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Together in “The Storms of War”: Negotiations between Croatian-Slavonian and Inner-Austrian Estates Regarding the Joint Defence Measures in 1620

By late summer 1620, the fires of the Thirty Years' War were spreading towards the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia and the provinces of Inner-Austria. Moreover, the very survival of the Habsburg Monarchy was being put to the test. In the short period between 1619 and 1620, Emperor and King Ferdinand II, as the newly elected and installed Habsburg ruler, lost both the Bohemian and Hungarian crowns due to the rebellious Bohemian and Hungarian estates. To make matters worse, Bohemians and Hungarians had joined the alliance known as the Bohemian Confederation. Ferdinand found himself in a desperate position, with his rule largely dependent on foreign support. Yet, there were lands within the Habsburg Monarchy still loyal to the House of Austria – specifically, the Catholic part of Hungary, Inner-Austrian provinces and the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia. Even though Croatia and Slavonia were part of the Realm of Saint Stephen alongside Hungary, in August 1620 they rejected Gabriel Bethlen as an elected king of Hungary unlike many members of the Hungarian aristocracy and opposed the decisions of the Hungarian Diet. Their long-standing military and political cooperation with the Inner-Austrian provinces, which had lasted for over a century, contributed to this alignment. Ferdinand II encouraged a meeting between Croatian-Slavonian and Inner-Austrian estates of the two sides in hope of arranging a viable defensive system. First, they assembled in Zagreb, where the members of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet proposed several solutions, including the establishment of a military alliance or a formal confederation with the Inner-Austrian provinces. These negotiations continued in Graz, where further deliberations were held and concrete military decisions regarding joint defence were adopted.

Keywords: Habsburg Monarchy, Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia, Inner-Austrian estates, Croatian-Slavonian Diet, the confederation, Military Frontier, The Thirty Years' War

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Introduction

Previous historical studies have largely portrayed the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) as a military conflict with very limited political significance for the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia. This interpretation has been shaped by the predominant focus on Croatian soldiers' participation in the war. In the first systematic study on the involvement of Croatian soldiers in the conflict, Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski observed, "... in the year 1618, a cruel fate forced the Croats to go and fight with the peoples of almost all of Europe, not for their own benefit, but for the vanity and pride of foreign nations and rulers".¹ A few years later, Tadija Smičiklas claimed that "The Croats did not influence the Thirty Years' War as a political nation, but only as part of the emperor's army".² In the end, Ernest Bauer – the author of the only published monograph on this subject – characterized the Thirty Years' War as follows: "...it was an episode that was not particularly significant in the political history of Croatia."³ According to Bauer, this was the primary reason for the lack of historiographical interest in the topic. He rightly asserted that the subject failed to generate significant interest among historians not only before the publication of his study in 1941 but also in the decades that followed. However, the limited understanding of the topic appears to have directly contributed to the misjudgement of the Thirty Years' War's significance for the political history of the Croatian lands. Therefore, this study argues that insufficient research has hindered the identification of the war's effects on the political history of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia.

Lesser-known but particularly significant historical events from the late summer of 1620 – especially in the context of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet (*Hrvatsko-slavonski sabor*) and the local estates – serve as indicators of the political consequences of the Thirty Years' War. In August and September, the Croatian-Slavonian estates engaged in intensive negotiations with their Inner-Austrian neighbours regarding the organization of joint defence and the possibility of a military alliance. Croatian historian Franjo Rački was the first to write about this event, asserting that in August 1620, Austrian envoys arrived at the assembly of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet and proposed the establishment of a military alliance,

¹ "...kad jur sljedeće 1618. godine zla kob Hrvatah prisili ih, da se idu klat i hrvat s narodima mal ne čitave Evrope, ne na svoju korist, nego u prilog slavohliepja i taštine tudjih vladarah i narodah." According to the same author, the only consequence is the bad reputation that marked Croatian soldiers in the Thirty Years' War. Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, "Borba Hrvatah u tridesetoljetnom ratu", *Arhiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku* 12 (1875): 2, 46.

² "Hrvati nisu uticali u veliki tridesetogodišnji rat kano politički narod, već samo kao vojska careva." Tadija Smičiklas, *Povijest hrvatska. Dio drugi. Od godine 1526-1848.* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1879), 137.

