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A Rivalry Ended? France and Austria during the Diplomatic Revolution and Seven Years War, 1756-1758

by

Kirsten L. Cooper

James Van Horn Melton, PhD
Adviser

Department of History

James Van Horn Melton, PhD
Adviser

Brian Vick, PhD
Committee Member

Barbara Lawatsch-Melton, PhD
Committee Member

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Kirsten L. Cooper

James Van Horn Melton, PhD

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Abstract

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After more than two hundred and fifty years of rivalry, France and Austria concluded an alliance. Known as the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, it redrew the traditional political alignments in Europe. With this thesis, I investigated some of the effects that the tradition of animosity had on the relationship between the newly created allies during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). The years of rivalry contributed to a virulent tradition of mistrust and suspicion, which was colored by specific political stereotypes garnered from years of conflict. I used diplomatic correspondence, gathered through archival research and published sources, from political elites in each state. By looking at the diplomatic correspondence of three of these actors, Maria Theresa, Kaunitz, and Bernis, we can see how this tradition of distrust influenced the political relationship between France and Austria. The Seven Years War placed a significant amount of stress on the new relationship and created opportunities for this tradition of distrust to color interactions. By analyzing how these three individuals discussed the actions of the other country and what motivations they assigned to these actions, we can see that the rivalry was still extremely potent, even during the alliance. This not only highlights the effects of one of Europe's longest and most vicious rivalries, one which is often undervalued, but it also demonstrates the value of exploring the relationship between political events and intellectual, cultural, and social trends as mutually influential factors that shape history.

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Introduction

End of a Rivalry?

"M. de Kaunitz, ambassador of the Emperor to Paris, leads a singular life." The influential French statesman, René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, Marquis D'Argenson, wrote this intriguing statement in January of 1752. He was discussing Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg, then the Austrian ambassador to Versailles. This pronouncement was then followed with a description of Kaunitz's behavior. "He does not see anyone but our financiers... he draws from them the true state of the horrid finances of the realm... to know the truth that the Austrian tyranny has to fear or not to fear from France." To D'Argenson, the extraordinary amount of time that Kaunitz chose to spend with French financiers meant one thing: the ambassador was collecting information to aid his state in "the debasement of France."[1] D'Argenson painted a villainous picture of Kaunitz because he did not trust the Habsburg Court, or its representative.

By 1752, France and the Habsburgs had experienced upwards of two hundred and fifty years of enmity, which began at the end of the fifteenth century. During this time, the two powers stood solidly in opposite diplomatic camps, opposing each other in every major conflict and working to minimize the power and influence of the other within the European state system. This extended rivalry had serious consequences for the political culture of each nation and contributed to a virulent tradition of distrust, such as that seen in the above example. This distrust was not necessarily rational and often drew on political stereotypes, particular strategies and tactics frequently used by the rulers of each state to achieve their goals. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Franco-Habsburg antagonism had become so ingrained in the political

[1] D'Argenson, René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, Marquis, *Journal et Mémoires du Marquis D'Argenson,* ed. E.J.B. Rathery (Paris: Mme. Ve. Jules Renouard, 1867), 7:79.

culture of Europe that France and Austria were considered to be natural enemies.[2] These were two powers whose state systems and agendas were so inherently incompatible that they were destined always to be at loggerheads according to the natural order of power in Europe.

Yet, on May 1, 1756, a freshly concluded alliance ended the rivalry between France and Austria. According to the First Treaty of Versailles, there would now exist a "friendship and sincere and constant union between Her Majesty the Empress-Queen [Maria Theresa] and His Very Christian Majesty [Louis XV]."[3] France and Austria would no longer oppose each other in war as well as peace; mere months after the treaty was signed, these two powers would join forces to combat Prussia in the continental theater of the Seven Years War. Describing these relations, the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Abbé François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis wrote to the French ambassador in Vienna, "If we thought alike, - the Court of Vienna and ourselves, - we might at once arrange many things."[4] However, the two courts did not think alike, and Bernis lamented that "their [the Court of Vienna's] idea is solely to commit us to their own course, and as we will not separate from them we are forced to yield to their impulsion; but, in the end, no State allows itself to be sacrificed for another."[5] This hardly sounds like the true friendship and sincere union the language of the Treaty professed. It also hardly sounds like the

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[2] This idea was the flipside of the construction of Austria and Great Britain as natural allies, working together to contain France and Prussia. Austria provided a counterbalance on the continent to protect British interests while not posing any competition to British maritime commerce or imperial interests. In return Great Britain acted as banker for the Habsburg monarchy. Franz A.J. Szabo, *The Seven Years War in Europe, 1756-1763* (Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education, 2008), 3; Thomas E. Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie-Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror," *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 584; M.S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-48* (New York: Longman Group, 1995), 11; William J. McGill, "Roots of Policy: Kaunitz in Vienna and Versailles, 1749-1753," *Journal of Modern History* 43, no. 2 (June 1971): 232;

[3] "Treaty of defensive union and friendship signed between Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and His Very Christian Majesty," in *Memoirs and Letters of the Cardinal de Bernis*, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (Boston: Hardy, Pratt & Company, 1901), 1:322-323.

[4] Bernis to Stainville, August 20, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:217.

[5] Ibid.

Franco-Habsburg rivalry was over. Instead it evokes the same suspicion of Austrian motives and assumption of villainous intent that we saw in the excerpt from D'Argenson's memoirs.

The contexts in which these two excerpts were written were drastically different: rivalry versus alliance. And yet the two excerpts share a strikingly similar mood and tone. The truth is that while the 1756 Diplomatic Revolution, the crowning jewel of which was the Franco-Austrian alliance, may have ended the overt political rivalry between France and Austria, this rivalry was much harder to end in the minds of individuals. Through examples like the two above we will see that despite a negotiated agreement signed and sealed in 1756, the First Treaty of Versailles did not immediately change the diplomatic culture or the individual perceptions and opinions of the ministers in each state. These continued to be influenced by the history of enmity between the two powers and especially by the tradition of distrust. The long history of diplomatic decisions and maneuvers comprised in the Franco-Habsburg rivalry influenced the way French and Austrian statesmen thought. But the intellectual trends of hostility and suspicion, in turn, influenced the alliance and the outcomes of the Franco-Austrian partnership.

In this study I will be examining the writings of French and Austrian diplomats who were charged with maintaining this alliance. By analyzing how these key statesmen viewed and described the actions of their ally and what motivations were assigned to these actions, we can discern that vestiges of distrust were not wiped away in 1756. The interactions between the two powers during the first few years of the Seven Years War illustrate this fact. Whenever difficulties between the two powers arose, the statesmen involved slipped easily and effortlessly into mutual recriminations that had their roots in the history of mistrust.

I have chosen several statesmen who were high-ranking officials and who played a key role in the conclusion of the First Treaty of Versailles. Count Anton Wenzel von Kaunitz-

Rietberg, Austrian State Chancellor, was the architect and first proponent of the French alliance. He had been advocating a realignment of alliance systems since the conclusion of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748. Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, supported Kaunitz's plan and saw France as the key to exacting revenge on Frederick II (The Great) of Prussia, whom Maria Theresa loathed. Finally, the Cardinal de Bernis, who viewed himself as the creator of the Franco-Austrian alliance, was the one French minister entrusted to conduct the secret negotiations that resulted in the First Treaty of Versailles.[6] Each of these actors played a key role in creating the alliance, and they played their parts well. These individuals were all staunchly pro-French or pro-Austrian in their respective camps, which at times earned them criticism from contemporaries such as the strongly anti-Austrian Marquis D'Argenson. But, despite their support of the new alliance, these individuals were not immune to the effects of the long-standing enmity between France and Austria. The analysis of this specific set of individuals will point to how deep-seated and virulent these trends truly were.

Before proceeding, there are several terms that need to be defined in order to facilitate a discussion spanning three centuries of European history. Until the end of the Spanish-Habsburg line in 1700, the array of territories held by the Habsburg thrones of Spain and Austria will be referred to as the Habsburg lands. These lands encompassed a unique conglomeration of territories. Charles W. Ingrao describes them as "otherwise disparate dominions, over which they [the Habsburgs] might later superimpose domestic policies aimed at providing the continuity that their territories lacked."[7] The head of the House of Habsburg was also customarily elected Holy Roman Emperor. As leaders of the conglomeration of German principalities, referred to from now on as the Empire, the Habsburgs had an extremely difficult juggling act to perform. By the

[6] Ibid., 2:237, 238-9.
[7] Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

period of the Seven Years War, which we will examine in depth, Habsburg control of Spain had ended. I refer to the Habsburg hereditary lands and the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia as Austria. This was a separate yet connected entity from the Empire. Although ruled by the same monarch, only a portion of Austria actually fell within Imperial boundaries. I use the terms Franco-Habsburg and Franco-Austrian to refer to the relationship at different temporal moments. Scholars focusing on the eighteenth century have used the phrases Franco-Austrian rivalry and alliance to refer to the two powers after the end of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty. Since my discussion extends further back, it would be inaccurate to call it a purely Franco-Austrian rivalry prior to 1700. I use the term Franco-Habsburg to encompass the wider Habsburg lands. This is not meant to be a distinction between an earlier dynastic rivalry and a later national rivalry, but simply a way to accurately encompass the context in which the rivalry was occurring. And while the rivalry was chiefly political, one cannot say that it was wholly dynastic. As we will see, the rivalry affected more than just the ruling households.

The complicated conglomeration of territories over which the Habsburgs ruled created a lack of continuity across the Habsburg lands that affected how other states perceived them. Thomas Kaiser, a leading scholar in the field of Franco-Austrian relations, argues that what he terms French 'Austrophobia' was a superficial, though no less virulent, phenomenon compared to enmity felt towards the British. "Austria had little sense of national identity to project, since it was but one fragment in two overlapping political mosaics," the Habsburg lands and the Holy Roman Empire. French perceptions of Austria were chiefly constructed on the basis of the "political/military threats posed by Austria's Habsburg rulers."[8] Kaiser argues that enmity with Austria was "one of France's most venerable diplomatic traditions."[9] Kaiser calls this tradition

[8] Thomas E. Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 581.
[9] Ibid.

Austrophobia, since he is chiefly concerned with the eighteenth century. But, suspicion of the Habsburgs was a constant throughout the Franco-Habsburg rivalry, becoming focused solely on the Austrian Habsburgs after the extinction of the Spanish line.[10]

Kaiser works exclusively on the French side of the question and the historically ever-looming French Revolution frames his scholarship. His explorations have centered on perceptions of and hatred towards Marie-Antoinette as the Austrian princess and foreign, infiltrating queen. He has nonetheless identified certain structures that have informed my own transnational investigation. Kaiser maintains that Austrophobia was a constant in France. It was not on the wane during the years leading up to 1756; a lessening of hostility was not the cause for the Diplomatic Revolution. In fact, Kaiser argues that Austrophobia was increasing prior to 1756 and that the alliance provided further impetus for the trend.[11] Gary Savage and Michael Hochedlinger also explore Austrophobia in the context of the French Revolution, both tying their discussions to Marie-Antoinette as well.[12] Savage specifically draws connections between anti-Austrian arguments written immediately after the First Treaty of Versailles and the later explosion of Austrophobic sentiment in the revolutionary popular press. These scholars show convincingly that Austrophobia continued to exist after the alliance between France and Austria had been concluded and that it played a major role in public hatred and hostility towards Marie-Antoinette at the height of the Revolution. The Diplomatic Revolution was a turning point in this tradition, not the end of it.

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[10] For more of Kaiser's work on Austrophobia see also Thomas E. Kaiser, "Ambiguous Identities: Marie-Antoinette and the House of Lorraine from the Affair of the Minuet to Lambesc's Charge," in *Marie-Antonette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman, (New York: Taylor & Francis Books, Inc., 2003), 171-198; Thomas E. Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie-Antoinette? Diplomacy, Austrophobia and the Queen," *French History* 14, no. 3 (2000): 241-271.

[11] Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 582-3.

[12] Gary Savage, "Favier's Heirs: The French Revolution and the Secret du Roi," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 1998): 225-258; Michael Hochedlinger, "'La cause de tous les maux de la France': Die 'Austrophobie' im revolutionären Frankreich und der Sturz des Königtums, 1789-1792," *Francia Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 42, No. 2 (1998): 73-119.

Previous scholarship has focused on Austrophobia as a chiefly revolutionary phenomenon. In France, a combination of factors, from the alliance with Austria to the severe losses experienced during the Seven Years War to the blend of social, political, and economic discontent that caused the French people to rise up against the monarchy in 1789, transmitted a new charge to the tradition of mistrust that grew out of the rivalry. The political stereotypes Kaiser discusses, which had always fed into the lingering wariness, informed perceptions that acquired a new, more nationalistic charge as the century progressed. This phenomenon never occurred in Austria because the Habsburgs had Prussia, a new threat on which to fixate, and did not lose nearly as much during the Seven Years War. This combined with stronger public approval for Maria Theresa and for the war itself to create a domestic situation strikingly different from that in France. However, for the period that we are looking at, the stereotypes invoked for each nation were truly more political in nature. They were derived from real and specific moments in history and at least partially based on the perceived characteristics of specific rulers. Over the many years of the rivalry, these political stereotypes were reinforced again and again to become a fixed component of the larger distrust that both nations experienced.

The potency of the distrust was a direct result of the potency of the rivalry between the two states. For that is precisely what the Franco-Habsburg relationship amounted to, not simply competition, but constant and sustained rivalry. William R. Thompson makes the distinction between the two relationships clear. "While all great powers, almost by definition, are competitors, only some brand each other as rivals. Rivals are thus competitors who have been singled out for special attention in some way… In most cases, the special significance can be attributed to a perception of acute threat."[13] We can safely brand France and Austria as rivals

[13] William R. Thompson, *Great Power Rivalries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 3.

according to this definition. Throughout their two and a half century enmity, they were not each other's only competition on the continent; both had other conflicts and even other rivalries. But each represented a constant focus and preoccupation for the other. Both powers attempted to undermine and control the other in order to prevent the realization of the threats each faced.

Thompson's definition encompasses a fixation on refusing to allow one's rival to gain anything without a corresponding gain for oneself of equal or greater value. This concern was related to wider considerations of maintaining the power balance in Europe, a driving force in international relations of the old regime, but within a rivalry this consideration became especially focused on one's specific rival. Rivals always had to consider the other when making foreign policy decisions to assess the implications and weigh the potential for relative gains.[14] This was true for France and the Habsburg powers throughout their overt rivalry, but it also held true once the powers became ostensible allies. Although working together, there was always a fear on both sides of abandonment or manipulation. These fears were vestiges of the history of enmity and contributed to what Thompson sees as an alliance used chiefly as a method of control. Instead of serving as a strategy to combine forces and achieve their mutual or individual foreign policy goals, the alliance gave France and Austria a way to exert control over the other without resorting once again to open warfare.[15]

Marco Cesa's political science construction also analyzes the Franco-Austrian alliance and comes up with a strikingly similar conclusion to Thompson. Cesa classifies the Franco-Austrian alliance as deadlocked.[16] Within his diplomatic classification system, he labels France

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[14] Ibid., 4-6.
[15] Ibid., 66.
[16] Marco Cesa, *Allies Yet Rivals: International Politics in 18th Century Europe*, trans. Patrick John Barr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 176-210.

and Austria as heterogeneous and symmetrical powers.[17] This means that the two powers had divergent interests and pursued separate and sometimes contradictory goals in order to fulfill and protect those interests. It also means that the two states were more or less equally matched in terms of power and strategic force, which Cesa defines as ability to control resources deemed important by other powers in a political sphere. When these two characteristics, heterogeneity and symmetry, are combined it creates a deadlocked alliance in which each power is strong enough to impede the other whenever the necessity arises. Again, "the problem of relative gains is particularly evident in this kind of alliance. Given the basic rivalry between the allies, neither is prepared to see the other obtain gains that could alter the relations of forces between them."[18] This is why the alliance inevitably ends in a deadlock. Neither power can let the other pursue its goals fully because this might alter the symmetry of their internal power balance and remove the possibility of influence and control over that ally. In the case of the Seven Years War, if Austria were allowed to triumph over Prussia while France lost its struggle against England, Austria would emerge more powerful, and vice versa. Although they were supporting each other against their enemies, this support was not unconditional.

In this sense, the relationship between France and Austria never inherently changed. They were still rival powers. The relationship simply changed in form and name, allowing each to neutralize the other while they dealt with other pressing situations. This explains why so many tensions arose during the Seven Years War and why the alliance was not as successful as one might imagine. What Thompson and Cesa do not account for however, is how rivalry, and rivalry within alliance, influenced the personal opinions of the diplomats making policy decisions. The purely political decisions motivated by *raison d'état* depended on an

[17] Ibid., 56-63.
[18] Ibid., 74.

interpretation of what the needs of the state in a particular context were. When this interpretation was colored by years of distrust, hostility, enmity, and suspicion, the intellectual trends that developed out of the rivalry influenced new political decisions. The intellectual and social trends mirrored the political and diplomatic trends Thompson and Cesa have analyzed, but these two sides of the question also intertwined and influenced each other. The diplomatic and political events of the rivalry created the tradition of enmity as much as the tradition of enmity contributed to furthering the geopolitical rivalry. So how did the tradition of enmity influence the decisions of statesmen when that geopolitical rivalry had become an alliance? This is where we turn to the diplomatic correspondence to shed light on the rationale behind the actions of the two powers during the Seven Years War.

