 68-69.

87. On the homages to Charles VI with further literature Seitschek, 2021b. On coronations and homages in general Van Gelder, 2021. With regard to the associated journeys through the monarchy Rausch, 1949.

88. An overview on reasons for ignoring or reviving the inaugural rites Maña, 2021: 41-50.

1723⁸⁹ or Graz in 1728) immediately after the recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction and thus became personally known to the estates there. Still hopes for a male heir remained ever present in the autograph texts, on ceremonial occasions (Seitschek, 2018: 346-347; Vokáčová, 2021) or even in printed works⁹⁰. With the recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction and the reorganization of the administration through the establishment of the *Statthaltereien* during the Hungarian Diet of 1722/1723 (Forgó, 2020; Szijártó, 2020), the kingdom moved already closer to Vienna during the reign of Charles VI. The Hungarian nobility was present and took part in court festivities (Kökényesi, 2021). The support of the Hungarians at the beginning of the War of the Austrian Succession and the historical background are described several times and are an integral part of the myth of Maria Theresa (Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017; Telesko, 2012). In short, a definite designation as successor was not possible apart from the existing succession regulation; her own mother and especially her sister, moreover, actively and quite successfully performed governmental functions during Charles VI's lifetime, despite the usual canons of education. It is also repeatedly emphasized that the emperor involved his son-in-law, who had been the sovereign of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany since 1737, in the affairs of government. Consequently, Franz Stephan remained with the emperor on his deathbed for a long time (Zedinger, 2008: 81-83)⁹¹. The unexpected death of Charles VI, who was barely 55 years old — his mortal foreboding aside (O'Reilly, 2009: 70; Zedinger, 2008: 81) — brought Maria Theresa, who was pregnant with Joseph at the time, into the immediate practice of government.

In the following years, the military disputes and alliances shaped the policy of the Viennese court, which need not be discussed here in detail⁹². Besides Silesia, important territories in Italy were lost, such as Parma, Piacenza and the occupied

89. Concise Vokáčová, 2021. Accordingly, due to the timing, an important intention of the coronation would be a political message rather than the inauguration of the reign. «The imperial couple had not produced a male heir, and Charles sought international backing for the Pragmatic Sanction that was to warrant the preservation of the Habsburg Monarchy against territorial claims by rivaling princes. In this context, the crowning of 1723 proved the ideal opportunity to respond to the threats and propagate Vienna's point of view in the public sphere» (ibidem, 144). Considering the marriages of the Josephine archduchesses in 1719 and 1722 and the regular news of their births in the Viennese Diary, we can only agree with this conclusion of «counter-propaganda». Maria Theresa celebrated her name day in Prague, for example.

90. WD (= *Wienerisches Diarium*) 20 (March 8, 1724) or WD 98 (December 6, 1724). April 5, 1724: «happily gave birth to a girl, thanks be to God, fiat voluntas Dei, by his grace a boy will follow, in all His will». A medal was designed referring to Amalia as forebearer of her future brother (WD 38, May 10, 1724).

91. In 1732, for example, he was appointed governor of Hungary, although his military activities in the Second Turkish War were not very successful. See Zedinger, 2008: 95-101.

92. On Maria Theresa's first years of government Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 70-129. With regard to the government Kretschmayr, 1938: 18-91.

Duchy of Guastalla. The marriage of Maria Theresa's daughter to a ruling dynasty in Italy again strengthened influence there. Francis Stephen role, first as Grand Duke of Tuscany, then as co-regent in the Habsburg Monarchy and from 1745 as emperor, should not go unmentioned, especially since his influence in the Empire continued to be an important political pillar of the archducal house (Kulenkampff, 2005; Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 157-176; Zedinger, 2008).

The Austrian War of Succession and the increasing lack of resources made the need for reform obvious, which was finally implemented based on the proposals of Friedrich Wilhelm count Haugwitz (1702-1765). Above all, Haugwitz wanted the tax revenues of the Habsburg lands to be administered by sovereign authorities, removing them from the control of the estates. At the beginning, a large number of the ministers rooted in the provinces opposed Haugwitz's plans, led by count Harrach, who wanted to place the responsibility of administration more in the hands of the estates and with his attitude incurred the anger of the empress. Maria Theresa supported count Haugwitz's proposals. She noted the animated discussion about this matter in the minutes: «Placet, and is this matter all too true in such way proceeded; in 50 years one will not believe that these were my ministers created by me alone!» (translated from Walter, 1951: 53). Walter sees Haugwitz's work and the associated dismantling of certain traditional forms of rule as an important basis for the formation of a centrally governed «core state» of the Habsburg monarchy (Walter, 1951: 13. To his reforms Kretschmayr, 1938: 92-253; Hochedlinger, 2019):

He was the ideal type of princely servant who was exclusively committed to the ruling dynasty to which he owed his rise, identified completely with its interests and was not distracted by any other loyalties. (Translated from Stollberg-Rilinger, 2017: 194)

Following count Bartenstein's 1753 retirement to the office of vice-chancellor of the Directorate, the implementation and failure of Haugwitz's reforms, and the associated rise of Wenzel Anton Kaunitz-Rietberg (state chancellor since 1751), who had been married to a granddaughter of Starhemberg since 1736, the changing of the guard in the closest circle of advisors was complete. Kaunitz had already mediated at the Peace of Aachen (1748). And like Sinzendorf and later Metternich, Kaunitz had gained diplomatic experience as ambassador in Paris. The state chancellor subsequently shaped the policy of the Habsburg monarchy, which completed the transformation, —the *renversement des alliances* (1756)— in the alliance with France (Szabo, 1994).

The preceding observations were based on the brief references to political advisors and developments in the diaries of Emperor Charles VI. If we look at Table 1, we see peaks of influence (Althann 1722, Perlas and Sinzendorf 1725) as well as increasing mentions in the last decade of the reign (Empress Elisabeth

Christine, Bartenstein, Francis Stephen of Lorraine) and continuous mentions (Althann, Prince Eugene) in the diaries. We may recall the described role of the Spanish group at court and Prince Eugene in the context of the first Turkish War (1718), the initiation of the Spanish Peace by Vilana-Perlas and Sinzendorf (1725) or Bartenstein's role in dealing with Maria Theresa's marriage to Francis Stephen of Lorraine (1735/1736). Again and again we encountered brief references to political events in the diaries. Although the imperial notes seldom offer completely new insights here, the immediate assessments, which were consistently made on a daily basis over three decades, add a unique, supplementary source that nevertheless requires arduous contextualisation. In addition to the pedantic notes on court life, which was shaped by the ecclesiastical year and imperial family events, the notes also allow conclusions to be drawn about the emperor himself. Longer text passages occasionally break through the corset of the otherwise telegram-like records. In this way one gains insights into the relationship within the imperial family and to close advisors, the emperor's perception of his body and health, personal piety or imperial interests. In addition to the hunts, references can be made to gambling evenings, carnival parties or visits to the imperial art collections. Nonetheless that is another story (to this Seitschek, 2018 and 2021a).

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