³ "...radi [se] o jednoj epizodi koja za političku povijest Hrvatske nije bila toliko važna." Ernest Bauer, *Hrvati u tridesetogodišnjem ratu* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1941), 5.

which the local estates, i.e. the Diet, accepted.⁴ Vjekoslav Klaić also expressed interest in the alliance, referring to it as a confederation – a term that likely originated from the *acta* or conclusions of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet. However, as this topic was not central to his research, he did not elaborate on the details, nor was he able to determine whether any formal agreement had been reached. Nonetheless, he emphasized the significance of the event for early modern Croatian history.⁵ Later, Nada Klaić even referred to it as the *Styrian-Croatian Confederation*.⁶ The confederation was mentioned in the works of later Croatian authors, but no definitive conclusions were reached.⁷ Stanko Guldescu took the analysis a step further. According to his research, the Inner-Austrian estates abandoned the “project” of confederation due to developments in the Thirty Years’ War, while simultaneously, the Croatian-Slavonian nobility became preoccupied with their internal disputes.⁸ Ultimately, the most significant research was conducted by the Austrian historian Helfried Valentinitisch in his dissertation. He approached the topic from the Inner-Austrian, or more specifically, the Styrian perspective.⁹

Considering this, the objective of this paper is to re-examine the political implications of the Thirty Years’ War on Croatia and Slavonia, with focus on the archival materials. The details of the confederation or military alliance will be

⁴ Franjo Rački, “Ob obrani hrvatsko-slavonske granice u XVI. i XVII. vjeku s gledišta državnopravnoga”, *Književnik* 3 (1866): 536-537.

⁵ Vjekoslav Klaić, “Banovanje kneza Nikole Frankopana Tržačkog (1617.–1622.)”, *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 91=211 (1916): 182.

⁶ Nada Klaić, *Društvena previranja i bune u Hrvatskoj u XVI i XVII stoljeću* (Beograd: Nolit, 1976), 123.

⁷ In chronological order: Rudolf Horvat, *Povijest Hrvatske*, knj. I.: *Od najstarijeg doba do g. 1657.* (Zagreb: Merkur, 1924), 332-333; Ferdo Šišić, *Politika Habsburgovaca spram Hrvata do Leopolda I.* (Zagreb: Tisak Nadbiskupske tiskare, 1939), 139; Josip Kolanović, “Hrvatski sabor od narodnih zbora do građanskog sabora 1848.”, in: *Hrvatski sabor*, ed. Željko Sabol (Zagreb: Sabor Republike Hrvatske; Nakladni zavod Globus; Školska knjiga, 1995) 47; Zlatko Kudelić, *Marčanska biskupija. Habsburgovci, pravoslavlje i crkvena unija u Hrvatsko-slavonskoj vojnoj krajini (1611.-1755.)* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2007), 24; Darko Bekić, *Povijest hrvatske diplomacije. Svezak prvi do 1918.* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga 2016), 370; Ivana Jukić, “Vjerska politika plemstva u Hrvatskom saboru od 1604. do 1687. godine”, in: *Tridentska baština. Katolička obnova i konfesionalizacija u hrvatskim zemljama. Zbornik radova*, ed. Zrinka Blažević and Lahorka Plejić Poje (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska; Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Zagrebu; Filozofski fakultet Družbe Isusove u Zagrebu, 2016), 93; Filip Hren, “Hrvatski staleži i Vojna krajina u Tridesetogodišnjem ratu” (Master’s thesis, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2017), 29. Damir Stanić, “*Tko su bili ti ‘strašni Hrvati’*”, *exhibition catalogue* (Štrigova: Hrvatski državni arhiv; Državni arhiv za Međimurje, 2018), 22; Damir Stanić, “Recruiting for the ‘Foreign War’: New Sources on the Participation of Croatian Soldiers in the Thirty Years’ War”, *Historijski zbornik* 75 (2022), no. 1: 29; Filip Hren, “Hrvatski vojnici u Tridesetogodišnjem ratu 1618.-1648” (PhD diss., Hrvatsko katoličko sveučilište, 2023), 96-107.

⁸ Stanko Guldescu, *The Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom 1526-1792* (The Hague; Paris: Mouton, 1970), 126.

⁹ Helfried Valentinitisch, “Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen während des ersten Kriegs mit Bethlen Gabor von Siebenbürgen 1619-1622” (PhD diss., Universität Graz, 1967).

examined from a Croatian-Slavonian perspective. Specifically, the paper will investigate whether an agreement was ultimately reached and, if so, what its primary purpose was.