We will begin our exploration by looking at the two hundred and fifty years of rivalry. By reviewing relations between France and the Habsburgs while enemies, we can gain a glimpse of what rivalry truly meant, what was at stake, as well as what the reasons were for such a sustained and constant enmity. Within this discussion we will also begin to see patterns emerging of ways in which both powers approached this rivalry. These patterns became mutated into political stereotypes that further colored hostility by providing concrete examples. This overview will bring us up to the Diplomatic Revolution and Seven Years War, the moment of transition and trial. I will begin by looking at Austria and analyzing the writings of Kaunitz and Maria Theresa. While they certainly did not wholly trust France or French intentions, they were forced to suppress their suspicions, doubts, and hostility in favor of maintaining the partnership, which allowed them to combat Prussia. Bernis had no such ulterior motives to check his reservations towards Austria. Looking at the French case we will see again that the tradition of distrust and hostility emerged during times of tension, but that there was no tangible benefit in France to

work through these difficulties. As the war dragged on, the continental theater became a drain on French resources and detracted from the main French goal of triumphing over Great Britain. At the end of the war France was left with serious losses and an ally who seemed to have brought nothing of benefit to the partnership while taking all. The tradition of hostility grew in the face of these setbacks. In the unique context of France's domestic and international position after the Seven Years War, the history of hostility and enmity became a deeper and more virulent trend exploding in 1789 and reaching a climax with Marie Antoinette's execution in 1793.

Despite the nominal cooperation of France and Austria after the Diplomatic Revolution and during the Seven Years War, interests of state combined with a long-standing history of rivalry that made true partnership between the two powers elusive. Stuck in a balancing act and refusing to let either side gain the upper hand, these two powers faced incredibly difficult challenges from a geopolitical standpoint. But, the individuals involved were not analyzing their situation with the benefit of hindsight and systemic political science models. This is where the personal opinions that had been so influenced by the history of enmity came to serve an important role. The “problem of relative gains” was not viewed with the same disengaged neutrality that Cesa uses in his discussion. Instead Austrian diplomats mistrusted the motives of France, which Austrians had historically perceived as belligerent, aggrandizing, and perfidious. France, which had for centuries interfered in Imperial politics and constantly tried to diminish Habsburg power, was believed to be intentionally reneging on promises and providing false assurances to undermine the Austrian war effort. The Habsburgs, who had for centuries been accused of trying to recreate their universal empire in a concerted effort to control all of Europe, were believed to be using their connections within the French ministry to infiltrate and destroy France from the inside out. Geopolitical considerations, caused by the circumstances that

Thompson and Cesa have analyzed so well, were twisted and given color and life by the tradition of distrust that had developed in each society.

Throughout the Seven Years War both sides dealt with the fear that their interests were being subjugated to those of their ally. Much of this fear was an extension of the relative gains conundrum and scholars today have still not escaped this fixation. Historians have tried to determine exactly whose interests were subjugated to the other and to whom the disastrous outcomes of the war can be attributed. L. Jay Oliva stood staunchly in one corner, arguing that the agreement between France and Austria, and between France and Austria's ally Russia, was a misalliance to which France sacrificed its national interests for no tangible benefits.[19] Throughout his work Oliva painted France as a victim of Habsburg revenge and Russian aggrandizement and placed the blame for France's colonial losses at the feet of her allies. John Charles Batzel argues the opposite.[20] He maintains that Austria was simply looking to neutralize France and wanted only financial assistance from her ally. This way France would be free to focus her efforts on Great Britain in their colonial struggle. It was France's foolish choice to become embroiled on the continent that resulted in disastrous campaigns in a second theater.

The reality is that scholars may never be able to agree on one interpretation of the 'truth'. Apologists for both sides will most likely never come to terms, but it does not matter for our purposes. Just as Elizabeth Colwill refuses to separate the mythology surrounding Marie Antoinette from the reality, as it is the mythology that provides insights into the minds of French revolutionary society, so we should not worry about discerning the 'truth' about the Franco-

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[19] L. Jay Oliva, *Misalliance: A Study of French Policy in Russia During the Seven Years' War* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 46.
[20] John Charles Batzel, "Austria and the First Three Treaties of Versailles, 1755-1758," (PhD diss., Brown University, 1974).

Austrian alliance.[21] What matters is not the veracity of what the diplomats on each side thought or conveyed, but the validity of their thoughts and convictions. For it is within these thoughts and convictions, within the mistrust, that we gain historical insight into the Austro-French rivalry. The frequently candid writings of diplomatic correspondence provide a window onto the personal convictions and frustrations under which the diplomats struggled while trying to maintain the alliance.[22] Before we seek to penetrate the minds of these diplomats, however, we must understand the context in which they were writing. The Franco-Habsburg rivalry began centuries before the Seven Years War. The Franco-Habsburg alliance began months before it. This journey and final jump must be understood in order to comprehend the consequences for both French and Austrian society.

[21] Elizabeth Colwill, "Just Another 'Citoyenne?' Marie-Antoinette on Trial, 1790-1793," *History Workshop*, no. 28 (Autumn 1989): 64.

[22] Mary Lindemann makes a very convincing argument for the continued use of diplomatic correspondence as source material and the wealth of information it can provide in Mary Lindemann, "The Discreet Charm of the Diplomatic Archive," *German History* 29, no. 2 (June 2011): 281-303.

Chapter 1

Rivalry and Alliance

Eighteenth century political decisions did not occur in a vacuum. The context of the moment shaped and motivated politics, as did historical antecedents. Johannes Burkhardt argues that "the political culture of the early modern period was also a historical culture,"[23] and this is especially apparent in Franco-Austrian diplomacy. Burkhardt charts the use of the historical argument of rivalry in diplomatic interactions between France and the Habsburgs and points out that this argument almost took on a life of its own as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries progressed.[24] The longer the rivalry continued and more examples were piled on to reinforce the historical argument, the more independent the conception of rivalry became as an influential factor in diplomacy.

Scholars traditionally pinpoint the French invasion of Italy in 1494, led by Charles VIII, as the beginning of the Franco-Habsburg rivalry. This move sparked over half a century of conflict in Italy, known as the Habsburg-Valois or Italian Wars, and was the first major conflict that pitted France and the Habsburgs against each other. It was not until the accession of the Habsburg Charles V however, that the rivalry, as defined by Thompson, truly began.[25] From this point forward specific political considerations emerged for both sides, creating the acute threats that Thompson posits as necessary for rivalry to exist. These political considerations created the context for rivalry and explain its longevity from a geopolitical standpoint. Both France and the Habsburg powers were strong entities in continental Europe. It is no surprise that clashes

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[23] Johannes Burkhardt, "Geschichte als Argument in der Habsburgisch-Französischen Diplomatie: Der Wandel des frühneuzeitlichen Geschichtsbewußtseins in seiner Bedeutung für die Diplomatische Revolution von 1756," in *Frankreich im europäischen Staatensystem der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Rainer Babel 191-217 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1995), 192.
[24] Ibid., 195.
[25] Thompson, *Great Power Rivalries*, 3.

occurred between the two. But the unique geographical and political positions of France and the Habsburg lands contributed to the potency of the rivalry and resulted in the eighteenth-century conception of the two powers as inherently incompatible, as natural enemies.

It is no surprise then, that the diplomatic 'revolution' was given such a moniker. Within the political culture of the time, the Franco-Habsburg rivalry was so entrenched that a reversal of it seemed nothing less than revolutionary. There were, however, important long-term shifts in the power balance of Europe that created the opportunity to reassess traditional political alignments. A gradual disintegration of the specific political context fueling the Franco-Habsburg rivalry from the end of the seventeenth century allowed the "space" to open up in which the two powers could maneuver away from rivalry and towards alliance.[26] But this geopolitical shift did not immediately result in an alliance. The idea of ending the rivalry and concluding an alliance was not seriously considered until other factors caused the current state system to appear utterly insufficient. It was not until the desperate need of Austria went unmet by her traditional allies that the open spaces were recognized and utilized, almost half a century after they began to appear.

One statesman in particular was responsible for recognizing these open spaces. Kaunitz's personal opinions and appreciation of French culture may have made him view France in a favorable light, disposing him more than others to realize the opportunities that a French alliance presented. But, personal opinions and prejudices also played a very large role in the long delay between the removal of geopolitical concerns and the move towards a closer relationship. It took almost half a century for somebody to emerge who seriously advocated and worked towards the new alliance, and this was chiefly do to outside factors. Throughout the rivalry both powers

[26] Marco Cesa discusses a model of looking at diplomatic history that recognizes the opening and closing of possibilities for diplomatic maneuvering. These possibilities are referred to as "spaces" into or out of which powers can move. See Cesa, *Allies yet Rivals*, 32-41.

feared specific, acute threats from the other. These fears influenced the political culture and political relationship over the hundreds of years that the rivalry persisted and mutated into something more potent than simply geopolitical considerations: a history and continuing tradition of distrust and suspicion that did not end when the geopolitical considerations were removed.

Jeremy Black correctly criticizes too heavy a reliance on a systemic analysis of eighteenth-century international relations.[27] Systemic models ignore the role of chance, religion, and ideology in favor of a strict *raison d'état* analysis, and most importantly they do not take into account the personal opinions of diplomats, statesmen, and monarchs. It is especially important to consider these elements in the case of Franco-Habsburg relations. Such a long and vicious rivalry affected the personal conviction of the individuals responsible for the eventual alliance. Although rivalry was no longer strictly dictated by geopolitical concerns after the Spanish Succession War, the two powers still considered each other rivals. This conception of rivalry incorporated specific political stereotypes drawn from hundreds of years of conflict. Diplomatic and military tactics, used by one state to combat the threats posed by the other, came to be seen as characteristically French or characteristically Austrian strategies and colored the particular brand of hostility and suspicion in each state. Even after the alliance was signed and the two powers were ostensibly partners, hostility, distrust, suspicion and rivalry continued to influence Franco-Austrian interactions and spelled difficult times for the new alliance when, two months after the ink dried on the First Treaty of Versailles, Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia plunged Europe into what has been called the first world war.

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[27] Jeremy Black, "Essay and Reflection: on the 'Old System' and the 'Diplomatic Revolution' of the Eighteenth Century," *International History Review* 12, no. 2 (May 1990): 305-320.

The Substance of Rivalry

The specific political considerations that contributed so much to the longevity of the Franco-Habsburg rivalry began in earnest with the accession of Charles V. Charles, Duke of Burgundy, inherited his maternal grandparents' Spanish kingdom in 1516. Three years later Charles also succeeded to the archduchy of Austria when his paternal grandfather, Maximilian I, died. Charles was then elected Holy Roman Emperor as the head of the House of Habsburg. Consolidating the possessions of three ruling houses of Europe, Charles V controlled lands from one side of Europe to the other and he controlled all of the Spanish territories in the New World. For the French from this time on, the Habsburgs represented the real and always-feared possibility of encirclement. Charles V's empire, on which the sun supposedly never set, was both the origin of this fear and the closest it ever came to reality. Charles V ruled Castile and Aragon on France's southwestern border. His Burgundian inheritance gave him control of territories on France's northern and eastern borders. Finally, his accession to the Habsburg lands and his election as Holy Roman Emperor gave Charles influence and nominal control over territories in Germany, Italy, Austria, Bohemia, and parts of Hungary. This completed Habsburg encirclement on France's eastern border.

Looking at a map of Charles V's empire gives a very clear picture of why encirclement was such a real concern for France. Yet to say that Charles V controlled all of these territories is to use the term loosely. This mish-mash of territories proved to be too much for one man to handle. Despite an intricate system of delegation using various Habsburg regents, Charles V abdicated his thrones and split up his empire at the end of his life.[28] Thus began the age of the dual houses of Habsburg: Spanish and Austrian. Spain, the New World, and the Burgundian

[28] Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 115-125, 133-136.

territories in the Low Countries to the northeast of France became the domain of Charles's son Philip II of Spain. The Austrian hereditary lands and the tradition of being elected Holy Roman Emperor fell to Charles's brother Ferdinand I. The abdication of Charles and the division of his empire into Spanish and Austrian Habsburg branches did not remove France's concerns. Although separate powers, the two dynasties worked together and remained closely connected and allied. But they also had more freedom to pursue their own state interests. France now had a new problem to face: how to juggle the dual threat of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs.

From this point onwards, French statesmen suspected the Habsburgs of attempting to recreate the universal empire of Charles V and achieve hegemony across Europe. By the eighteenth century this suspicion had morphed into the concept of Austrian despotism.[29] This phrase encompassed several characteristics, including aggression, self-aggrandizement, and deception, which were purportedly used to extend Habsburg hegemony across Europe. French fears of encirclement were mutated into fears of being consumed by the despotic Habsburgs. Austria would stop at nothing and use any means available to achieve this goal. French statesmen also suspected the Austrian government of being cruel, deceitful, untrustworthy, contemptible, violent, conniving, and capable of infiltration and subtle intrigue.[30] These characteristics all stemmed from French fear, distrust, and years of conflict. As we discuss the clashes between France and the Habsburg powers, we will see how Habsburg actions fed into French fears.

For the duration of the dual Habsburg dynasties, the Spanish branch was dominant. It was against this branch that France focused most of its political and military attention. The Spanish territories encircled France on two sides and provided a more direct threat than the semi-

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[29] Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie-Antoinette," 244; This concept has been used during the seventeenth century as well, but truly gained significance in French propaganda during the War of the Spanish Succession, see Jeremy Black, "French Foreign Policy in the Age of Fleury Reassessed," *The English Historical Review* 103, no. 407 (April 1988): 368.

[30] Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie-Antoinette," 244; Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 582-584.

autonomous imperial territories or the more distant Habsburg hereditary lands. The string of Habsburg controlled lands on France's eastern border provided crucial access for merchants and troops moving between Spain and the Low Countries.[31] Thus, it was as important for Spain to maintain this string of territories as it was for France to try to break through and escape confinement. France also worked under the hope that if Spain could be defeated its Austrian counterpart would back down as well.[32]

To deal with Austria then, France relied more on fighting by proxy. France frequently supported powers such as Sweden, the Ottoman Empire, and imperial German princes as they fought against the Austrian Habsburgs. One technique used repeatedly was to meddle in imperial politics. By supporting anti-Habsburg princes as they struggled against the authority of the emperor, France worked to undermine the Habsburgs' effective control over the complicated association of territories. Because the Holy Roman Empire was a conglomeration of semi-autonomous powers, strong principalities seized any opportunity they could to increase their own power *vis-à-vis* the emperor. This was much easier with the backing, whether politically, militarily, or financially, of a great power such as France. This also meant that conflicts between emperor and princes usually expanded beyond the boundaries of the empire.

During the Thirty Years War, for example, a confessional struggle between Protestant princes and the stringently Catholic emperor, Ferdinand II, grew into a massive and devastating European-wide conflict. This war provides a spectacular look at France's political strategy as regards the Habsburg powers. The Thirty Years War came to involve most of the states of Europe, but it was sparked in 1618 by a confessional struggle centered in Prague and for a time

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[31] Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). See especially Chapter 3, "The Spanish Road."
[32] Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (New York: Military Heritage Press, 1988), 148.

seemed to be confined to the lands of the Holy Roman Empire.[33] When it seemed that Habsburg armies were veering too close to victory and threatening to greatly consolidate their religious and political hold over the empire, other powers stepped in. For most of those involved, the struggle remained, at least in part, a question of religion. The Protestant powers of Europe wanted to protect their coreligionists from Catholic oppression. Catholic strongholds like Spain and the Papacy back the Austrian Habsburgs. France was also a Catholic power that had itself been ravaged by years of internal religious strife during the recent Wars of Religion. And yet, the French crown sided against the Catholic League. The Franco-Habsburg rivalry ranked higher than confessional solidarity in the political spectrum of Versailles.

Due to the recent confessional struggles and domestic strife in France, open hostility against the Catholic Habsburgs would have been extremely contested and wildly unpopular. Instead, beginning in 1630, France concluded a number of alliances with Protestant powers, including England and Sweden, in an effort to prevent the need for open involvement in the war. France was content to provide monetary support and other resources and to allow the German princes and Protestant powers to act as "surrogates in the [Franco-Habsburg] rivalry."[34] However, France saw the need to declare war against Spain in May of 1635.[35] An agreement with Sweden was to guarantee limited French interference in the empire, allowing it to focus on Philip IV's Spanish territories. A French declaration of war against the Emperor was not made until more than a year later.[36] Any victory that added to Habsburg power or prestige was a defeat for France. Thus, when imperial control of the Protestant principalities seemed to be

[33] John Childs, *Warfare in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001); Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, 144-145.
[36] Ibid., 148.

consolidating, France intervened against its coreligionists, focusing first on Spain. When indirect efforts against the emperor were exhausted, France finally turned its attention in that direction.

The threat that the Habsburgs faced from France was partly in response to France's own fears. As mentioned, France used aggression, both direct and indirect, as a tool to break out of Habsburg encirclement. The Austrian Habsburgs faced French interference in the empire, which greatly complicated whatever little authority they could actually exercise there. France also frequently supported foreign entities in conflict with the Austrian Habsburgs, seen with England and Sweden during the Thirty Years War and also commonly employed in the Ottoman Porte. Despite posing the single greatest threat to Christian Europe, France spent many years secretly supporting the Ottoman Empire in its struggles with the Austrian Habsburgs. Even Hungarian revolts, such as that led by Francis II Rákóczi from 1703-1711, were seen as useful tools to weaken the Austrian branch. Yet still the best way to break the noose of territories ringing her borders was for France to gain control of said territories. This aggrandizement threatened to cut ties between Spain and her valuable but rebellious northern holdings while also compromising the possessions of Imperial princes.