“Marriage of Convenience”: the Strengthening the Ties Between the (Inner-) Austrian and Croatian Lands

In 1939, Ferdo Šišić concluded that during the 16th and 17th centuries, “the ties between Croatia and the neighbouring Austrian lands became closer day by day, while the gradual distancing and alienation of Croatia (with Slavonia) from Hungary grew larger”.¹⁰ Alexander Buczynski observed that this connection had its limitations, and the Habsburgs never seized the opportunity to bring the Austrian and Croatian lands closer together. Except for the Military Frontier and later Dalmatia, Vienna ruled over Croatia and Slavonia through Hungary. He also argues that, with the arrival of the Habsburgs, the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen were more than ever “oriented towards each other”, but that their goals and methods differed.¹¹ Géza Pálffy emphasizes another reason for giving additional attention to the issue of mutual relations, noting that the relationships between the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and Hungary are the least studied, particularly for the 16th and 17th centuries.¹²

The connections between the Austrian nobility and their counterparts in Croatia and Slavonia can be traced back to the Middle Ages.¹³ During the second half of the 15th century those ties started to tighten due to the growing Ottoman threat.¹⁴ The nobility of Inner-Austria, specifically Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and the County of Gorizia, had a particular interest in cooperation, as they

¹⁰ “veze između Hrvatske i susjednih austrijskih zemalja postale su iz dana u dan sve tješnje, a postepeno udaljivanje i tuđenje Hrvatske (sa Slavonijom) od Ugarske sve veće”. Šišić, *Politika*, 130.

¹¹ Alexander Buczynski, “Zajedno na granici između dvaju velikih carstava”, in: *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102.-1918. Zbornik radova*, ed. Milan Kruhek (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), 126.

¹² Géza Pálffy, “Hrvatska i Slavonija u sklopu Ugarske Kraljevine u 16. i 17. stoljeću (s posebnim osvrtom na političke, vojne i društvene odnose)”, in: *Hrvatsko-mađarski odnosi 1102.-1918. Zbornik radova*, ed. Milan Kruhek (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2004), 114.

¹³ Šišić, *Politika*, 94-100. A noteworthy example of early military cooperation is provided by the case of the Babonić family. Their ties to the Habsburgs can be traced back to the early fourteenth century, and evidence of military collaboration dates from that period as well – specifically when the Babonićs dispatched troops in support of Duke Frederick during his campaigns for the Bohemian crown. Hrvoje Kekez, *Pod znamenjem propetog lava: povijest knezova Babonića do kraja 14. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016), 114-115.

¹⁴ Šišić, *Politika*, 128; Bernardin Frankapan Modruški, *Oratio pro Croatia / Govor za Hrvatsku (1522.)*, studiju, prijepis i prijevod priredili Ivan Jurković i Violetta Moretti (Modruš: Katedra Čakavskog sabora Modruše 2010), 42-43.

were most vulnerable to Ottoman attacks among all of the Habsburg Hereditary Lands (*Erblande*). Consequently, the Styrians made concerted efforts to finance the defence of Croatia and Slavonia as early as 1522.¹⁵ The most significant example of strengthening these ties is the election of Ferdinand of Habsburg as king by the Croatian nobility on 1 January 1527 in Cetingrad. This event marked the conclusion of a “marriage of convenience”. Ferdinand was to finance an army and provide resources to defend the Kingdom of Croatia (and Dalmatia) from the Ottoman invasion in exchange for the royal crown. Although some more recent interpretations suggest that the election in Cetingrad was merely a confirmation of the actual choice made by the Hungarian nobility in Pozsony, through this act, Croatia (and, somewhat later, Slavonia) entered into a political union with the Habsburg Hereditary Lands and the Bohemian lands, all linked by the ruling dynasty.¹⁶ However, it appears that the ties between Croatia and the Austrian provinces could have been even stronger.

Just a few months after the election, during the second assembly of Cetingrad held on 28 April 1527, the Croatian nobility expressed the first serious signs of dissatisfaction with the king’s insufficient engagement in the Realm’s defence.¹⁷ In addition to their complaints, the Croatian nobility reminded Ferdinand of his promise to unite Croatia with the Austrian lands upon his election as king.¹⁸ Fol-

¹⁵ Nataša Štefanec, *Država ili ne: Ustroj Vojne krajine 1578. godine i hrvatsko-slavonski staleži u regionalnoj obrani i politici* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2011), 343.