French aggrandizement, covert operations, and aggression all contributed to the specific variety of distrust that was prevalent in Austria. Habsburg suspicion was especially exacerbated by the personality and decisions of one man, Louis XIV. During the last half of the seventeenth century, France's strategy of targeting Habsburg Spain as the dominant power seemed to be paying off. The Spanish Habsburg dynastic line was on the verge of extinction and Spain's influence and power were steadily declining. In this opening space, France gained in power and prestige. Under the leadership of the Sun King, France became the dominant force in Europe.[37]

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[37] For further information on Spain during this time see J.H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

Louis XIV's actions earned him a reputation for belligerence, ambition, and an insatiable thirst for territory. Never before had France posed such a strong direct threat to the Habsburgs.

The wars of Louis XIV can all be said to have one thing in common: the bellicosity of France, whether the intention was offensive or defensive.[38] French ambition was on display for all of Europe to see. As a result, the picture painted of the Sun King across Europe was that of an insatiable tyrant who would stop at nothing for the aggrandizement of France.[39] This depiction contributed to the unification of Europe against France on several occasions and especially fed closer cooperation between Imperial princes and the Habsburg emperors. It became the responsibility of the European nations to contain Louis XIV's ambition in order to preserve the balance of power throughout the continent. In fact, John L. Sutton cites this point as the moment when the system of power balance solidified for the first time.[40] The majority of these conflicts were directed towards Habsburg and Imperial territories.[41] These conflicts united the German Imperial princes against France and actually increased the authority of the emperor as leader of the anti-French league.[42] An image was cast "of Louis the relentless, voracious conqueror, and he never succeeded in erecting another to take its place."[43] What is interesting, however, is that many times Louis XIV saw his actions as defensive, preemptive responses to Habsburg

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[38] Jeremy Black, *European International Relations, 1648-1815* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667-1714* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999).
[39] For a discussion of how Louis XIV was viewed in Germany and across Europe see Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda Under Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).
[40] John L. Sutton, *The King's Honor & the King's Cardinal: The War of the Polish* Succession (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 4.
[41] France invaded the Spanish Netherlands in the War of Devolution (1667-1668). The Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678) did not directly involve the Habsburgs or the Empire, but it did result in a much-strengthened French position on the border of the Spanish Netherlands. The Wars of the Reunions (1683-1684) directly affected Imperial princes as French Chambers of Reunion ruled that France had a right to annex further territories. The Spanish Habsburgs declared war on France as a result. The Nine Years War (1688-1697) also began with French seizures in the empire, and resulted in France facing off against a league of Imperial Princes, the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs, England and the Netherlands, among others. See Lynn, *Wars of Louis XIV*; Black, *European International Relations*.
[42] Black, *European International Relations*, 96.
[43] Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV*, 38.

aggression designed to make France more defensible in the event of an attack. In French this was termed "*la defense aggressive*."[44] In the prelude to the War of the Reunions, French security meant taking territory from imperial and Habsburg lands to make French borders more defensible. Although Louis XIV may have rationalized these conflicts from a defensive standpoint, it did not resonate with the inhabitants of the German and Habsburg territories against whom his 'defense' was directed. *La defense aggressive* isolated France and made its enemies and its former allies wary of what seemed like never-ending French aggression.

The image of ruthless, insatiable, belligerent France was compounded with that of perfidious aggrandizer upon the death of the last Spanish Habsburg king, Charles II. Charles named Louis XIV's grandson, Philippe of Anjou, as his heir in direct contradiction to the will of Charles' father, Philip IV. Philip had explicitly stated that if the Spanish male Habsburg line became extinct, the crown would revert to the Austrian branch. The competing claims quickly became a clash between competing armies. When Louis XIV recognized his grandson as Philip V of Spain while still maintaining his grandson's rights to inherit the French throne, fears of the unification of France and Spain under one monarch were aroused. The last minute circumstances surrounding this bequeathal seemed suspicious to the parties involved and were quickly blamed on forgery, intrigue, and French duplicity. The Austrian Habsburgs wasted no time in painting Louis XIV and the Court of Versailles in the blackest of colors. A resurgence of French propaganda, both domestic and foreign, speaks to the dreadful opinions ranged against Louis XIV during the Spanish Succession War. Troops and subsidies were no longer sufficient to achieve the Sun King's goals.[45]

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[44] Ibid., 37.
[45]Ibid., 100.

Anti-French propaganda made full use of the historically derived political stereotypes to describe Louis XIV. They also painted the sun king as ruthless, ambitious, insatiable, deceitful, and greedy.[46] One example of this depiction can be found in the pamphlet entitled "The Rights of the House of Austria to the Spanish Succession," printed by order of Emperor Leopold I in London in 1701. Designed to promote the Habsburg cause in England, this pamphlet details the circumstances surrounding the Bourbon inheritance and decries French treachery throughout the process. The "fickle and inconstant" French, who's "Faith... [is] so often given, and so often broken," care little for "Treaties, Laws, or Latter Wills, when they find it their advantage to break or oppose them" and when it can further increase and satisfy "the Power and Avarice of *France*." The French crown broke canon law, reneged on treaties and sacred oaths, and was guilty of bribes and forgery. Spain, which had so long resisted the threats that France posed, finally succumbed to the relentless intrigues of Louis XIV's ministry. Through their actions, the French "overturn all those things upon which the Peace and Security of Society and Government is founded. They have no regard to the publick [sic] Good of Europe, and provided they can but raise the Glory and Power of France, they don't care if the whole Universe besides should Perish."[47] French actions had shown them to be untrustworthy and a danger to the interests of any other European state, especially the Habsburgs.

The Spanish Succession War is significant for our story on two levels. The developments of the conflict provided more fuel to the fire of Habsburg distrust. Louis XIV had employed all of the characteristic French political strategies to disastrous effect for the rest of Europe. The Sun King cast an extremely long shadow, under which suspicions of Versailles were multiplied. On a

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[46] For an overview of what French propaganda was up against see Klaits, *Printed Propaganda Under Louis XIV*.
[47] Holy Roman Empire, *The Rights of the House of Austria to the Spanish Succession. Published by Order of His Imperial Majesty, and translated from the original printed at Vienna*, (London: J. Nut, 1701), 16; Ibid., 11; Ibid., 16; Ibid., 18; Ibid., 17.

political level, the French succeeded in breaking free of Habsburg encirclement. It would seem that France had triumphed. Yet two considerations diminished the victory France had achieved. First, Philip V was not content to simply act as a French puppet.[48] With the death of Louis XIV in 1715, a power vacuum was created. Philip V took this opportunity to pursue his own interests and those of Spain. Additionally the power of the Austrian Habsburgs had greatly increased since decisively defeating the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Vienna in 1683 and pushing the Turkish threat out of Hungary. In fact, France gained less territory during Louis XIV's reign than Austria did from the Ottomans in Hungary and Transylvania and the Spanish in the Netherlands and Italy.[49] The Habsburgs still remained a powerful force despite losing the Spanish throne and this force was now centered in Vienna.[50]

The Diplomatic Revolution

The political situation after Utrecht was strikingly different than it had been for two hundred years. The Habsburgs no longer posed the immediate threat of encirclement to France. Austria had less to fear from French threats to Habsburg peripheral territories. Despite this changed political situation, the half-century after the Treaty of Utrecht was signed did not bring much in the way of radical change for the Franco-Austrian relationship. The two powers still faced off over a number of issues, from the Polish succession to the Austrian succession. Austria was still the strongest counterbalance to French ambition on the continent and France continued to meddle in imperial and Habsburg affairs.[51] Most importantly these powers were considered natural enemies and the traditional conception of power alliances in Europe was solidifying fast.

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[48] Black, "French Foreign Policy," 361.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV*, 36.
[51] Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession,* 6.

Though the situation had changed drastically since the time of Charles V, the rivalry continued for half a century more.

The continuity of priorities in the political culture is clear enough when one considers how quickly France joined the other European states in trying to dismember Maria Theresa's inheritance during the War of the Austrian Succession. Emperor Charles VI, with no male heirs, had made it his life's work to receive recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction from the powers of Europe, guaranteeing the succession of his eldest daughter, Maria Theresa. On his death, however, these guarantees came to naught. The same year that Charles VI died, Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia invaded the Austrian province of Silesia. This strike at the end of 1740 began the War of the Austrian Succession in which Maria Theresa had to protect her inheritance from partition at the hands of her enemies, chiefly France and Prussia. Frederick's invasion was a painful lesson to the new queen, showing her that the state of Austria's military and finances were woefully underdeveloped. Frederick's attack, called the Rape of Silesia for its sudden and painful results, also confirmed in Maria Theresa's mind that Prussia now posed the most immediate threat to the existence of her kingdom and to Habsburg power in Europe. The empress never forgave Frederick for this transgression. Frederick's attack was not just disastrous from a political and military standpoint, it was incredibly insulting to the proud queen, and she always saw the return of Silesia as a matter of honor as well as diplomacy.[52] Once it became obvious that Maria Theresa would not resign herself to the loss of Silesia and would fight to maintain the integrity of her territories, France took advantage of Frederick's impetuosity, seeing this as an opportunity to deal a decisive blow to an old rival.[53]

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[52] Ibid., 71-2.
[53] Ibid., 74.

In the face of an array of enemies, Maria Theresa was given lackluster support from her traditional allies. German princes who did support the Habsburg cause, were unwilling to expend excessive effort for what seemed to many a hopeless cause. Great Britain and the United Provinces refrained from sending sufficient support to rescue their long-time and supposedly natural ally. George II of Great Britain, elector of Hanover, had a strong personal dislike for Frederick and sided strongly with Maria Theresa.[54] His British advisors did not feel the same urge to protect German interests however, and supported Austria only as a safeguard against other powers in Central Europe. Her destruction was to be avoided, but anything more was not a concern. As Anderson writes, "To Maria Theresa the enemy was now Prussia; to the British, as always, France. The two powers were irremediably at cross-purposes: from this they were never to escape."[55] During the negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle Great Britain even seemed inclined to appease Prussia. Despite Austria's necessarily central role in the war, the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was dictated by Britain and France to the rest of the powers and left much unresolved resentment.[56] Although the basis of the treaty was a reversion of almost all conquered territories, Austria was forced to guarantee the cession of Silesia and the city of Glatz to Prussia. Kaunitz, the Austrian delegate to the peace conference, saw this as a gross betrayal of Austrian interests.

Eight years after the conclusion of this latest Franco-Habsburg war, the natural enemies had become allies. The question is how and, more importantly, why. There are two schools of thought regarding the origins of the *renversement*. The first, more traditional view is that the Diplomatic Revolution was precisely that, a revolution. The sudden rise of Prussia and disintegrating relations between Austria and Great Britain as a result of their now different geopolitical priorities gave cause to a sudden and sweeping reevaluation of the 'Old System' of

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[54] Ibid., 78-79.
[55] Ibid., 79.
[56] Black, *European International Relations*, 165.

alliances. With the conclusion of two shocking treaties, the Convention of Westminster between Great Britain and Prussia in January of 1756 and the First Treaty of Versailles between France and Austria in May of 1756, the revolution was complete and the traditional alliance system had been reversed.

John Charles Batzel asserts in his dissertation that up until the notorious Rape of Silesia in 1740, Austria was still wholly preoccupied with its enemies at Versailles.[57] It was not until Frederick made his sudden attack that Prussia surpassed France as Austria's public enemy number one. To protect against future Prussian attacks, which were thought to be inevitable, Austria turned to France. Having France as an ally offered the prospect of financial and military support.[58] It also meant neutralizing France as a threat on the continent, allowing Maria Theresa to concentrate her forces against her northern neighbor. Reed Browning insists that Austria was not trying to alienate Britain and replace her with France, but simply trying to remove the French threat while maintaining amicable relations with her traditional ally.[59] But, Britain and France were involved in an escalating colonial conflict, which made Austria's attempts at bridging the divide increasingly precarious. Browning shows that on several occasions Austria took pains to please her English ally in an effort to maintain their close relationship even while negotiating with France. William McGill argues that Austria was wary of breaking off relations with Great Britain because Vienna did not want to be left completely isolated. Maria Theresa and her

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[57] Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles"; Reed Browning, "The British Orientation of Austrian Foreign Policy, 1749-1754," *Central European History* 1, no. 4 (December 1968): 299-323; McGill, "Roots of Policy"; Oliva, *Misalliance*.

[58] Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 85. Batzel argues that Austria was simply looking for France to act as a bank and provide financial support. In this role subsidies from France would replace subsidies from Great Britain that had formerly been collected by Austria.

[59] Browning also shows that in the years immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the British ministry was working hard to repair relations with Vienna and ensure the continuation of the Anglo-Austrian alliance. See Reed Browning, "The Duke of Newcastle and the Imperial Election Plan, 1749-1754," *The Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (November 1967): 28-47.

ministers hoped that they could manage to keep both Great Britain and France appeased, but realized after 1753 that this would be impossible.

For all of these scholars, the Diplomatic Revolution was not a foregone conclusion until the Westminster Convention. Although Austria had spent several years attempting to conclude an alliance with France, it was not until news of the 1756 Anglo-Prussian agreement that France also subscribed to the idea. L. Jay Oliva contends that France was simply looking for peace, a chance to repair its finances and deal with its growing domestic problems. Thus, when the Austrians leaked news of the Anglo-Prussian negotiations to the French ministry, it immediately raised fears of war.[60] Colonial tensions between France and Britain had been escalating and France saw these negotiations as a sign that Britain was gathering allies for a two-front war. It also raised the specter of political isolation. The Westminster Convention "dictated" the new alliance for France and solidified the Diplomatic Revolution.[61] The Westminster Convention was the "one shock" that made all hopes of a partnership with Great Britain and France inconceivable. The agreement rang the death knell for the Anglo-Austrian alliance, but it also provided a bargaining chip in negotiations with France.[62] McGill argues that Austria used the Westminster Convention to achieve its main goal of dissolving the Franco-Prussian partnership without isolating itself in the process. The Habsburgs replaced Great Britain with France at exactly the right moment and the Westminster Convention was the step that definitively "hurled the Hofburg and Versailles into each other's reluctant arms."[63]

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[60] Etienne-François Duc de Choiseul, *Mémoires du duc de Choiseul, 1718-1785* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1904), 151, 155-6; D'Argenson, *Journal et Mémoires*, 9:180-1.
[61] Karl Schweizer, "The Seven Years' War: A System Perspective," in *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Jeremy Black 242-260 (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1787), 252.
[62] Browning, "The British Orientation of Austrian Foreign Policy," 323.
[63] Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 64.

The competing interpretation of the Diplomatic Revolution questions the very use of the term 'revolution.' Several scholars ask how a process that had been developing for decades could be called revolutionary. The earliest proponent of this interpretation was Max Braubach, who saw the roots of this alliance in the reign of Louis XIV.[64] After years of war, the Sun King suggested a policy of *rapprochement* with Austria in order to maintain peace, much needed in France after the exhausting Spanish Succession War.[65] Jeremy Black criticizes Braubach for exaggerating French attempts to reach an agreement with Austria while ignoring efforts to gather allies against the Habsburg state. Black does agree, however, that it was not simply Prussia's attack on Silesia that prompted the realignment. Black sees the principal motivation for Austrian overtures to France in Austria's deteriorating relationship with Great Britain. He traces this trend back to 1719 and argues that Prussia's attack on Silesia in fact prolonged the weakening alliance by uniting Great Britain and Austria in war for eight years.

Charles Ingrao views Austria's decision to approach France as an inevitable development resulting from shifting political priorities. Beginning in the reign of Leopold I with the end of the Spanish Habsburgs, Ingrao charts a realignment of Austria's foreign policy priorities. Instead of focusing on protecting peripheral territories, statesmen in Vienna began to focus more and more on the heart of the kingdom: chiefly Austria, Hungary and Bohemia. This reassessment was sparked by the removal of far-flung obligations connected with Spanish Habsburg interests and of the realization that Prussia posed a growing threat to the heart of Austrian Habsburg territory. "The Hofburg's conception of the 'western front' was already shifting from the seventeenth-

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[64] Max Braubach, *Versailles und Wien von Ludwig XIV. bis Kaunitz: Die Vorstadien der diplomatischen Revolution im 18. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1952); Black, "French Foreign Policy"; Black, "Essay and Reflection"; Charles W. Ingrao, "Habsburg Strategy and Geopolitics during the Eighteenth Century," in *East Central European Society and War in the pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century*, edited by Gunther E. Rothernberg, Béla K. Király, and Peter F. Sugar 49-66 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
[65] Klaits, *Printed Propaganda Under Louis XIV,* 30; Braubach, *Versailles und Wien*, 45-104.

century notion of a struggle with France to defend the Empire's borders, to an eighteenth-century awareness of a contest with Prussia within Germany itself to protect the monarchy's own security."[66] This reassessment meant that Austrian interests had been slowly diverging from those of Britain, which still saw France as the main target, making the Anglo-Austrian alliance increasingly difficult to maintain.

Karl Schweizer comes the closest to a synthesis of the two sides of the debate. Schweizer views the new alliance as a result of subtle, undetected shifts "beneath the uneasy façade of stability, behind the deceptive features of continuity... in the very structure of power and interest in Europe."[67] He does see these shifts stemming from the time of Louis XIV, although their development was not necessarily steady and constant. But, he sees the sudden arrival of Prussia as a formidable power in 1740 as the catalyst that precipitated Austria to take action towards an alliance with France. Schweizer also agrees that Austrian priorities had shifted from peripheral areas such as the Netherlands and Italy to the heart of its territories, which made its rivalry with France less crucial. Based on this assessment, Kaunitz advocated for a new alliance to fix the problems Austria faced in its relationship with Britain.

Schweizer's synthesis ignores neither the long-term nor the immediate origins of the *renversement*, but gives both their due and acknowledges how the two sides of the debate can work together. However, the progression from rivalry to alliance was not as inevitable as Schweizer makes it seem. Remembering Black's criticism of a strictly systemic analysis, a slightly altered interpretation must be suggested. We have already seen how the situation stood after the treaty of Utrecht and it certainly suggests that the *raison d'être* of the Franco-Habsburg rivalry had diminished significantly. Now that France no longer had to fear encirclement, the

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[66] Ingrao, "Habsburg Strategy and Geopolitics," 58.
[67] Ibid., 245.

only threat the Habsburgs posed was that of another strong continental power. While still something to take into consideration, there was no longer a geopolitical reason for these two powers to single each other out as extraordinarily dangerous rivals, according to Thompson's definition.[68] Thompson himself acknowledges that "by the early eighteenth century France had largely solved its security problems vis-à-vis the Habsburgs," through successful positioning of a Bourbon monarch in Spain and 'defensive' territorial gains along the border with Germany and the Netherlands. France posed less of a threat to Austria after Louis XIV's belligerence created a closer cooperation between the princes and the emperor and after France's ability to use Turkey and other client states to counter Austria decreased.[69] Yet no decisive and undeniable move was made towards alliance until Kaunitz began reevaluating Austria's alliance system after the War of the Austrian Succession.

Simply laying a logical basis for ending a rivalry was not enough, and probably never would be. For, although Thompson defines a rivalry in strictly geopolitical terms, a rivalry encompasses much more than just politics. Vilification of one's enemy, whether through state sponsored propaganda or not, is a natural response to war. This is especially true with prolonged or repeated war, and opinions do not simply change overnight. When we consider that France and the Habsburgs had experienced over two centuries of repeated warfare, it is no surprise that it took almost fifty years for personal convictions to catch up with political reality, and even then only from a man with deep admiration for the cultural achievements France.[70] The War of the Austrian Succession and the peace conference at Aix-la-Chapelle highlighted the dual problems of decreasing support from Great Britain and the immediate danger looming in the north. These

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[68] Thompson, *Great Power Rivalries*, 3.
[69] Ibid., 61.
[70] Franz A.J. Szabo, *Kaunitz & Enlightened Absolutism, 1753-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 27.

considerations convinced Kaunitz that the status quo was no longer sustainable for Austria, and led him to the realization that alliance with France was not only possible, but also preferable.

Kaunitz may also have been influenced towards a partnership with France due to his affinity for French culture. At the same time that he was reinventing Austria's foreign policy agenda, Kaunitz was promoting French culture in Vienna. Szabo describes the man as "without question the foremost proponent of French theater in the Monarchy."[71] The connection between Kaunitz's personal aesthetic tastes and his foreign diplomacy has not been formally investigated, but it can hardly have been a coincidence that the man most responsible for promoting mid-century French culture was also the man responsible for creating the closest political ties between France and Austria in centuries. Szabo does warn against placing too much stock in Kaunitz's fondness for French culture or in his intimate familiarity with French literature, theater, and art. This affinity did not mean that Kaunitz was entirely a Francophile.[72] He was not pursuing France out of some sycophantic idealization; the alliance would not have been pursued if not for the crucial diplomatic considerations posed by Great Britain and Prussia. But, we do know that Kaunitz was not abhorrent of all things French. His acceptance as much as his appreciation of French culture likely made him more predisposed than many to consider a French alliance.

In a political climate where a future Prussian attack was seen in Austria as inevitable, the questionable reliability of Great Britain's support for Austria was a serious liability. The disruption of their mutual goal of containing France spelled hard times for the Anglo-Austrian alliance, but it was Great Britain's apparent lack of concern for Austrian interests that convinced Kaunitz an alternative alliance structure had to be created. So, indeed, relations between Britain

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 28-29.

and Austria played an extremely important role in the reevaluation of Austrian policies, but it did not inevitably point to a French alliance. What made negotiations with France such an irresistible alternative were the close ties between her and Prussia. With these two powers in agreement, Austria would be required to split her resources between France to the west and Prussia to the north. Austria needed to isolate Prussia if it wanted to prevail against Frederick.

The long-term developments, encompassing the drastically changed European situation after Utrecht, provided the geopolitical opportunity that gave Kaunitz's plans a chance of success. But Kaunitz's strategy received little positive reception within France and may never have succeeded had it not been for the negotiations between Great Britain and Prussia that culminated in the Westminster Convention. Prussia's fickleness was reaffirmed and the possibility of isolation stared France in the face. For France, this was the first moment when reevaluating their position became a political necessity. When the rug was pulled out from beneath their feet, Austria was conveniently waiting. Suddenly France saw in Austria precisely what it needed when facing war against an Anglo-Prussian partnership: a counterpoint to Prussian aggression on the continent.

The First Test

Frederick II fulfilled his enemies' predictions when he again struck against the Habsburgs in August of 1756.[73] This plunged France and Austria into a continental war mere months after the conclusion of their defensive alliance. During this first test of the new alliance, France struggled to hang on to its overseas empire and finally gain an upper hand against Great Britain while Austria struggled to remove Prussia as a threat once and for all by recovering Silesia and

[73] The following summary has been gathered from Szabo, *The Seven Years War*.

dealing a decisive blow to Frederick. The two powers had differing aims in this conflict and we will see later how these cross-purposes created many difficulties for the Franco-Austrian war effort. The difficulties then created resentment as both powers blamed the other for the failure to accomplish their war aims.

Between 1756 and 1759 France and Austria concluded three separate Treaties of Versailles. These can help us chart the early course of the war and relations between both allies. The First Treaty, concluded prior to the start of the war, was purely defensive in nature, protecting against the eventuality of an attack by Prussia. This was the cornerstone of the Diplomatic Revolution and the beginning of the Franco-Austrian alliance. The Second Treaty was offensive in nature. This ramped up the requirements of both powers and hinted at a closer understanding and degree of cooperation between France and Austria. It showed important cracks in the veneer of friendship however, as the negotiations were often fraught with indignation. One year after the initial Franco-Austrian alliance was signed, the offensive treaty was concluded. From there things began going rapidly downhill. Bernis's dispatches to Stainville, the French ambassador in Vienna, became increasingly desperate as French military and financial prospects deteriorated. By 1758 Bernis was begging Austria to conclude peace. At the end of this year Bernis was removed from office, exiled, and replaced by Stainville, newly dubbed the Duc de Choiseul, as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Choiseul then quickly concluded the negotiations he had been conducting with Vienna about a reduction of the subsidy and troop requirements listed in the Second Treaty. The Third Treaty of Versailles, essentially a reversion to the initial agreement of 1756, was officially signed in March of 1759. While the war continued until 1763, the last years were chiefly preoccupied with negotiations and maneuvering over potential peace terms. Offensive military campaigns were launched to secure the best

position from which to treat. France, especially, advocated for an end to the continental war as soon as possible.

When the war concluded, neither France nor Austria had achieved their goals. France had lost colonial possessions as well as diplomatic prestige and influence to Great Britain. Austria had failed to regain Silesia or deal a decisive blow to Prussia. The alliance survived the Seven Years War, but it was a "deadlocked alliance," in the words of Marco Cesa, and would continue to be so until it was effectively ended by a renewal of hostilities during the French Revolution.[74] In 1756 both France and Austria had found themselves in a situation in which their current political alliances no longer provided what they needed. When faced with this problem, an alliance with each other appeared as a feasible option because the previous geopolitical considerations, which had given such fuel to the fire of their rivalry, had been diminished. But, though the powers concluded an alliance politically, it did not remove the two hundred and fifty year tradition of enmity and hostility between the two states. When faced almost immediately with the Seven Years War, this hostility escalated the tensions between the two powers despite their nominal friendship. Within the diplomatic correspondence of key actors on both sides of the political playing field, we can see that the fear and distrust that fueled the rivalry for so long were still present underneath the titular alliance.

[74]Cesa, *Allies Yet Rivals*, 176-211.

Chapter 2

Austria

After the Seven Years War, Kaunitz outlined several reasons why the alliance with France should continue despite the disastrous outcomes of the conflict. The French alliance would guarantee peace on the continent and would allow a more stable system to be maintained. "Before the alliance with France and after Silesia fell into Prussian hands, all the Habsburg crown lands were exposed to constant and obvious danger."[75] Neutralizing France as a threat greatly reduced this exposure and allowed Austria to focus solely on Prussia, now Austria's chief rival. True, this strategy had not achieved everything Austria had hoped for during the Seven Years War, but it had still allowed Austria to grapple with Prussia directly and the Habsburgs were not forced to split their forces across several different fronts.

Prussia was undoubtedly the Habsburg priority, but the geopolitical rivalry with France was not immediately wiped away. Kaunitz's second argument for the continuation of the French alliance was the maintenance of peace on the continent. He outlined, in terms strikingly similar to those used by Cesa and Thompson, how the "Austro-French accord... will guarantee the general tranquility and each state's individual security. Neither Austrian nor French interests can view with equanimity either one's attempt to enlarge itself or to tip the balance of power in its favor."[76] Both powers would be using the alliance to accomplish the same outcomes previously pursued through warfare: preventing the undue growth of either power relative to the other. Now, however, these goals would presumably be achieved through diplomacy and negotiation as allies. No longer was a territorial war between these two powers to be feared. Conflicts within the

[75] Prince Wenzel Kaunitz-Rietberg, "Denkschriften, 1764," in *Maria Theresa,* ed. Karl A. Roider, Jr (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1973), 119.
[76] Ibid., 122.

empire, either from French instigation or Austrian consolidation, would be lessened. But this was not to say that the Habsburgs and the French would achieve peace through harmonious cooperation. Instead France would simply prevent Austrian domination through diplomatic measures and Austria would keep check on French aggrandizement and belligerence through peaceful means. The situation described by Kaunitz, in which tranquility would be ensured, is the same that Cesa describes as deadlocked. The alliance did not further mutually beneficial goals; it was instead be a vehicle through which each power could contain the other. Although Prussia was the greatest threat, Austria could not simply allow France a free rein on the continent. Overt rivalry may have ended in 1756, but the two powers still experienced political competition that was not so different from their previous relationship.

Political competition creates suspicion and the attendant mistrust of one's rival, neither of which disappeared entirely when the alliance was concluded. Enmity with France had grown out of the struggle to contain the state for so many years. This enmity persisted, just as the ultimate goal of preventing disproportionate French gains persisted. Throughout the Austrian diplomatic correspondence of the Seven Years War, vestiges of the enmity with France can be seen in distrust of French intentions and motivations. Although nominally allies, a diplomatic agreement was not enough to change the ingrained opinions of individuals overnight, even when these individuals were responsible for creating and maintaining the alliance. These individuals then made decisions based on their opinions and their perception of a situation. The correspondence we will examine is chiefly that of two actors, State Chancellor Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz and the Empress-Queen, Maria Theresa, written to the Austrian ambassador in France, Count Georg Prince of Starhemberg. Both Kaunitz and Maria Theresa had a large stake in the

continuance of the alliance and genuinely believed that it was the most sensible option if Austria wanted to defeat Prussia.

Yet even for these individuals, working within the alliance was not easy. Throughout the Franco-Austrian relationship there were disputes and tensions between the two powers. It is at the locus of these tensions where we find examples of continued enmity towards France. In each case, tensions would arise when the two powers were not in agreement; one power would take a step that the other power did not condone. These tensions alone do not signify much; all allies will disagree at moments. What is significant is the way in which Kaunitz and Maria Theresa discussed the steps taken by France against Austrian wishes. When frustration with France became too much to conceal, Kaunitz and Maria Theresa could not longer maintain a cool, diplomatic tone. The frustration reads clearly enough from the correspondence and arose frequently in Austrian dealings with France. And, while the evidence for the Austrian side does not conclusively point to the same level of distrust and enmity which we will see in France, in light of the historical relationship reviewed in the last chapter, it is plausible to suggest that the all too common frustrations arose out of a tradition of distrust and suspicion. These were moments when French decisions diverged the most from what Austrian statesmen had counseled. From the Austrian viewpoint, these choices were not made out of genuine interest to further the goals of the alliance, but out of some other motivation.

Distrust would rear its ugly head, but in the interest of maintaining the alliance would be suppressed. Thus, while clearly unhappy with the circumstances, in most of the correspondence that Kaunitz and Maria Theresa truly betrayed their pique, they also provided counter suggestions and proposals. Never once did Kaunitz or Maria Theresa give up on the alliance entirely or work to conclude a separate peace. While it is absurd to think that Austrian diplomats

were immune to the effects of the long tradition of enmity with France, the relationship with France needed to be endured in order to continue the alliance because Frederick II and the Prussian state were much more dangerous. To illustrate how powerful personal motives were in eighteenth century diplomacy, we will begin by discussing Frederick and opinions of Prussia as the enemy. Using this as a comparative point, we will then analyze reactions to several specific moments in the Franco-Austrian partnership that caused tensions and frustrations.

The Monstrous Prussian King

Since the "Rape of Silesia," Prussia had become Austria's top priority. This consideration meant that suspicions of France had to be suppressed in favor of maintaining the alliance, which was crucial to Austria's ability to counter Prussia. Hence, the immediate threat posed by the Prussian state ultimately superseded misgivings over France's exploits, even when these choices proved detrimental to the campaign against Prussia. While French decisions might result in fewer resources or an expanded conflict, it would never directly result in the dismemberment of the Habsburg state. Prussia, on the other hand, posed a threat to the survival of Maria Theresa's inheritance, to the continuation of her state, and to Habsburg authority in the empire. "It was the monarchy's security that guided her [Maria Theresa's] hand"[77] in determining whether or not to prolong the Franco-Austrian alliance as a means of continuing the struggle against Prussia. This struggle, she always hoped, would end in a success for the House of Habsburg during the next battle or the next campaign. If not, the despicable Prussian war machine might disrupt the existence of her entire world.

[77] Ingrao, "Habsburg Strategy and Geopolitics," 59.

Maria Theresa had an extreme personal hatred of Frederick that grew out of the threat he posed and the injuries he had already inflicted upon the Imperial House. Matters of state, such as his seizure of Silesia, influenced this personal hatred, but this hatred also reinforced Austrian determination to exact revenge and destroy Prussian power. Maria Theresa repeatedly depicted Frederick as someone entirely beyond the world of civility and morality. Writing to Maria Antonia, consort to the Elector of Saxony, she referred to Frederick as a monster, against whom she would send "the young and the old and the last man [*le verd et le sec et le dernier homme*], to draw you from this slavery."[78] Maria Theresa saw the Prussian occupation of Saxony as a form of enslavement, against which she would send every man available. The Empress "had always detested the perfidy of Frederick, his broken word in European affairs, his Machiavellian attitude." His actions during the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War "placed Prussia outside the realm of civilized nations."[79] His occupation of Saxony was nothing less than enslavement by a treacherous, dishonorable, monster bent solely on obtaining his own interests and those of his state, to the detriment of the rest of Europe.

The image of Frederick as a loose cannon at the helm of the Prussian state contributed to fantastic imaginations of evil deeds committed by the king during his military rampages. In a decree concerning Prussian military recruitment, Maria Theresa did not hesitate to paint a picture of an evil tyrant sucking the life-blood out of Europe.

> The political measures of the King in Prussia are extraordinary and perilous, so therefore his arrangements for war must not be less distinguished... The king in Prussia... ravishes foreign subjects and forces them to break their oath and duty, to become soldiers and fight against their own sovereign. His entire military is such an artificial machine, in which each individual solder is forced against their will to be useful and to fight. All of the other powers become denuded of people through the war

[78] Maria Theresa to Maria Antonia, December 21, 1758, in *Kaiserin Maria Theresia und Kurfürstin Maria Antonia von Sachsen Briefwechsel, 1747-1772* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1908), 34.
[79] Batzel, "The First Three Treaties of Versailles," 201; Ibid., 14.

> and the frequent battles; the King alone has found the means to replenish his troops through war.[80]

Once again invoking language of rape and plunder, Maria Theresa depicted Frederick as a despot leeching the manpower from conquered lands to feed his own military machine. He turned men and citizens against their own people and their own sovereigns, forcing them to break sacred oaths of fidelity. At the same time, he sucked the lifeblood from those he fought against through constant warfare. While civilized nations would lose men during war, only Frederick was able to restore his military establishment via warfare, by drawing the resources and manpower out of his enemies' nations. In a letter written to her son Joseph II in 1778, Maria Theresa described Frederick as "villainous," "petty," "a veritable charlatan, concealed only by his power and good luck," and, again, as a "Monster."[81] Her hatred did not cease after the end of the Seven Years War, and Frederick would always remain something wholly alien to Maria Theresa's standards of respectability, honorability, and morality.

It was this intense hatred that made it so imperative for Maria Theresa, and therefore for her entire state, to exact revenge on Frederick and to crush Prussian might. *Raison d'état* said that Prussia was a relatively strong power in close proximity to Austria with an anti-Habsburg ruler. But the personal hatred and vilification of Frederick by Maria Theresa made the situation even more critical to address. As perceived by the empress, Frederick was entirely deficient of integrity or honor and thus liable to do just about anything. This was terrifying to the Court of Vienna. If treaties, negotiations, or the standard principles that made eighteenth-century European diplomacy run could not contain Frederick, then the only possible way of neutralizing him was to dismember his state and so weaken it that Prussia no longer posed any threat. The

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[80] Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria, "Urteil Maria Theresias über das preußische Heeresersatzwesen, 23 December, 1757," in *Briefe und Aktenstücke in Auswahl*, ed. Friedrich Walter (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1968).
[81] Maria Theresa to Joseph II, June 20, 1778, in *Maria Theresa*, 28.

combination of political reality and perception was the context in which Maria Theresa and her ministers were making their decisions. Prussia's potential for destruction and Frederick's perceived dishonor dictated that a military strategy was the only way for Austria to proceed. This, then, also dictated that an alliance with France was necessary to have the security and support to focus entirely on crushing Prussia. This ultimately meant putting up with all of the suspicions of France and of French intentions. So, though the Franco-Austrian alliance may not have been easy, nor consistently beneficial, any help against the villainous monster, Frederick II, was appreciated and not to be thrown away lightly.