¹⁶ Agreements between the House of Habsburg and the ruling Jagiellonian dynasty had existed since the late 15th century, when Emperor Maximilian and King Vladislaus II Jagiellon signed a pact concerning the inheritance of the Crown of Saint Stephen in the event that the Jagiellonians failed to produce a male heir. In the following decades, this agreement was reinforced through dynastic marriages between their descendants. Although the Hungarian Diet initially recognised the agreement, it later declared that only a “native son” could rightfully ascend to the throne. This became the basis upon which, following the death of Louis II Jagiellon, a faction of the Hungarian nobility – together with the Slavonian estates – elected John Szapolyai as king in 1526 and 1527, a decision that precipitated a civil war. Over time, however, the nobility in Slavonia came to accept Ferdinand as king, and he ultimately prevailed in the conflict against Szapolyai. On the other hand, Szabolcs Varga argues that the assembly in Cetingrad served a propagandistic purpose, aiming to emphasize the support of a segment of the estates of the Kingdom of Hungary for the House of Habsburg. According to this interpretation, the Croatian estates – lacking sufficient political weight on its own – merely confirmed the decision that had been made several months earlier by the Hungarian estates in Pozsony. He interprets the election of John Szapolyai by the Slavonian Estates in a very similar manner. Vjekoslav Klaić, *Povijest Hrvata: Od najstarijih vremena do svršetka XIX. stoljeća*, vol. 5: *Četvrto doba – Vladanje kraljeva iz porodice Habsburga (1527-1740)* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1973), 84. More on the election of Ferdinand as a king: Ferdo Šišić, “Izbor Ferdinanda I. hrvatskim kraljem”, *Starohrvatska prosvjeta* I (1927), no. 1-2: 15-44; Szabolcs Varga, “Az 1527. évi horvát-szlavón kettős „királyválasztás” története”. *Századok* 142 (2008), no. 5: 1131-1132.

¹⁷ Lujo Margetić, “Cetingradski sabori u 1527”, *Senjski zbornik: prilozi za geografiju, etnologiju, gospodarstvo, povijest i kulturu* 17 (1990), no. 1: 39.

¹⁸ *Sacra regia maiestas, domine graciousissime. Nouerit maiestas vestra, quod eadem maiestas vestra nos quesuiit sibi subditos, promittens nos coagregare erga alia sua regna hereditaria...* Ferdo Šišić, ed.,

lowing the advice of his counsellors from Lower Austria,¹⁹ Ferdinand dismissed this proposal. From his statements, as well as the conclusions of his advisors, it can be inferred that he did not entirely reject the idea but rather postponed a final decision for an indefinite period. It is uncertain how seriously Ferdinand considered this possibility. Šišić argued that Ferdinand could not accept the unification of Croatia with the Austrian lands, as such a move would have further polarised relations with Hungary and Slavonia, both of which supported John Szapolyai.²⁰ In any case, the April session in Cetingrad unquestionably warrants further study.²¹

Since the Cetingrad Charter²² does not mention any form of unification between Croatia and the Hereditary Lands, Šišić argues that Ferdinand Habsburg made this promise in November 1526.²³ Lujo Margetić, however, contends that the idea of Croatia joining the Hereditary Lands is merely a product of the Croatian nobility's interpretation, as Ferdinand never "formally promised that Croatia would be annexed to the hereditary Habsburg lands". Margetić suggests that Ferdinand's refusal of this desire – or interpretation – prevented Croatia from achieving equal status with the Austrian lands but allowed it to preserve its own identity by maintaining a certain level of autonomy. While L. Margetić does not reference any prior agreements between the Croatian nobility and Ferdinand (as mentioned by Šišić), he firmly rejects the possibility of unification, arguing that it was based on a promise rather than a signed document.²⁴ Darko Bekić shares a similar view, proposing that the attempt to join the Austrian lands reflected the desperation of the Croatian nobility and a capitulatory solution that would have "reduced Croatia to the status of a 'hereditary land', i.e., an Austrian province, thereby losing its, albeit formal, but – from a social standpoint – essential position as an 'associated kingdom'".²⁵

Hrvatski saborski spisi (hereafter: HSS), vol. I: *Od godine 1526. do godine 1536.* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti umjetnosti, 1912), 98.

¹⁹ Šišić, HSS, vol. I, 106.

²⁰ Šišić assumed that Ferdinand could not accept the unification of Croatia with the Austrian lands, as it would further polarize relations with Hungary and Slavonia, which supported John Szapolyai. Šišić, *Politika*, 129.

²¹ Apart from the mentioned text by Lujo Margetić, study about the assembly in Cetingrad in April 1527 is still missing. Štefanec, *Država*, 82.

²² The charter signed by the Croatian nobility on 1 January 1527 confirmed the election of Ferdinand as king.

²³ Šišić, "Izbor", note 41.

²⁴ „pismeno obećao da će Hrvatska biti priključena nasljednim habsburškim zemljama“. Margetić, "Cetingradski sabori", 1: 39-40.

²⁵ "[Hrvatska bi] bila svedena na položaj 'nasljedne zemlje', tj. austrijske provincije i izgubila svoj, iako formalan, ali – s društvenog stajališta – bitan položaj 'pridruženog kraljevstva'". Bekić, *Povijest*, 258.

On the one hand, it seems that the idea of unification between the lands was not as unrealistic as it may initially appear. First, Ferdinand's advisors would not have considered this possibility at all if it had not been seriously discussed at some point. Second, King Ferdinand I himself confirms that the topic had indeed been discussed, as evidenced by his response to postpone the decision. Third, the Croatian nobility interpreted Ferdinand's intention of unification as a promise, which neither he nor his advisors denied. On the other hand, Ferdinand appears to have been content with holding the title of King of Croatia, avoiding any actions that might further destabilize the already fragile political situation within the Realm of St. Stephen, particularly in light of the ongoing Ottoman threat and his war with Szapolyai.

Coexistence persisted despite periodic objections and dissatisfaction. The relationship between the Croatian (and later Slavonian) nobility and the Austrian provinces steadily strengthened. This development was not a linear process but rather one characterized by fluctuations and complexities. On a broader politico-military scale, two particular events illustrate the evolving relations between the Croatian-Slavonian nobility and (Inner-) Austria. After the Ottoman forces defeated the Habsburg army at Gorjani on 9 October 1537, Ferdinand I convened – among other measures – a joint assembly of representatives from the Hereditary Lands as well as from Croatia and Slavonia in Graz, with the aim of establishing a more effective and coordinated defence of the territory.

Prior to the assembly in Graz, the Croatian and Slavonian nobility met in Dubrava to appoint their envoys and agree on the key positions they would advocate in the Styrian capital. The king's envoys, Nikola Jurišić and the provost of Pécs, Albert Peregi,²⁶ also attended. Their task was to present the king's efforts in organizing the defence of the realm. This occasion marked the first time that the estates of the Hereditary Lands – along with Ferdinand's representatives – and delegates from Croatia and Slavonia collectively deliberated defensive measures against the Ottoman threat, and the first occasion on which a Croatian-Slavonian delegation participated in an assembly beyond the borders of their homeland, apart from the Hungarian Diet.²⁷

The second – and decisive – event that shaped the shared history of Inner-Austria, Croatia, and Slavonia occurred at the assembly in Bruck an der Mur in 1578, where the financing and administration of the Croatian and Slavonian Military Frontier were formally agreed upon. This agreement emerged after exhausting negotiations, aimed on the one hand at covering the archduke's debt, and on the

²⁶ On Albert Peregi's career more recently, see: Szabolcs Varga, "Egy ismeretlen humanista: Peregi Albert pécsi prépost", *Történelmi Szemle* 3 (2011), no. 53: 351-376.

²⁷ For the conclusions of the assemblies in Dubrava and Graz see: Klaić, *Povijest*, vol. 5, 155-161; Milan Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde i obrana hrvatskog kraljevstva tijekom 16. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Institut za suvremenu povijest, 1995), 97-99; Štefanec, *Država*, 171-172.

other at securing the religious rights of the numerous Protestant estates of Inner-Austria. A shared interest in defence against the Ottomans ultimately served as the catalyst for the settlement. Thus, the estates accepted the archduke's proposal and agreed to finance the Military Frontier, while he, in return, guaranteed them religious freedoms.²⁸ The Court War Council (*Innerösterreichischer Hofkriegsrat*) was also established in Graz, assuming control over the Military Frontier which effectively meant the transfer of authority over a part of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia. This development ultimately became the clearest indicator of the growing interdependence among Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Croatia, and Slavonia.²⁹ Unlike the earlier assembly in Graz, the Diet in Bruck an der Mur – as well as the one convened in Vienna a year prior – took place without any participation from Croatian or Slavonian representatives. In contrast to the situation in 1537, by 1577 and 1578 the views and proposals of the Croatian-Slavonian nobility were neither sought nor considered relevant in discussions on collective defence.³⁰

The Beginning of the Thirty Years' War: Military Alliances and the Crisis of the Habsburg Monarchy

Forming military or political alliances was not uncommon in the first half of the seventeenth century, particularly on a continent fractured by religious and political divisions – especially when rulers shared common interests or a mutual enemy. In 1607, a group of Protestant Imperial princes formed an alliance known as the Protestant Union to defend themselves against their Catholic rivals. In response, Catholic princes established the Catholic League the following year as a counterbalance. Similar alliances continued to emerge in the subsequent years, primarily because rulers found themselves entangled in the escalating chaos of the Thirty Years' War.³¹

²⁸ Johann Loserth, *Innerösterreich und die militärischen Maßnahmen gegen die Türken im 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Geschichte der Landesdefension und der Reichshilfe* (Graz: Styria, 1934), 95-101.