The Suspicious Intentions of Versailles

Even though Kaunitz and Maria Theresa both refused to give up on the Franco-Austrian alliance, they still at times seem to have fallen victim to the legacy of distrust. I will be analyzing three specific events which caused significant tension within the alliance: the territorial exchange of the Austrian Low Countries, the French plan to invade Hanover, and the question of the French auxiliary corps. The crucial factor that we are looking for in the correspondence of these two individuals is suspected motivation. France may have had legitimate geopolitical reasons for ignoring the entreaties of its ally and making a move contrary to Austrian interests. What we will see, however, is that the reaction to such moves did not usually encompass an attempt to understand these geopolitical reasons. Instead, when faced with French obstinacy, Kaunitz and Maria Theresa suspected France of having ulterior motives. They became angry, or frustrated, or exasperated because they saw, accurately or not, that Versailles did not have the best interests of the alliance in mind and was therefore making detrimental decisions that undermined the allied war effort. Again, the immediate concerns were ones of state security and were motivated in

large part by *raison d'état*, but the reactions were based upon an image of these political factors distorted by perceptions of motivation and intention. Assigned motivations for otherwise inexplicably contrary French actions grew directly out of the mistrust that was a remnant of the Franco-Habsburg rivalry. Responses to France were then based on these interpretations of events, colored as the perceptions were by distrust.

Since the First Treaty of Versailles was signed in May of 1756, discussions had been underway to negotiate a new offensive treaty.[82] During negotiations, Austria offered part of the Low Countries in return for French guarantees of the return of Silesia and Glatz to the Habsburgs and of financial and military support for this end. Initially the cession of lands was to occur once Silesia and Glatz were securely in Habsburg hands. Then France floated the proposal that Austria sell the Netherlands to France in its entirety at the outset of the war. The French saw this as a means of ensuring the security of the Netherlands. They could protect the territory and then secure its transfer to the Spanish Infante, Don Philippe, at the end of the war. To France this proposal was protection against the possibility that Austria would use French resources to recapture Silesia without being sufficiently bound to territorial exchanges in the Low Countries.[83]

The offer derived from French distrust of Austria, but the idea of an immediate, outright transfer set off alarms in Vienna. As Maria Theresa described it, the French were not simply offering out of good will, "such an augmentation would increase the French power on water and on land."[84] Austrian interests required the maintenance of a power balance on the continent and the Empress did not have faith in French assurances. She saw this as a strategy to upset the power balance in France's favor. To the empress, there was no reason to effect an exchange of

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[82] Szabo, *The Seven Years War,* 48-49.
[83] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 48-51.
[84] Maria Theresa to Starhemberg, Vienna, June 9, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten zur Vorgeschichte des siebenjährigen Krieges*, ed. Gustav Berthold Volz and Georg Küntzel (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1899), 401.

the Netherlands for Silesia and Glatz if the latter two had not "first be[en] snatched from the King in Prussia through the force of weapons."[85] Only with Silesia securely in Austrian hands would Maria Theresa trust France enough to effect a territorial exchange. Otherwise, Maria Theresa was sure that France would simply occupy the most valuable portions of the region for itself. She also saw this offer as a maneuver by France to exclude Austria from a closer understanding with Spain and Naples, which would result from the installation of Don Philippe.[86] To the Empress it seemed obvious that Versailles would not relinquish valuable territories once these were solidly within its grasp. At the same time France could conveniently stall an expansion of Austrian influence in the Spanish and Neapolitan courts. As she saw it, if Austria allowed France to obtain full possession of the Netherlands at the outset, Vienna would be playing into the manipulative hands of the French.

Another important consideration for Vienna was the need to keep France securely tied to the alliance. The proposed immediate cession of the Low Countries placed the reliability of the French as allies under suspicion. Maria Theresa repeatedly invoked the twin virtues of "equality and reciprocity"[87] to describe how the Franco-Austrian alliance must function. Both powers needed to contribute equally to the Prussian struggle. If France insisted on asking for more from Austria, Austria would do the same. Maria Theresa listed several new demands as "*conditiones sine quibus non*" in response to France's new requests in the Low Countries.[88] These demands included France's declaration of support for the return of Silesia and Glatz to the Habsburgs, increased subsidy payments, and a commitment to providing approximately fifty thousand men

[85] Ibid., 402.
[86] Ibid., 401.
[87] Ibid., 396-406.
[88] Ibid., 398.

for Austrian use in central Europe.[89] As Batzel explains, "in the interests of reciprocity, the French would have to carry a greater burden in the enterprise to offset added Austrian sacrifices."[90] This would keep the alliance fair and keep France honest, for the more invested France became in the alliance, the more likely it was to provide consistent support.

Maria Theresa did not trust the word of Versailles in regards to the Low Countries and she did not trust French guarantees of help against Prussia without any additional motivation. The fear lurking behind these negotiations and counterproposals was that France would abandon Austria when presented with an appetizing opportunity. This fear was driven both by increasing defeatism voiced by Bernis and a long history of little cooperation between the two powers. After centuries of rivalry were ended only by a quickly concluded alliance after news of the Westminster Convention, it only makes sense that Austrian statesmen would be wary of French loyalties. But, Maria Theresa never outright denied French proposals of a cession of the Low Countries and instead provided suggestions, alternatives, and equivalents to even out the treaty.

This determination to endure French vacillation did not waver even when France seemed to be intentionally sabotaging the alliance. One such example was France's insistence on becoming embroiled militarily in Hanover. France proposed to field a continental army of one hundred thousand men to be deployed against King George's possessions in Hanover.[91] For the French, occupation of Hanover would mean an incredibly useful bargaining chip for later negotiations with England. If the French could defeat Hanover, it would also secure a convenient launching point for French maneuvers against Prussia. Frederick himself was extremely anxious

[89] Ibid., 396-406; Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 163.
[90] Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 164.
[91] Szabo, *The Seven Years War,* 75.

about this possibility, for if Hanover fell, his western flank would be entirely exposed. The Prussian king strongly campaigned for increased Hanoverian protection from England.[92]

Austria did not see the potential benefits of French involvement in Hanover in quite the same light. Kaunitz and Maria Theresa suspected French aggression and belligerence to be the true factors behind this plan.[93] France was fielding a significantly larger army, comprised of troops promised to Austria, in order to pursue its own interests by gaining an advantage against England. A letter from Kaunitz to Starhemberg, dated November 14, 1756, outlined many counterarguments meant to persuade France of the folly of a Hanoverian campaign. To the French ministry this was a prime opportunity. The combined forces of Austria and Russia would keep Prussia sufficiently occupied and would most likely win a decisive and quick victory over Frederick. In the meantime France could deal an equally quick and decisive blow to the King of England. Kaunitz argued that a campaign in Hanover would not bring about any of the outcomes that the French ministry desired. Instead, Kaunitz urged France to realize that the actual consequences would earn nothing for France and be disastrous for Austria.[94]

If the French ministry was to move forward with its plan, it would cause a much-expanded conflict, "as costly as it is dangerous,"[95] without achieving anything for the Habsburg cause *vis-à-vis* Prussia. As Kaunitz described the scheme, "In a word, the plan in question could occasion a general fire, and consequently disturb entirely the common views of the two courts."[96] Much concern was voiced about the effect that a French attack on Hanover would have for

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[92] Ibid., 75-77.
[93] In fact these suspicions may have been entirely accurate. Batzel argues that aggression and self-interest were indeed the motivating factors behind French campaigns in Hanover. See Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 236-239.
[94] Kaunitz to Starhemberg, November 14, 1756, Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereafter cited as HHStA), Staatenabteilung (hereafter cited as StA), Frankreich Weisungen (hereafter cited as FW) 96 (1756), Fasc. X-XII, f. 61.
[95] Ibid., 61v.
[96] Ibid., 62.

imperial relations between Catholic and Protestant princes. In September Maria Theresa and Kaunitz again voiced similar warnings and emphasized the need to prevent Protestant princes from joining with Prussia in the face of French aggression.[97] In addition to arguing that the plan would provide no tangible benefit to Austria, Kaunitz tried to point out that it would not achieve France's goals either. The English ministry cared little for the King's Hanoverian possessions, but the King himself would refuse to allow "*une armée formidable"* to tear through his territory. He would open the coffers of the Hanoverian treasury to combat France and would eagerly contribute money to "excite cabals, mayhem, and revolutions [in Russia and Turkey] which could render the outcome of the war fatal to the new system" entirely.[98] The only way out of this disaster was to conclude a neutrality agreement with Hanover and thus remove the danger entirely. Neutrality would give France no excuse but to send the auxiliary corps directly to the Austrian army, as they had promised.[99] Hanover itself wished to negotiate neutrality, but this outcome was never achieved.[100] In the spring of 1757 the French invaded the principality despite warnings from Vienna. This was a move that would have reinforced Austrian distrust and suspicions. Even after multiple repeated attempts to explain the hazards, drawbacks, and alternatives to a Hanoverian invasion, France proceeded regardless.

This initial invasion was extremely successful and by the end of the summer Hanover had asked for terms. The convention of Kloster Zeven was quickly concluded in September of 1757. This convention was in fact a neutrality agreement, what Austria had wanted all along, but neither France nor England was happy with it and both quickly began searching for a way out.[101]

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[97] Maria Theresa to Starhemberg, Vienna, September 19, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten,* 590-592; Kaunitz to Starhemberg , Vienna, September 19, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten*, 592-593.
[98] Kaunitz to Starhemberg, November 14, 1756, HHStA, StA, FW 96 (1756), Fasc. X-XII, ff. 61v-62.
[99] Kaunitz to Starhemberg, September 19, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten,* 593.
[100] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 75.
[101] Ibid., 92-94.

The French ministry felt that the agreement was too lax. It stipulated French occupation of Hanover but did not require the Hanoverian army to be dismantled.[102] King George was furious that his hereditary lands were in French hands and managed to wring guarantees of support out of his English cabinet ministers. A little over a month after the agreement had been signed, it was formally repudiated by England.[103] At this point, Austria again tried to ensure Hanoverian neutrality and finally obtained support from France, albeit reluctantly. Unfortunately, resolve in Great Britain had solidified behind the repudiation of Kloster Zeven and preparations had already begun for a continental offensive. The window of opportunity had passed and "any attempt to neutralise north-west Germany so that the French could concentrate on Prussia was doomed to failure."[104]

While the culpability could in fact be assigned to various actors, the Austrians saw French responsibility in all of these developments. If the French had simply listened to the carefully reasoned arguments and proposals of Kaunitz, a neutrality agreement might have been concluded early in the war. This would have freed up all of the resources France poured into Hanover and allowed the Austrians to direct this might towards crushing Prussia quickly and decisively. French belligerence had instead set off a chain of resentment and reprisal that united King George's possessions in Great Britain and Hanover in a way that had not seemed possible before. Suddenly Great Britain was taking it upon itself to finance and field a continental army under the direction of Ferdinand of Brunswick.[105] The continental theater had quickly expanded and French troops were employed in campaign after campaign with little benefit to the fight against Frederick, just as Kaunitz had predicted.

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[102] Ibid., 79.
[103] Ibid., 100.
[104] Ibid., 133.
[105] Ibid.

In an undated letter written in December of 1757, Maria Theresa lamented the sorry state French decisions had created.

> Last night a letter arrived from Paris, bringing everything you could wish. They want to sacrifice their own interests in Hanover and in England itself, and push to crush the King of Prussia. All this is comforting, but all too late and will not help us in time. I look at the business still to be lost irretrievably.[106]

Even by December Maria Theresa realized there was little chance of fixing the situation that France had created by invading Hanover. It was well that the ministers in Versailles realized the misguided direction of their efforts, but it was unfortunately too little too late for the purposes of the Austrian court. In the same month Kaunitz was so frustrated with French actions and disappointed by the missed opportunity that he called French involvement in Hanover "the greatest political mistake" of the war. If France had sent the one hundred thousand Frenchmen directly against Prussia, the allies could have crushed Frederick effectively at the outset.[107] This was an irredeemable mistake in the eyes of Austria especially since it had been made in direct opposition to Austrian counsels. And, if not destroying any faith in French intentions, it certainly weakened trust in the French ability to assess a situation. It was something which would continue to stick in the minds of the Austrian statesmen and which fed still further into lingering distrust of Versailles.

Even while involving itself in Hanover, France was required by both the First and Second Treaties of Versailles to provide an auxiliary corps directly to the Austrian army. According to the initial agreement in the First Treaty of Versailles, this corps would amount to twenty four thousand men or the monetary equivalent thereof. The choice was left to the discretion of Maria

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[106] Maria Theresa to Grafen Ulfeldt, Undated (December 1757), in *Briefe der Kaiserin Maria Theresia an Ihre Kinder und Freunde*, ed. Alfred Ritter von Arneth (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1978), 4:198.
[107] Kaunitz to Starhemberg, December 29, 1757, HHStA, StA, FW 102 (1757), Fasc. XII, ff. 40-53.

Theresa who preferred to have the corps sent to her as soon as possible.[108] On May 1, 1757 the Second Treaty of Versailles was signed which stipulated that France would provide an army of over one hundred thousand men to be put in the field directly against Prussia. They would also provide an auxiliary corps of twenty-four thousand to serve with the imperial army.[109] By the end of 1757 however, the French realized they could not live up to these conditions. They began trying to back out of the requirements stipulated in the Second Treaty.[110] The Austrians saw this as a symptom of French self-interest, as the war dragged on with increasingly little prospect of gain.

Despite repeated assurances that the auxiliary corps was to march soon, it always seemed that soon never arrived. Urgings by Maria Theresa and Kaunitz to send the corps as soon as possible appear in the correspondence as frequently as French promises to do so and excuses as to why they had not done so already. The Austrian court became frustrated by these excuses and saw them as convenient methods of escaping commitments. The court neither believed nor appreciated the arguments France was making. As the date of deployment was pushed farther and farther back, the reassurances of Bernis and Louis XV fell on increasingly deaf ears. On September 29, 1756, Starhemberg wrote to Kaunitz that "although France has not officially conceded to the march of the auxiliary corps towards Bohemia," Starhemberg had been reassured that "the entire corps could be on the move the 25th or the 26th of the [next] month at the latest."[111] Then On October 5, 1756 Starhemberg wrote to Kaunitz that Bernis had promised him troops were indeed being organized for Austrian use, but they would now unfortunately not be able to cross the Rhine until at least the 10th or 13th of November. These most recent excuses

[108] Maria Theresa to Starhemberg, September 19, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten* 590.
[109] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 50.
[110] Ibid., 191.
[111] Starhemberg to Kaunitz, Paris, September 29, 1756 in in *Preussische und österreichische Acten,* 601.

and reassurances of Bernis were hollow to Starhemberg, who declared, "This assertion is absolutely contrary to the truth. It is indisputable that they would be able to cross the Rhine the 20th or 22nd of October."[112] He then accused the French of intentionally dragging their feet and delaying the deployment of the troops. He could see that most of the French court was against the idea. "The cause here has begun to become very disagreeable; all are united against it... Pompadour… Belleisle [sic]… Bernis... they all think that the matter will not go well."[113]

Charles Louis Auguste Fouquet, duc de Belle-Isle, future Secretary of State for War, led the opposition and finally clearly stated his opinions. Belle-Isle laid out several reasons why the troops should not, in fact, be sent at all. He argued that by the time the troops arrived, they would be of no use to the Austrians due to fatigue from the long journey.[114] Likewise, because it was so late in the campaigning season, by the time the troops had recuperated the Austrians would have little use for them. By this logic there was no need to hasten the departure of the troops. They would do just as much good arriving at the beginning of the next campaign season as at the end of this one. The French ministry also argued that providing troops to Austria would weaken French defenses, making them vulnerable to attacks from England and from the combined English and German forces in Hanover. This was the final straw for Kaunitz, who did not conceal his anger in a letter of October 18, 1757. Kaunitz began by criticizing Louis XV for falsely portraying himself and France as respectable and reliable. The French monarch acted as if he fulfilled his treaty engagements "with promptness and fidelity." All the while he had continually assured the Empress that France would remain true to its treaty obligations, "the

[112] Starhemberg to Kaunitz, Paris, October 5, 1756, in *Preussische und österreichische Acten,* 607. This is the postscript to another letter dated the same day and cited below.
[113] Starhemberg to Kaunitz, Paris, October 5, 1756 in in *Preussische und österreichische Acten,* 606.
[114] Batzel, "First Three Treaties of Versailles," 228.

auxiliary corps above all."[115] Yet, Austria still had not been given any positive proof that these seemingly empty promises would be kept and no definite answer as to when the auxiliary corps would be sent.