²⁹ For the negotiations and the arrangements between the Emperor, Inner-Austrians and Croatian-Slavonian estates regarding the defence system in 1570s see the studies Kruhek, *Krajiške utvrde* and Štefanec, *Država*.

³⁰ Štefanec, *Država*, 158.

³¹ Some of the more prominent military-political alliances of the period include the Hague Alliance, concluded among European Protestants in 1626; the Heilbronn League, formed in 1633 between Sweden and the German Protestant states; and the Treaty of Alba Iulia, signed in 1643, through which Sweden and Transylvania agreed on military cooperation. Géza Pálffy, "Ein vergessenes Territorium des Dreißigjährigen Krieges? Die Länder der ungarischen Krone im großen Krieg Europas: Forschungsergebnisse und -desiderata", in: *Die Habsburgermonarchie und der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, ed. Katrin Keller and Martin Scheutz (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2020), 78.

Alliances were also formed among the estates of the Habsburg Monarchy and were typically referred to as *confederations*. One such alliance was established following the Long Turkish War (1591/1593-1606) and the uprising led by Stephen Bocskai (1604-1606). At the assembly of the Hungarian Diet held in Pozsony (present-day Bratislava, Slovakia) in February 1608, Upper and Lower Austria concluded the so-called Pozsony Confederation with the Hungarian estates, under the leadership of Archduke Matthias of Habsburg. The agreement aimed to preserve peace, political unity, and religious freedom for Protestants in Hungary, as previously established by the Peace of Vienna in 1606.³² A few months later, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet accepted all provisions of the Pozsony Confederation, with the exception of the clause – originating from the Peace of Vienna – regarding religious freedom for Protestants. The local estates argued that such a right for the Protestants in Croatia and Slavonia could only be granted by the Croatian-Slavonian Diet itself.³³

Another alliance was formed a decade later. When the first cannons of the Thirty Years' War began to echo in 1618 – or more accurately, in 1619 – the political situation for the Austrian Habsburgs rapidly deteriorated.³⁴ On 23 May 1618, Bohemian rebels defenestrated three imperial officials in Prague and were soon supported by the estates of the Hereditary Lands, particularly Protestant factions from Lower and Upper Austria. Their alliance became official when they joined the Bohemian Confederation on 16 August 1619, an alliance originally formed

³² For a new edition of the document see: Géza Pálffy, "Bündnispartner und Konkurrenten der Krone: die ungarischen Stände, Stefan Bocskai und Erzherzog Matthias 1604–1608", in: *Ein Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg (1608–1611)*, ed. Václav Bůžek (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích, Historický ústav, 2010), 397-398.

³³ Ferdo Šišić, ed., HSS, volume IV: *Od godine 1578. do godine 1608. Dodatak od godine 1578 – 1605* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti umjetnosti, 1917), 516. The Habsburgs sought to condition political loyalty on religious affiliation. The Croatian-Slavonian nobility showed a willingness to accept this condition, though primarily as a means of preserving their own local particularities and interests. Jukić, "Vjerska politika", 88.

³⁴ Vienna endured two sieges within the span of a few months. In June 1619, the city was unsuccessfully besieged by Count Jindřich Matyáš Thurn (1567–1640), leader of the Bohemian rebels, and again in October by the Transylvanian prince Gabriel Bethlen (1580–1629). In November of the same year, the Czech estates formally deposed the future Emperor Ferdinand II from the Bohemian throne, revoking the Crown of Saint Wenceslas, with which he had been crowned two years earlier. Peter Broucek, "Feldmarschall Bucquoy als Armeekommandant 1618-1620", *Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums (Militärwissenschaftliches Institut) in Wien*, Band 7: *Der Dreissigjährige Krieg. Beiträge zu seiner Geschichte* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1976), 33; see also: Pálffy, Géza Pálffy, "The Kingdom of Hungary in the Thirty Years War", in: *The Princes of Transylvania in the Thirty Years War*, ed. Gábor Kármán (Brill: Schöningh, 2023), 8; Géza Pálffy, "Crisis in the Habsburg Monarchy and Hungary, 1619–1622: The Hungarian Estates and Gábor Bethlen", *Hungarian Historical Review* 2 (2013), no. 4: 737.

on 31 July among five Bohemian provinces.³⁵ Finally, in April 1620, the Bohemian Confederation admitted a new member: the Transylvanian prince Gabriel Bethlen.³⁶ It is important to note, however, that despite significant differences between the treaties signed by the Confederation's various members, their shared objective was the formation of a military alliance.³⁷

Shortly after the establishment of the Bohemian Confederation, on 19 August 1619, the Bohemian estates deposed Ferdinand from the throne, thereby wresting the Kingdom of Bohemia – albeit briefly – from Habsburg control.³⁸

The Inner-Austrian estates – particularly the Styrian nobility – initially intended to adopt a policy of neutrality following the Prague Defenestration.³⁹ However, subsequent developments did not favour this position. They were soon compelled not only to mobilize their own forces but also to request assistance from the neighbouring Carinthian and Carniolan estates. This shift in policy was largely prompted by military developments in Hungary. The Transylvanian prince, Gabriel Bethlen, succeeded in rallying significant support among the Protestant Hungarian nobility, especially in Upper Hungary, and a successful campaign in the final months of 1619 brought his forces to the eastern border of Styria.⁴⁰

The rebellion of the Bohemian estates and the siege of Vienna in June 1619 prompted the Croatian-Slavonian estates to express their support for the king

³⁵ Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Years War* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 282.

³⁶ Pálffy, "The Kingdom", 9. More on the relations between Hungarian nobility, rebellious Bohemian estates and Gabriel Bethlen in: Gábor Kármán, "Das Verhältnis der ungarischen Stände zum Böhmisches Ständeaufstand 1618–1620", in: *Der Böhmisches Ständeaufstand 1618–1620. Akteure, Gegner und Verbündete*, ed. Václav Bůžek (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2021), 287–311.

³⁷ In their treaty, the five Bohemian provinces established not only a military cooperation and mutual protection but also introduced a new institutional structure that significantly altered the relationship between the ruler and the estates. In contrast, Upper and Lower Austrian Protestant estates joined the Confederation primarily to ensure military cooperation and to safeguard their own religious rights. The weakest ties bound Bethlen, whose role amounted to little more than that of a military ally. Gábor Kármán, "Not ruler, but the land: Estates and ceremonial order at the diet of Besztercebánya, 1620", in: *Power and Ceremony in European History. Rituals, Practices and Representative Bodies since the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Anna Kalinowska, Jonathan Spangler and Paweł Tyszka (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 146–147.

³⁸ Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618–48* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1997), 55.

³⁹ Helfried Valentinitz, "Die Bedrohung der Steiermark durch Bethlen Gabor von Siebenbürgen 1619–1622", in: *Die Steiermark: Brücke und Bollwerk: Katalog der Landesausstellung: Schloß Herberstein bei Stubenberg, 3. Mai bis 26. Oktober 1986*, ed. Gerhard Pferschy and Peter Krenn, Veröffentlichungen des steiermärkischen Landesarchivs, Band 16 (Graz: Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, 1986), 325.

⁴⁰ Géza Pálffy, *Povijest Mađarske – Ugarska na granici dvaju imperija (1526–1711.)*, trans. Jelena Knežević (Samobor: Meridijani, 2010), 185–188.

and to declare their readiness to dispatch military assistance if necessary.⁴¹ In October, the Croatian and Slavonian estates took the first concrete defensive measures, and the Diet summoned all magnates, noblemen, and prelates to arms.⁴² This was the second instance in which the Croatian and Slavonian Diet aligned itself with Vienna against the Transylvanian threat, a precedent having been set during the uprising of Stephan Bocskai (1604-1606).⁴³

Although the House of Austria managed to survive the crises of 1619,⁴⁴ the following year presented an even greater challenge – one that raised fundamental questions regarding the very survival of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁴⁵ Vienna found itself increasingly isolated. Within the Monarchy, Ferdinand II could count on the loyalty of only Inner-Austria, the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom, and a certain group of Catholic Hungarian estates.⁴⁶ According to Klaić, it was precisely for this reason that Ferdinand II encouraged the Inner-Austrian and Croatian-Slavonian estates to negotiate a military alliance as a counterweight to the Bohemian Confederation.⁴⁷ The situation closely resembled the events of 1526–1527, when Ferdinand, having lost the support in Hungary of all but a narrow yet influential circle of aristocrats (and a few towns in western Hungary), was likewise compelled by adverse political circumstances to establish—or, more precisely, to strengthen—his cooperation with the Croatian estates. The Croatian lands still held immense strategic importance for the defence of the Habsburg Hereditary Lands.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Ferdo Šišić, ed., HSS, vol. V: *Od godine 1609. do godine 1630. s dodatkom od god. 1570. do god. 1628.* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti umjetnosti, 1918), 220-221.