Kaunitz directly cited the excuses given by Belle-Isles and rejected them one by one. He especially scoffed at the presumption that supplying a corps of twenty four thousand men for Austrian use would have any significant effect on France's ability to protect itself. Kaunitz questioned how "a power like her [France], who has not been prevented from having large armies in Germany, Italy, and the Low Countries by [conducting] a sea war a few years prior, could be embarrassed when it comes to sending 24,000 men to the help of an ally, whose success should earn it immeasurable acquisitions and advantages."[116] French resources were assumed to be so extensive that Kaunitz saw Belle-Isle's argument as a pathetic excuse used to cloak the dishonest behavior of France. Additionally, Kaunitz flatly stated that "the Empress is within her rights to determine the destination of the aid [provided to her], and no domestic reason can authorize France to not dispense it."[117] But instead of supporting its ally as France had promised to do, Kaunitz argued that "France believes she can be allowed the preference of her own convenience over the rights of her allies in executing the [requirements] of the treaties" while Austria, the victim and "the attacked party," was forced to carry alone all the responsibilities of the war with Prussia.[118] Kaunitz accused France of betraying the precise stipulations of the Franco-Austrian treaty, of placing the interests of France above all else, and of covering with "obliging phrases" their refusals to provide an ally with much needed help.[119] The lack of clarity

[115] Kaunitz to Starhemberg, October 18, 1756, HHStA, StA, FW 96 (1756), Fasc. X-XII, f. 38.
[116] Ibid., 39.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., 40, 41.
[119] Ibid., 39-40, 41v, 39v.

lured Austria into a false sense of assurance as Vienna counted on troops that never arrived and the dearth of follow-through made any previous trust in France seem grossly misplaced.

In one of the most scathing sections of the letter, Kaunitz asked point blank whether or not France had any good intentions towards the alliance and the interests of Austria. Their behavior was raising strong suspicions in Vienna.

> It is a question of knowing if one wants the thing or if one does not? And if one wants it, it follows, that one must also want to employ the means of obtaining it, and not [just] half [of it], but vigorously, at least one would not want to expose it to the hazards of the affair which could be certain with [the employment of] sufficient measures; whereas conducting the war weakly, it cannot but be much longer and consequently more expensive.[120]

If France truly had the best interests of its ally at heart, than it would not hesitate to send help. The crux of this question was, again, suspicions of French loyalty. Viewing it from this angle, it is no wonder that Kaunitz asked whether France actually wanted the successful completion of the goals of the alliance or not. Expecting the "obliging phrases" of a positive confirmation, Kaunitz then immediately asked why, if wanting "the thing," France was wasting so much time and energy preventing the quick and decisive conclusion of it. While complaining of a dearth of troops it was prolonging the war and using up its own purportedly limited resources. Something within this construction did not add up for Kaunitz and the Austrian ministry. Kaunitz demanded an explanation. He reiterated that Maria Theresa was not asking France to divert all of its resources towards the Austro-Prussian struggle or wanting France to be distracted from its war with England. Austria simply expected France to live up to the obligations agreed to in the treaties. By fulfilling these obligations, they would also be providing Austria with assistance that could only lead to a swifter conclusion of the war, an outcome beneficial to both parties.[121]

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[120] Ibid., 40v-41.
[121] Ibid., 41v-42.

When France pursued a course of action that did not correspond with allied goals, it both prompted and reinforced the tradition of skepticism created by the history of rivalry. When the French intentionally disregarded the arguments, entreaties, and counterproposals logically laid out by Kaunitz and Maria Theresa, the question arose of whether or not France was truly working towards allied goals, or whether it had other, potentially devious, motives. Kaunitz and Maria Theresa experienced suspicions of French motivations that worked within the contextual framework of the Franco-Habsburg relationship, until recently the Franco-Habsburg rivalry. And yet, despite the distrust and frustration the court of Vienna tolerated French vacillation. Maria Theresa never suggested abandoning the alliance. Kaunitz argued for its continuation after 1763. No matter how little they trusted Versailles, maintaining France as an ally, even if the French cared little for Austrian interests, still provided tangible benefits against the Prussian threat.

These benefits were so great that Vienna even sacrificed some of its own interests and demands *vis-à-vis* France in order to mollify Versailles and maintain the alliance. Kaunitz and Maria Theresa conceded to appeasing France on several occasions when tensions between the powers threatened to push the French court into rupturing the partnership. The Third Treaty of Versailles is a clear example. Negotiated throughout 1758, it was concluded on the basis of the reduced subsidy and troop commitments contained in the original defensive treaty.[122] The troop requirements were reduced to fourteen thousand men, or the monetary equivalent thereof, and everything contained in the Second Treaty of Versailles was declared "null and void,"[123] including French guarantees to not lay down arms until Silesia and Glatz had been recovered. Of course this treaty was not entirely one-sided, but it did involve serious concessions seen

[122] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 191.
[123] Ibid., 213.

previously by the Habsburg court as *condiciones sine quibus non*.[124] No longer could Vienna rely on French support until these territories had been returned and Prussia no longer posed a serious threat. It might seem that this new agreement made no sense for Austrian interests, as weakening Prussia and recovering Silesia were the most important goals in the Austrian agenda. But, even without French guarantees, there was still a chance that Austria might be able to defeat Prussia. It was certainly better, at the very least, than ending the Franco-Austrian alliance and risking a revival of the entente between Louis XV and Frederick II.

To Kaunitz and Maria Theresa, the French were suspected of being untrustworthy and selfish, but they were no longer a danger to the existence of the Habsburg state like Prussia was. Therefore, although the concessions given were not ideal and France still required careful watching, it was necessary to appease the French in order to keep them attached to the alliance. France as ally, even an uncooperative ally, still provided continental security, still allowed Austria to focus its forces directly against Prussia, and still provided some form of monetary and military support, all crucial components in the fight against Frederick. The reasons for Austrian perseverance were the same that so inclined Kaunitz and Maria Theresa to conclude the shocking alliance reversal in the first place. Austria had larger and more threatening problems on the horizon.

[124] For a more detailed summary of the provisions see Ibid., 210-214.

Chapter 3

France

France had no such new threat on the horizon to mitigate its distrust of Austria. There was of course the danger posed by Great Britain, but this was a rivalry of comparable length and severity to that with Austria. The threats and challenges posed by the English were not a new development. For France, enmity with Austria and Great Britain had existed simultaneously for centuries, one was not suddenly going to replace the other. The lack of new developments on France's political horizon also helps to explain why French diplomats were not particularly receptive to Austrian overtures at first. It was not until after they had been isolated by the Anglo-Prussian alliance at Westminster that the French ministry truly began considering Austrian proposals. The Franco-Austrian alliance for France was concluded out of a dire necessity more than a gradual reassessment of the needs of the French state. The alliance shift therefore seemed extremely sudden and haphazard to many who were not directly involved in the negotiations, and still seemed so to many who were.

In August of 1756, Jean-Louis Favier wrote a pamphlet encapsulating the confusion, outrage, and distrust directed towards the new alliance by many in France.[125] This pamphlet was written for Louis XV by the request of the fiercely anti-Austrian Marquis D'Argenson.[126] Entitled "Doubts and Questions about the Treaty of Versailles," the pamphlet was intended to point out the dangerous path down which France was heading and why the alliance with Austria was an immense mistake to be remedied as soon as possible. Favier evaluated the potential benefits of this alliance and did not find much to be optimistic about. He argued that any political

[125] Jean-Louis Favier, "Doutes et questions sur le traité de Versailles, du 1er Mai 1756, entre le Roi et l'Impératrice-Reine de Hongrie," in *Politique de tous les cabinets de l'Europe, pendant les regnes de Louis XV de Louis XVI* (Paris: F. Buisson, 1801).
[126] Savage, "Favier's Heirs," 232.

action should be understood in the context of potential gains for the safety of the state, the aggrandizement of the state, and the reputation of the state. No agenda should be pursued that did not reap rewards in at least one of these areas. Not surprisingly, Favier proceeded to detail point by point how the alliance with Austria did not provide a single benefit to the French state, and in fact hindered French interests on several accounts.

First, the neutrality agreement with Austria would not enhance French security in any way, because there was no security threat from Austria. According to Favier, Austria would never attack France, even while the latter was preoccupied in a colonial war with Great Britain. "The reason is simple. This war, being on the sea, is outside of the continent, the cheapest success and the largest losses would not ruin our armies, nor open our frontiers. These are the only circumstances which could offer to the court of Vienna some appearance of success."[127] France's armies and allies within the empire would be sufficient to stop any attack on French borders. Even a combined attack from Austria, its allies in the Empire, Great Britain and the Dutch Republic could not amass sufficient forces to challenge the armies of Louis XV.[128] Not only did the treaty offer no opportunity for benefit, it was detrimental to French interests on the continent. The Habsburgs would never have threatened French territorial and power increases in the colonies, as it had no substantial navy. On the other hand, concluding an alliance with Austria meant that the expansion of French influence on the continent was no longer a possibility. Before France could have easily invaded the Habsburg Low Countries and used this as a bargaining chip in future negotiations with Great Britain, an old and trusted French strategy. The alliance with Austria precluded this course and therefore snatched a valuable bargaining chip for colonial aggrandizement from French hands. Finally, the alliance would also hinder

[127] Favier, "Doutes et Questions," 259.
[128] Ibid., 262.

France's credit and reputation at other courts in Europe. Prior to the First Treaty of Versailles, France was esteemed as the counter-point to Austrian aggression and aggrandizement. France's military power protected small states from the "odious and suspect" court of Vienna, whose Empress directed all "her hatred or her vengeance" on these small powers in the hopes of adding them to her empire.[129] By concluding a treaty with this court, France would be forced to assist the Empress in achieving her insatiable quest for empire by concluding the alliance. France was betraying the interests of the rest of her allies, which would strike a severe blow to French credit.

In addition to providing no tangible benefits to the state interests of France, this treaty would cause even more odious problems. Regarding the subsidy agreements, Favier was outraged at what he calculated to be 8,640,000 livres of assistance per year to the Habsburg court. He called this commitment "a subsidy as onerous as it is useless to pay."[130] There would be no reciprocity to this stipulation as Vienna did not possess the resources. While France would certainly be able to fulfill its responsibilities *vis-à-vis* Austria, and would honorably follow through with such a commitment, Austria would not have "the power or the will" to do the same.[131] Plus, Austria was in a much more vulnerable position than France and would require significantly more assistance from its ally. No power would be foolish enough to attack the French state, Favier argued, and if one did it would be quickly crushed. The Habsburgs were in entirely different circumstances. Austria had so many enemies arranged against them in "the Low Countries, on the Elbe, the Oder, the Danube, and in Italy… [that] as a result the risk of being attacked is, for the Austrian states, very large, very frequent, and very multiplied."[132] France would find itself required to protect the Habsburg state when it was inevitably attacked.

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[129] Ibid., 320.
[130] Ibid., 284.
[131] Ibid., 285-286.
[132] Ibid., 298.

This would mean wasting French resources while undermining France's reputation and proving disadvantageous to the growth of French influence and power.

Favier's evaluation was based chiefly on geopolitical concerns of balance of power, assessment of threats, and relative gains, and he could not find a single redeeming feature of the Franco-Austrian alliance. Most of his arguments were grounded in a sizable amount of confidence in French military power and ability to fend off continental threats, perhaps meant to flatter Louis XV's sense of pride, and in an evaluation of Austria's geopolitical position as weak and vulnerable. Austria would drag France down if the alliance were allowed to continue. By allying with a weak Austria, France would sacrifice its own power and prestige for that of the Habsburgs. An interesting facet of Favier's argument was this discussion of relative gains. Cesa sees the same problem as the main symptom of a deadlocked alliance, not beneficial to either party. Kaunitz saw it as a beneficial strategy by which to maintain peace on the continent. Favier, however, saw the issue of relative gains as a potential trap for the French state, from which Austria could clamber out to emerge on top in the political balance of Europe. "All power is relative… therefore that of France will diminish as a consequence of the growth of that of Austria."[133] It was not just possible that Austria would use the alliance to upset the power balance of Europe. It was inevitable.

Inherent in this construction of unequal gains was strong distrust of Austria. In the correspondence of Kaunitz and Maria Theresa, we saw that enmity with France certainly persisted even after the treaty had been signed. We saw how this enmity influenced Austria perceptions and suspicions of French intentions. But, we also saw how the court of Vienna suppressed distrust and frustrations in favor of maintaining the alliance and defeating Frederick.

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[133] Ibid., 323.

France had no such ulterior motive for working towards a continuation of the Franco-Austrian partnership; they saw it as simply a relationship that could be beneficial to the war against Britain. When it proved more difficult than beneficial, French statesmen had little reason to check their mistrust. France was much more willing to give up on the goals stated in the Treaty when the war took a turn for the worse. Versailles was also concerned about sacrificing its resources unnecessarily for suspected Austrian gain. The lack of a strong new argument for maintaining the alliance even in the face of adversity also helps explain why the closer partnership caused more long term effects in France and why the French history of distrust was charged with added elements: Austrophobia and public hatred of the *renversement* and those who represented it.

The Blame Lies with Vienna

Throughout the Franco-Habsburg rivalry, France continually suspected the Habsburgs of committing heinous acts in an effort to recreate their universal empire. Kaiser describes how "the French foreign ministry kept track of Austrian malfeasance in files bearing such labels as 'Assassinations [committed by] the House of Austria,' 'Violations of the Treaty of Westphalia by the Court of Vienna, and 'Injustices of the Court of Vienna.'"[134] The deep distrust inherent in the political rivalry meant that generations of French ministers suspected Austria to be guilty of all sorts of dubious accomplishments, not just crimes but also cruelty, deceit, aggression, and infiltration. Beginning with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, "a new, potentially explosive element" was introduced into French political culture: "Namely," Kaiser writes, "the *idée fixe* that Austrian interests were being promoted from within

[134] Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 583.

the French court."[135] The French position at the peace negotiations was perceived to be uncharacteristically weak. This was blamed on the hated and controversial Madame de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV, who was suspected to have been working for Austrian interests within France. Pompadour, who also played an integral role in the conclusion of the Franco-Austrian *renversement*, was thought to have "been 'turned' through the flattery of the empress Maria Theresia, who for sheer reasons of state had condescended to correspond with this parvenu royal prostitute."[136]

Once the idea of an Austrian presence in Versailles had been introduced, it also colored the seemingly sudden turn towards amicable relations with Austria in an extremely unfavorable light. It was no secret that the alliance seemed to favor Austria more than France, for Austria had managed to profess neutrality in the conflict between France and Britain while France was required to assist Austria against Prussia. For those already ill disposed towards Austria, this smelled strongly of infiltration.[137] The Habsburgs had failed for over two centuries to reduce France through outright means; now they were suspected of trying a new tactic.

Favier and the rest of the anti-Austrian party at court were extremely vocal about their concerns regarding the alliance.[138] They had no doubts that Austria's intentions towards France were unchanged despite the new alliance. Even Bernis was not immune to these ideas. Unlike Favier and D'Argenson, Bernis did not openly oppose the alliance, nor did he think that Prussia always had and always would present a better option. Bernis worked to create and maintain the alliance and yet we can still see evidence of lingering distrust and the result of years of

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] The anti-Austrian party was primarily centered around the Queen and the Dauphin. Known as the *parti dévot*, this group was allied with the Jesuits and bitterly hated Pompadour and any other mistress of Louis XV. For more information see Thomas E. Kaiser, "Madame de Pompadour and the Theaters of Power," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 1025; Dale K. Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien Régime, 1750-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 60-1, 86, 145.

suspicions directed towards Vienna in his communications. But, Bernis did not simply mistrust Austria or doubt its intentions. Bernis was so adamant in his distrust that he came to see Austria as the root of all of France's evils as prospects in the war became increasingly worse. Bernis not only suspected the Habsburgs, but also blamed them outright for setbacks encountered in both the colonial and continental wars.

Favier, in his pamphlet, disparaged the Franco-Austrian alliance for its lack of political benefits. D'Argenson, in his memoirs, disparaged the alliance for the false, insincere, and untrustworthy ally to whom France had tied itself. For D'Argenson, the biggest drawback was the Court of Vienna itself. He believed that Prussia should never have been abandoned: Frederick was the only ally that could truly assist France. Austria could not fulfill the needs of the French state because France's top priority, according to D'Argenson, was countering Habsburg power. After hearing the news of the Westminster Convention, D'Argenson wrote an impassioned argument against those in France who said good riddance to Frederick, a fickle ally that did not have France's best interests at heart. To the contrary, D'Argenson argued, "the King of Prussia guards Silesia, he is our ally and the best ally that we could have, because he diminishes Austrian power... therefore he does well the role that we demand of him." France's only interest should have been containing Austrian ambition, but without the support of Prussia, "*voilà* the inundation of our frontiers which is to say that all is lost because we no longer have allies."[139]

Without a Franco-Prussian alliance to contain the Habsburgs while France was preoccupied with Britain, the threat of invasion loomed large on the north and eastern borders of France. Yet even neutralizing Austria through alliance was not an attractive option for the

[139] D'Argenson, *Journal et Mémoires,* 9:181.

Marquis. As Favier explained in the pamphlet commissioned by D'Argenson, there were no political benefits to be seen from the relationship. Anybody who believed Austrian arguments and assurances to the contrary was being tricked. D'Argenson believed that Austrian duplicity was luring Versailles into a snare by which the French would be forced into aiding their true enemy, "the bigoted and deceitful court of Vienna."[140] The Court of Versailles would end up contributing to Austrian aggrandizement while betraying the powers that looked to France for protection. "We will close our eyes to the insensible aggrandizement in Germany and Italy, we retain our relations with the houses of Bavaria, Saxony, Wurttemberg, etc. to hand them to Austria and pass it off as obedience... we will lose Turkey, Sweden and Denmark." Through the proposed alliance, Austria would drive a wedge between France and all other friendly powers, eventually isolating France anyway. At least now, though Prussia had abandoned the French for England, France could still maintain all of its other allegiances.

Beneath these anticipated negative results lay strong skepticism of Austrian intentions. D'Argenson saw the alliance as a contrived Austrian strategy to do harm to France under the cover of friendship. The Marquis was convinced the only reason the alliance had even been concluded in the face of such negative counter-arguments was that through Pompadour, Austria controlled a specific group of statesmen within the ministry. As early as 1753, D'Argenson mentioned an "Austrian party" in the King's council.[141] In January of 1756 he described how this party was working to convince all of Versailles that Austria was weak and needed French protection, that an alliance with Vienna would bring gains for France, that Austria was willing to cede territories such as Luxembourg and portions of the Low Countries in return for French support. D'Argenson scoffed at all of these arguments, calling them "illusions, lies, [and]

[140] Ibid., 9:282.
[141] Ibid., 8:154.

trickeries" which served "to disguise the desire to harm and absorb [France] in virtue, goodwill and flexibility."[142] In D'Argenson's opinion, Austria could never possess goodwill towards France because they wanted to subjugate France beneath Habsburg despotism.

According to D'Argenson's specter of an "Austrian Party," Bernis was one of Pompadour's pawns in the Austrian party at court.[143] The Marquis recorded Bernis's appointment as Secretary of State for Foreign affairs tersely: "The abbé de Bernis was declared the day before yesterday in the evening, Minister of State, effect of the grand and dishonest credit of the favorite,"[144] and by extension of the Court of Vienna itself. D'Argenson saw little personal merit that could possibly make Bernis deserving of this appointment and viewed it simply as another piece being maneuvered into place by Austria. Thus, Bernis and D'Argenson were squarely in opposite camps within the French ministry. Bernis supported the Austrian alliance and was one of Pompadour's favorites; D'Argenson abhorred everything that Bernis worked for. We would expect the memoirs and correspondence of Bernis to be as full of support and praise for the new alliance and for Austria as D'Argenson's were full of abuse and misgivings. Bernis recounted in his memoirs however, that when he first heard of the proposals from Vienna, he immediately reacted with suspicion. "At that first moment, I saw only a trap set for the King."[145]

Bernis saw several dangers lurking for France in the Austrian proposals. First, if the Austrians were sincere, it would cause a complete reversal of alliance systems, certain to be unpopular and shocking, and France would undoubtedly be dragged into war with Prussia. If the Austrians were simply playing a game, which Bernis saw as very likely, prospects were not good either. "In the second case, the Court of Vienna, the enemy for the last three hundred years of

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[142] Ibid., 9:186, Ibid., 9:185.
[143] Ibid., 9:282.
[144] Ibid., 9:380.
[145] Bernis, *Memoirs and Letters,* 1:205.

that of France, had great interest in causing jealousy to our allies by feigned negotiations... and so gain time [themselves] to strengthen an alliance with England, Holland, [and] Russia."[146] Austria could also be using the negotiations to separate France and Prussia and then, "having succeeded in detaching them from us, would not fail of pretexts herself to break off a specious and frivolous negotiation."[147] Bernis's initial suspicions were not that far from those voiced by D'Argenson. Bernis did not at first trust the sincerity of the court of Versailles. It seemed just as likely that it was a ruse set up by the duplicitous Austrians in order to harm France and benefit themselves. Bernis changed his opinion after hearing of the Convention of Westminster and speaking with Starhemberg about the specifics of the Austrian proposals, but the distrust that raised the initial suspicions was still lurking beneath the surface.

Once the war began, the allies understandably hit rough patches. Disputes over subsidies, troops, and operational plans are to be expected in any military partnership. But, Bernis did not approach these problems reasonably by assessing the needs of France's ally along with its own and thus understanding, if not always approving of, the choices made by Austria. Instead Bernis approached these problems with distrust and blame for the Austrian ministry because he suspected Austria of trying to sabotage France. He suspected that the intentions of the court of Vienna were to weaken France abroad and on the continent by weakening France's defenses and preventing French victories. Three arguments developing out of this suspicion especially took the forefront. The first that I will discuss was the perception that Austria was intentionally bankrupting Versailles by demanding more and more money when, to the French, it was perfectly clear they had no more to give. The second argument concerns the deployment of troops for Austrian use. Although the French had made promises in the treaties to provide

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 1:206.

subsidies and auxiliary forces, Bernis began to suspect unrelenting Austrian requests for such as an attempt to deprive France of resources needed to protect French borders from Great Britain's armies. Finally, when France had made it clear to Austria that continuing the war would only lead to exhaustion and defeat for the allies, Vienna still refused to give up on its quest for Silesia, Glatz, and the destruction of Frederick. Bernis accused Austria of trying to destroy France by refusing to provide what Versailles needed most: peace.

We have seen the frustrations that were caused in Vienna by France's irregular fulfillment of its subsidy requirements. Vienna could not understand why France, a state of vast power, resources, and wealth, could not manage to uphold its side of the bargain. Bernis repeatedly argued that France had no money left, using phrases such as "If we put all our money into paying foreigners none will be left for our own expenses" and "We cannot give money if nothing is left for us."[148] But, to Vienna these seemed like empty excuses coming from such a powerhouse as France. James C. Riley, economic historian of the period, agrees with the Austrian opinion that France did possess the necessary resources to provide the required subsidies. He states that "in economic resources, France was better prepared to go to war in 1756 than it had been at any point since at least the 1680s."[149] But, despite Austrian suspicions, the French ministry was neither intentionally ignoring this wealth nor intentionally withholding subsidies. The French genuinely thought that their economic and financial resources were exhausted.

To understand this belief one must view the situation from the French frame of reference. Although the French economy had the capability to absorb extra financial burdens, the French

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[148] Bernis to Stainville, September 24, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:91; Bernis to Stainville, April 27, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:201.
[149] James C. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 36.

people were not necessarily aware of that fact. Riley argues that French inability to take advantage of the available resources stemmed from popular hostility toward taxation. For "the French detested the tax. When levies were heavy and when they were light, the French felt toward them an 'hostilité violente et constant.'"[150] This popular hatred of taxation meant gross exaggerations of the actual financial burden of the taxes that the populace did have to pay.[151] Riley analyzes the growth in taxation until the mid-eighteenth century and does concede that taxation levels were rising, but only so much that they kept pace with inflation. Complaints about over-taxation were merely hyperbole.[152] "At the heart of the matter lies the unwillingness of the French to pay higher taxes except under extraordinary, and short-lived, circumstances, an unwillingness that assured new tensions with each addition to the taxes."[153] Any time the government tried to increase its revenues and take advantage of the resources of the French nation, it would be met with public outcry.

In an age when public opinion was gathering force as a political concept, public outcry could hold serious consequences for the monarchy, especially since on the eve of the Seven Years War, the French monarchy was already engaged in ideological and religious conflicts within an emerging public sphere. The public sphere was a space within which dialogue and debate could take place, whether commercial, political, or cultural.[154] It entailed a process by which the larger population came to participate in the political culture of the state via organs of

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[150] Ibid., 38.
[151] Ibid., 39.
[152] John Brewer also argues that the French were taxed far less than the British. He maintains that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the English paid approximately 17.6 livres each in taxes while the French paid only 8.1 livres. By the end of the eighteenth century the per capita tax rate had increased to 46 livres in Great Britain and only 17 in France. See John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 89.
[153] Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime*, 71.
[154] The seminal work on the emergence of the public sphere is of course Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois* Society, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), Originally published as *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962).

discussion and public opinion, such as through newspapers and within coffee houses.[155] France during the 1750s was in the middle of a crisis involving Jansenism, the authority of the *parlements*, and these emerging bodies of public opinion. Jansenism was a religious movement within the Catholic Church that questioned traditional conceptions of the relationship between grace and free will.[156] Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, clashes between Catholic and Jansenist priests erupted in France and mixed with clashes between the emerging public sphere and the absolutist political culture of Old Regime France. After the Papal Bull *Unigenitus* condemned Jansenism in France in 1713, the judicial bodies of the *parlements* increasingly used their position to oppose the monarchy's attempts to stamp out the movement.[157] This controversy contributed to the exile of the Paris *parlement* from 1753-54, as well as the assassination attempt on Louis XV in January of 1757.[158] In the midst of this public and political controversy, it is no surprise that the French crown would not add fuel to the fire of public outrage by increasing taxes on a population so adamantly against paying and which already believed itself to be over-taxed and unable to give any more.

Since the French crown could not increase taxation, it chose to finance the war chiefly through credit. Riley posits that three-fifths of the total cost of the war was raised through borrowing.[159] Despite the usual problems of relying heavily on credit without the income to back it up, the French also ran into trouble because the cost of the Seven Years War was significantly more than anyone had predicted, almost double the annual cost of War of the Austrian

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[155] For a discussion of various organs of the public sphere in states across eighteenth-century Europe see James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[156] Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 49-50.
[157] For an explanation of the terms and consequences of the Bull *Unigenitus* see Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair*, 57-59; For a discussion of the emergence of *parlements* as bodies of the oppositional public sphere see David Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[158] For an in depth discussion of the intersection between Damiens's assasination attempt and the social, political, and religious context of the time see Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair*.
[159] Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime*, 143.

Succession.[160] This was compounded by a rapid succession of incompetent finance ministers. Riley criticizes these men as having no background in finance and of being given insufficient time to make sense of complex French finances before being replaced. Thus, the solutions that these men proposed just made the state of the finances even worse.[161] All of these factors created a situation in which, by the end of the Seven Years War, the French crown was financially exhausted and facing an almost unmanageable amount of debt.

Within this mess it is no wonder that France could not pay the subsidies that Austria requested. Yes, exhaustion was due in part to financial mismanagement, but that did not mean that the French ministry believed any less that France would not be able to raise the requested money. Bernis's arguments developed not out of an understanding of the financial and economic situation of France as suggested by Riley, but out of what he perceived. What he saw was a state in which any additional taxation would meet with stringent opposition and tension between the crown and the population. Bernis saw a society that was already clashing with monarchical power and in which segments of the population were so discontented that one man had even attempted to assassinate the king. Bernis saw a government increasingly bogged down in crippling debt and facing exceedingly expensive war costs. Most of all Bernis saw an ally who refused to acknowledge all of this. What seemed obvious and apparent to Bernis was that no matter French intentions or good will, Versailles simply could not raise the money to send to Austria. He explained again and again that if they did attempt to pay the arrearages, the French state would be bankrupted in the process.

Austrian unwillingness to listen to these arguments raised suspicions of Habsburg intentions. Because the Austrian ministry was so distrustful of French actions and thus saw

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[160] Ibid., 147-148.
[161] Ibid., 161.

Bernis's arguments simply as excuses, the Austrian ministry, in turn, appeared to the French as if it was intentionally trying to bankrupt the French state. Bernis's letters became more and more desperate on this point. In April of 1758 Bernis countered Austrian suspicions outright stating "M. Kaunitz is wrong in thinking we want to hold them by money and for that reason have let the arrearages accumulate. We have not paid all, because we lacked the money."[162] A month later Bernis connected the Austrian demands for payment with the possibility of French defeat and destruction. "We pay no one, not even ourselves; and we shall soon have all Europe upon us... How can we possibly arrange matters with the Court of Vienna? I am promised that the empress shall have the money. But if it is sent to her we shall be left without any."[163] In August of the same year Bernis stated that the lack of money prevented France from raising a sufficient navy, which would directly result in defeat at the hands of the British and loss of France's entire colonial empire. Bernis lamented, "even if the King of Prussia were crushed, we should be none the less ruined," for even if the war were to end successfully for Austria, France would have still lost all prospects of prevailing over England due to sheer lack of resources.[164] It was situations like this that prompted Bernis to exclaim, "If our allies care nothing for our injury, they are not our friends, they are even more cruel than our enemies."[165] By not allowing France the time and space to repair its finances, Austria was believed to be causing more damage to the French state than any of France's enemies ever could.

Even the injuries that Great Britain could inflict upon France were seen to stem from suspicious Austrian intentions. Bernis blamed British successes on Austrian demands regarding the stipulated troop requirements. The auxiliary corps that France was to provide for Austrian

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[162] Bernis to Stainville, April 27, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:179.
[163] Bernis to Stainville, June 22, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:200.
[164] Bernis to Stainville, August 10, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:215.
[165] Ibid., 223.

use became a subject of much recrimination from Bernis. This is especially apparent in the aftermath of the British attack on Rochefort in September of 1757. Although this attack was, in fact, a failure for the British, it still shook French confidence.[166] As Bernis wrote to Stainville in the midst of the British expedition,

> the English have attacked Rochefort. You can, without risking anything against the truth, make Count Kaunitz and even the Empress feel that the second army we sent into Germany for her defense brought the visit of the English upon us; for they would never have risked attacking our coasts if we had not stripped them of men. This is not a complaint, for we had to do it; the king will never regret the marks of friendship he has given to his 'good friend, the empress' but it is necessary that they should know the extent and cost of the service.[167]

Bernis blamed Austrian demands for troops as the single cause of the British attack. Bernis had so little faith in the court of Vienna that his suspicions of Austrian selfishness had become certainties. After this blatant application of culpability, Bernis depicted France as playing the noble part of sacrifice. Perhaps countering Austrian accusations of French disloyalty, Bernis maintained that the French court was so honorable and dedicated that even after making a detrimental sacrifice for its ally, the court was not complaining, simply informing. In a letter written three days later Bernis again spared nothing to make Vienna feel the responsibility it held for French losses. "All our troops are in the service of the empress; she ought to remember eternally the damage that our faithfulness and generosity may cause this kingdom."[168]

Austrian demands were putting France in a predicament more and more perilous. In August of 1758, Bernis outlined the desperate situation of France vis-à-vis England and what would result if the war was continued in the same manner. "The King of Prussia will have an army next year; England will have money; France will have neither army nor money, but it is

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[166] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 80-81.
[167] Bernis to Stainville, September 24, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters,* 2:91-92.
[168] Bernis to Stainville, September 27, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:94.

France which has to furnish means to her allies."[169] Because France no longer possessed the finances nor the troops to sustain a two front war, one or the other had to end. And if it was the maritime conflict that was to be abandoned, France had to be assured of gains on the continent. "It is necessary to know where we stand on a point so difficult, and in case we give money we must be secure of some real and tangible benefit - so that I may not be stoned by the populace on the conclusion of peace."[170] The suspicion that Austria was trying to undermine France through the alliance meant that Bernis demanded an explicit statement of what these gains would be. The French minister did not have enough faith in Vienna to be content with vague assurances.

As the war dragged on with increasingly dismal prospects for France, Austrian determination to continue fighting became almost as onerous a request as providing resources. In December of 1757, in response to Austrian plans to recover Silesia during the next campaign, Bernis wrote "I think it so contrary to our common interests, and so likely to prolong the war, that if it exists the king would have to take the course of sending all his subsidiary troops to the Court of Vienna."[171] The truth was that Bernis could see neither any chance for French gains nor much chance that Austria would succeed in the aim of recapturing Silesia from Prussian clutches.[172] He denounced the Austrian ministry's optimistic opinion of its chances against Prussia in a scathing letter dated March 31, 1758. "Apparently they [the Austrians] have had a revelation from Saint Brigitta announcing the success of this campaign. As for me, who judge [sic] by facts only and from a knowledge of the resources on all sides, the generals, the ruin of credit, the universal ill-will of the whole nation, I see that (unless they employ the only means

[169] Bernis to Stainville, August 20, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:216.
[170] Bernis to Stainville, January 14, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:131.
[171] Bernis to Stainville, December 22, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:126.
[172] Bernis to Stainville, April 7, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:168.

that can cure such great evils) it would be wiser to postpone the game than to lose it wholly."[173] Portraying further attempts in Silesia as gambling, as ignoring reality, and as relying on visions, Bernis clearly portrayed his personal feelings about the prospects of such a move.

Instead of continuing to take risks at Austria's whim, Bernis repeatedly instructed Choiseul to press the court of Vienna to conclude peace. "It is for their own interests that we, their best and most useful ally, shall not break down without glory in their service... demonstrate to it [the court of Vienna] plainly the *uselessness* of a war which is more and more ill-fought and unfortunate?"[174] The more exhausted France became, the less it would be able to provide to Austria for its own benefit. Bernis tried to persuade Kaunitz and Maria Theresa that for Austria, concluding peace did not mean giving up on its goals and accepting defeat at Prussian hands. Rather it meant preserving what they did have and not risking the loss of everything for a vain quest. But, Bernis also argued that if Austria truly insisted on maintaining the course it had chosen, it would effectively be destroying France as well as the Franco-Austrian alliance.

> Do we wish to wait until an uprising in France shall break, with uproar, an alliance which could still sustain itself by judicious conduct, and a peace which has now become necessary to all Europe? Can the king sacrifice to a heroism of fidelity a kingdom which belongs as much to his children as to himself? ... The State, our friends, all demand that we shall come away from the precipice to which we are striding with giant steps.[175]

If Austria would not give up its ambitions in Silesia, the strains of war would cause the new alliance to disintegrate. In Bernis's opinion, France had been faithful and honorable all along, no matter the costs it incurred as a result, but nobility could only be pushed so far. Bernis laid no stock in Austrian reassurances and arguments to the contrary. Bernis suspected Austria of

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[173] Bernis to Stainville, February 28, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:160.
[174] Bernis to Stainville, August 20, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:216.
[175] Bernis to Choiseul, September 4, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:222.

leading France to the brink of destruction by not allowing its ally a much-needed respite in which to rebuild its state and replenish its resources.

Bernis's opinion of the alliance was extremely pessimistic due to his intense distrust of the court of Vienna. His negativity in fact made him several enemies in Versailles and eventually contributed to his removal as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and his exile from Paris.[176] Choiseul himself did not always agree with Bernis's defeatism, and upon replacing the Cardinal as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Choiseul was able to reanimate the French war machine for a time.[177] The fact that things were not truly as desperate as Bernis seemed to think speaks even more about how influential the tradition of mistrust still was. Within the negativity and the hyperbole, we can see that Bernis simply did not have faith in the good intentions of Austria. He might have played a large role in creating the alliance and he might have fully supported closer relations with Austria, but when faced with an increasingly desperate foreign situation, Bernis still reverted to suspicions of Austria as bent on the destruction of France. Whenever something went wrong, Bernis slipped effortlessly back into the habit of distrust and recrimination.

The Public Eye

Bernis was frequently encouraged in his accusations of Austria by the current of negative sentiment running through the French public. France was a cauldron of tensions between the public and the government at this point, which made the domestic climate in France particularly explosive. Louis XV was not a very popular monarch and neither were his policies. This included both the alliance and the Seven Years War, especially as prospects for France grew dimmer and dimmer. Bernis mentions the public on several occasions, always in a threatening

[176] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 192-193.
[177] Bernis to Stainville, 25 January, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2: 138.

and negative tone. Through these windows, we can see how public opinion grew increasingly more negative as the war continued. In January of 1757, Bernis wrote simply that "the alliance with Vienna is tacitly opposed by every one."[178] This short mention probably referred chiefly to court ministers and especially to the anti-Austrian *Parti dévot*. In October of 1757 Bernis again expressed the same sentiment when he wrote, "my dear count, all the world do not wish as we do that our new alliance should last."[179] Men like Favier and D'Argenson, who had been opposed to the entire concept of allying with Austria, did not show the new agreement much favor. It was these men who "have tried, from the first moment, to destroy the work of the alliance."[180]

As the war continued and French resources dwindled, Bernis began to encompass a larger public when he spoke of opposition to the alliance. "The public turns always to me to ask for justice on the follies that are committed. We spend enormous sums, but the people never know how they are employed; at any rate, they see no useful results from them."[181] As we can see in this letter from April 1758, the larger public Bernis referred to was significantly more hostile to the war and significantly less forgiving about what it perceived as empty French sacrifices. In the same letter Bernis explained, "Our nation is more indignant than ever at this war. It is madly in love with the King of Prussia, because we always love those who manage their own affairs well; and it detests the Court of Vienna, because it regards it as the leech of the state, and cares very little for its aggrandizement - or for ours." Vienna is seen costing the French dearly through the disorderly handling of Austrian affairs. Additionally, French assistance against Prussia, seen primarily as Austrian aggrandizement, was not thought to be worth the sacrifice. Faced with colonial losses, French resources could be much better spent in protecting the monarchy's

[178] Bernis to Stainville, January 20, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:88.
[179] Bernis to Stainville, October 3, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:96.
[180] Bernis to Stainville, November 22, 1757, *Memoirs and Letters,* 2:112.
[181] Bernis to Stainville, April 7, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:164.

possessions elsewhere. Two months later Bernis flatly states "the public abhors the system because it abhors the war" and at the end of June he laments "her [Pompadour] fate is dreadful. Paris detests her and blames her for all."[182] The unpopular war with Prussia is seen as stemming directly from the alliance with Austria and the influence of those who helped to create it.

Public opinion continued to worsen throughout the war and afterwards. The main source of discontent was the incredible costs of the war in comparison to the miserable outcome. France did not gain anything in its colonial struggle, in fact losing Canada in its entirety to Britain. But it was not the territorial losses that were most costly. The real French casualty was diplomatic. Szabo calls French colonial losses "more losses of potential, which injured French prestige more than French power."[183] Kaiser calls the Seven Years War "the most humiliating French defeat of the eighteenth century."[184] French reputation and power had taken a serious beating and the monarchy's status vis-à-vis Great Britain had been greatly diminished. All of this had come at a tremendous price. "The costs of the war were instrumental in plunging France into a downward spiral of debt."[185] French financial exhaustion was not something that could have been easily relieved. The mountain of debt piled up during the Seven Years War essentially bankrupted the state. It was also one of the crucial factors that led to the French Revolution in 1789.

The comparable position of the two allies did not win Vienna any new fans in France. Austria, while not achieving its goal of regaining Silesia and Glatz or striking a decisive blow to Prussia, was not weakened in any political way either. The continental peace was concluded on the basis of the *status quo ante*, diplomatically erasing the previous seven years. And, while Austria too was a victim of the tremendous costs of the war, its financial outlook was not nearly

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[182] Bernis to Stainville, June 6, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:196; Bernis to Stainville, June 29, 1758, *Memoirs and Letters*, 2:205.
[183] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 432.
[184] Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 585.
[185] Szabo, *The Seven Years War*, 433.

as bleak as that in France. Arguments that Austria had drained valuable resources from the French war effort and that the House of Habsburg had undermined French interests and subjected them to its own continued to be heard in the post-war period.

The devastating losses of France combined with war-weariness and distrust of Austria, as well as the already precarious domestic climate, to create the particular strain of Austrophobia that Kaiser and Savage explore at the end of the century. Over the half century following the conclusion of the First Treaty of Versailles, distrust of the Habsburgs and the political stereotypes of Habsburg strategies continued to be recycled, reinforced, and reapplied. While the alliance continued, it did not become any more popular despite the relative amount of peace that the continent saw. When in May of 1770, Choiseul and the court of Vienna concocted a marriage alliance intended to further solidify the Franco-Austrian agreement, this negative opinion had a new target to attack. Maria Theresa's youngest daughter, Marie-Antoinette, became the scapegoat of French Austrophobia, the popular base of which became readily apparent in the libelous pamphlets directed against the Foreign Queen during the French Revolution.

Epilogue

Rivalry Continues

Marie-Antoinette was hated, slandered, scandalized, and finally beheaded as the depraved Austrian Queen, a tangible result of the alliance with the Habsburgs. Enemies of the Austrian alliance spread slander and libels against her throughout the halls of Versailles. Rumors infiltrated the court and leaked out to be taken up, recycled, and exaggerated further by the people.[186] The profusion of pamphlet literature during the French Revolution attacked all manner of political actors, but Marie-Antoinette was undoubtedly the star of this scandalous show.[187] She was depicted as everything from a sexually insatiable fiend to a lesbian to a bloodthirsty she-wolf. No matter the representation, it usually referred back in language, portrayal, or even just origin to prejudices against the queen as the infiltrating Austrian. The political stereotypes of the Habsburg rulers, far from having faded in France, had grown significantly more potent and dangerous.

The queen's ignominy was seen as deriving from her Austrian roots. "This foreign woman introduced into the court of France the dissolution and brutality of German morals… the pamphlets that accuse Marie-Antoinette of outrageous licentiousness never fail to recall that she practiced vice in the German manner."[188] As one of the traditional stereotypes of Austrians, the repeated depiction of Marie-Antoinette as loose undermined her legitimacy as queen while harkening back to an older, more deeply rooted tradition of French Austrophobia. The

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[186] Peter R. Campbell, "Perceptions of Conspiracy on the Eve of the French Revolution," in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Peter R. Campbell, et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2007),31-32.
[187] Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette: Political Pornography and the problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution," in *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman (New York: Taylor & Francis Books, Inc., 2003), 128.
[188] Chantal Thomas, *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette*, trans. Julie Rose (New York: Urzone, Inc., 1999), 108

illustration was even more potent in comparison with the virtuous, republican ideal of womanhood that was vaunted by Revolutionary leaders. Her Austrian characteristics were conflated with an unnatural usurpation of political power by a woman, a foreign woman at that. Marie-Antoinette was so heinous in the mind of the French public that her evils became indescribable in traditional terms. The only option was to resort to animal images in an attempt to provide a sufficiently potent allusion.[189] Using language that relegated Marie-Antoinette to an inhuman status, the pamphleteers struggled to encompass all that the bloodthirsty, Austrian she-wolf represented.

In descriptive language that recalls the sensitive wounds of the Seven Years War, Marie-Antoinette was accused of leeching the life-blood from the French nation.[190] "She eats the money of France, in the hope of leading astray the French people one after the other." [191] French distrust and hatred of Austria had become so potent that by the outbreak of the revolution the term *l'Autrichienne*, translated as the Austrian woman, had come to denote nothing less than "traitor to the patrie."[192] It also lent itself easily to wordplay, implying that Marie-Antoinette was not simply *l'Autrichienne*, but also *l'autriche chienne*, or the Austrian bitch.

During the Revolution these stereotypes, depictions, rumors, and libels all contributed to increasing popular hostility toward the Queen's person, but they also played into larger fears of Austrian infiltration. Just as Pompadour was seen as a tool of Maria Theresa to promote Austrian interests at the French Court, so Marie Antoinette was seen as a loyal Habsburg trying to further Austrian interests to the detriment of France. Fear of manipulation manifested itself in a

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[189] Thomas, *The Wicked Queen*, 125.
[190] Le Campion, "Description de ce monster unique…," 1784, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris; "Monstre qui a été pris dans le lac de Fagua, au royaume de S.ta Fé," 1784, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris; "Description de ce monster unique se saisissant de sa proye…," 1784-88, Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris.
[191] F. Dantalle, *Description de la ménagerie royalle d'animaux vivans, établie aux Thuileries, près de la terrasse nationale, avec leurs noms, qualités, couleurs et propriétés* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie des patriotes, 1792), 4.
[192] Kaiser, "Ambiguous Identities," 176.

conspiracy theory that imagined a group of counter-revolutionaries plotting to overthrow the republic and advocating for the intervention of foreign monarchs. This committee, revolutionaries believed, was headed, directed, and inspired by the "Austrian tigress,"[193] Marie-Antoinette.[194] Known as the Austrian Committee, this alleged conspiracy was used particularly by a group of revolutionaries to push the French republic into declaring war on Austria in April of 1792.[195]

For France, the Austrian threat had not subsided in the least. In fact, the later, more popular conceptions of the threat were significantly more dangerous than those voiced by Bernis. The symptoms of Austrophobia manifested during the French Revolution depicted the Austrians not just as untrustworthy and concerned with furthering their own interests, but as villainous, monstrous, and heinous. The Revolutionary conception of Austria saw it as the enemy of liberty and equality, it was a state ruled by a family of despots whose single motivation was the destruction of France and the installation of a hegemonic Habsburg regime over all the free peoples of Europe. Additionally, the Revolutionary concept comprised not just specific political stereotypes, but the idea of personal characteristics inherent to membership in the ruling House of Habsburg. Marie-Antoinette was, by nature, licentious, bloodthirsty, corrupt, false, deceitful, and wicked.[196] In the half-century separating the French Revolution from the Seven Years War, the vestiges of distrust that developed throughout the history of rivalry had become charged with something more.

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[193] Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette," 130.
[194] For more on the history and origins of the 'Austrian Committee' see Kaiser, "Ambiguous Identities"; Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee"; Thomas E. Kaiser, "Entre les mots et les choses: le fantôme du <<comité autrichien>>," in *Révolutions et Mythes Identitaires: Mots, violences, mémoire*, ed. Annie Duprat (Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2009): 31-47; Kaiser, "Who's Afraid of Marie-Antoinette"; Savage, "Favier's Heirs."
[195] This group was led by Jacques Pierre Brissot and known as the Brissotins. Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 587.
[196] Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee," 582.

The reason for this mutation and intensification was the situation that France found itself in at the end of the Seven Years War. Diplomatically embarrassed and financially exhausted, the war had brought nothing of value to the French state. The Austrian alliance, which was concluded a few short months before the Seven Years War began, was seen to be a cause of French continental involvement as well as a cause of disastrous French military performance in both theaters. The increasingly tempestuous domestic climate in France as the eighteenth-century wore on contributed to the development and magnification of this tradition of blame and hatred. In 1763 Austria was perceived as having sucked the resources of the French military machine and diverted them to the causes of the court of Vienna. In 1791 Marie-Antoinette was perceived has having literally sucked the life force and blood out of the French nation. Although amplified in severity and exaggerated in potency while being focused on the personal characteristics of an individual, the stereotypes used against Marie-Antoinette derive directly from the same fears and suspicions Bernis held of Vienna during the Seven Years War. And Bernis's fears, in turn, derived from the history of distrust and enmity that was fueled for so long by rivalry and conflict.

There is a significantly larger body of scholarship on the eighteenth-century domestic situation in France than there is for its Austrian counterpart. Maria Theresa was clearly not as unpopular as Louis XV and the relationship between the monarchy and the population was not nearly as strained as it was in France.[197] The fact that Austria emerged comparably unscathed from the Seven Years War also helped to mitigate the sort of extreme unpopularity that the conflict experienced in France. Finally, the Prussian threat emerged as yet another reason for Austrian distinctiveness. The French nation saw the Seven Years War as a pointless disaster, a conflict which was needlessly escalated by the tie with Austria and from which only minimal

[197] Derek Edward Dawson Beales, *Joseph II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 33, 35; P.G.M. Dickson, *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia, 1740-1780* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 209, 211-212.

gains could have been expected even under the best circumstances. For Austria however, the Seven Years War was about avenging the insults of a proud, upstart King, recovering extremely valuable territory that had been unceremoniously stolen, and ensuring the existence of the Austrian state. No matter how widespread or otherwise this patriotic outlook towards Prussia was, it nevertheless provided a justification and motivation for the war that could be used by the court of Vienna to combat any discontented grumbling. The French government had no such justification.

As far as distrust in the ministry was concerned, Bernis, Kaunitz, and Maria Theresa were all victims of the historical rivalry that still pervaded the alliance. These three individuals were high-ranking, influential members of the political culture of their respective states. They all also worked to bring about, maintain, and further the Franco-Austrian alliance. Most of the previous scholarship has looked at Austrophobia during the French Revolution and has been concerned with conceptions of Austria and of Marie Antoinette as expressed by the newly enfranchised French nation. These were people who had overthrown elite statesmen like Bernis and who had abandoned even the idea of a divinely sanctioned monarchy. And yet, this nation was influenced by the same trends as the aristocrat Bernis. The Franco-Habsburg rivalry had created a tradition of enmity that truly came to pervade society at all levels. Although the majority of conflicts between France and the Habsburg powers were motivated by dynastic ambition or struggles over power and prestige, the history of rivalry had grown into something much larger and more encompassing. The intersection of diplomatic decisions made at the highest levels and socio-cultural trends interwoven throughout society is the site of fascinating insights into the workings of a particular political culture.

The influence that the history of rivalry had on popular conceptions of Austria during the French Revolution is just one site of this intersection. Using Bernis, Kaunitz, and Maria Theresa I am also able to investigate how socio-cultural trends influenced political and diplomatic decisions. These individuals were members of their respective societies. Their personal opinions and conceptions had been shaped by the trends of distrust and lingering rivalry. But these individuals were also responsible for making the decisions that shaped the future direction of their states. Part of the reason for French and Austrian defeats in the Seven Years War was the inability of the allies to coordinate war efforts. This coordination was supposed to happen at the highest levels of the ministries, precisely the levels at which we looked and at which distrust and suspicion played such an important role in relations between the two powers. While this is dabbling in the hypothetical, it is not that hard to imagine a scenario in which the ministers of each state were not as susceptible to the tradition of hostility. Perhaps these ministers would have spent less time squabbling about matters imagined to encompass much larger consequences than they actually did. In that case these ministers may have been able to cooperate more effectively, to coordinate their war efforts, and to emerge from the conflict victorious. This might have shown detractors that their hesitation and suspicions were unfounded and been a beginning step to truly ending the enmity between France and Austria. This, of course, did not happen and whether or not it would have changed the course of the alliance is something we will never know. But it is an interesting scenario nonetheless if only to point out how much the personal opinions of Bernis, Kaunitz, and Maria Theresa did influence the trajectory of the alliance.

Finally, the fact that all three of these individuals were supportive of the alliance and were responsible for maintaining it, points to the potency of the mutual enmity. Seeing the level of distrust that was still present in the minds of those favorable to Franco-Austrian cooperation

points to significantly deeper sentiments in those not favorable to the partnership. It also provides yet another explanation for the increased virulence of Austrophobic sentiments during the French Revolution. The authors of the libelous pamphlets against Marie-Antoinette had no stake in her well-being, they had no motivation to promote closer ties with Austria or even to prevent an all out war against the Habsburgs. They were simply expressing their personal attitudes towards Austria, attitudes with older roots, to be sure, but which had acquired a new and powerful charge in the context of the revolutionary era.

Even after the death of the Austrian Queen, in October of 1793, this enmity was not destroyed. The idea of the mounting foreign conspiracy contained in the Austrian Committee, which Marie-Antoinette was accused of controlling, did not disappear once the supposed puppet-master had been guillotined. The conspiracy simply took on a more vague hue and a wider context.[198] The potency of the history of enmity with Austria was too strong, even at the end of the century, to be wiped away in a day. This enmity was certainly not ended by the alliance in 1756.

[198] This new conspiracy was known as the 'Foreign Plot' and was used by the Jacobins in much the same way as the Austrian Committee was used by the Brissotins. See Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot”; Marisa Linton, "'Do you believe that we're conspirators?': Conspiracies Real and Imagined in Jacobin Politics, 1793-4," in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Peter R. Campbell, et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2007); Simon Burrows, "The émigrés and conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789-99," in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Peter R. Campbell, et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

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