⁴² The Diet issued a call to arms, requiring members of the high nobility to appear in person and to raise one foot soldier per household, as well as one cavalryman for every four households. Members of the lesser nobility were likewise expected to present themselves personally. It was further decided that the assembled army would gather at the camp near Šemovec, where their primary task would be to defend the border along the River Drava. Additional military units from the Zrinski family were expected to join the forces stationed there. Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 235-236.

⁴³ Klaić, *Povijest*, vol. 5, 570.

⁴⁴ The crisis of 1619 and Bethlen's advance on Vienna were brought to a halt by an incursion of Polish Cossacks into the northern regions of the Principality of Transylvania, a development made possible through Habsburg diplomacy. As a result, the eastern parts of Styria were no longer under immediate threat. However, the ensuing truce proved to be short-lived. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 291.

⁴⁵ Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1618 – 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21.

⁴⁶ Pálffy, "Crisis", 737.

⁴⁷ Klaić, "Banovanje", 181.

⁴⁸ Varga, "Az 1527. évi horvát-szlavón kettős", 1128.

The Confederation of Graz: the Unformal Military Alliance, the Fight for the Common Interests or the Attempt to Redefine the Military Frontier?

The truce agreed between Ferdinand and Bethlen in January 1620 was merely a temporary solution, and those parts of the Monarchy that remained loyal to the Austrian Habsburgs continued to develop the defensive plans that had already been set in motion.⁴⁹ Concerning the defence of Inner-Austria, the local estates possessed a practical defence system, established in 1575. It was based on neighbourly military aid (*nachbarliche succurs*). Over time, the system underwent several modifications, and following the Libel of Bruck an der Mur in 1578, the Croatian lands came to function as part of the system.⁵⁰

Styria, as the easternmost province, was also the most exposed to Bethlen's attacks; consequently, the organisation of joint defensive efforts from late 1619 was primarily directed towards reinforcing its eastern frontier. At the end of June 1620, in line with the policy of armed neutrality, the estates of the three provinces refused to provide assistance to the Emperor in Lower Austria.⁵¹ However, on 3 August, the Carniolan estates agreed to dispatch troops to their Styrian neighbours.⁵² As they deliberated on the implementation of military assistance, events unfolded in Hungary that would profoundly destabilise the Monarchy and further undermine its already fragile stability.

The Hungarian Diet convened in Besztercebánya (present-day Banská Bystrica, Slovakia) in July 1620. This assembly was a planned meeting between Ferdinand's envoys and Bethlen, together with his supporters. The remainder of the Hungarian nobility were present, as well as representatives from the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom. The latter had appointed Peter Gall and Toma Mikulić as their delegates for the occasion.⁵³ At the assembly in Besztercebánya, Ferdinand II encoun-

⁴⁹ Fritz Posch, "Die innerösterreichische Defensionsordnung von 1575 und der 'nachbarliche Succurs' der innerösterreichischen Länder Steiermark, Kärnten, Krain und Görz", *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Steiermark* 81 (1990): 45; Helfred Valentinitich, "Die Steiermark, Ungarn und die Osmanen 1606-1662", *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereines für Steiermark Jahrgang* 65 (1974): 99.

⁵⁰ Posch, "Die innerösterreichische Defensionsordnung", 42; Štefanec, *Država*, 143; Ferenc Véghe, "Stájerhon védelmében. A szlavón-petrinjai végvidék a 17. században – magyar szemmel", *Pontes* 3 (2020): 75.

⁵¹ Valentinitich, "Die Steiermark", 101.

⁵² Slovenia (hereafter: SI) – Arhiv Republike Slovenije u Ljubljani (hereafter: AS) – 2. Deželni stanovi za Kranjsko podfond I. registratura, 1457-1782 (hereafter: 2/I), fascicle 92, box 145, fol. 59-63.

⁵³ The Croatian-Slavonian Diet held the right to send delegates to the Hungarian Diet – also referred to as the Common Diet – where they could represent the interests of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. Ivan Beuc, *Povijest institucija državne vlasti Kraljevine Hrvatske, Slavonije i Dalmacije. Pravno-povijesne studije* (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet, Centar za stručno usavršavanje i suradnju s udruženim radom 1985), 200; Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 247.

tered a new setback to his ruling ambitions. Most of the Hungarian (Protestant) nobility aligned themselves with Bethlen, agreeing to cooperate with the rebellious Bohemian estates, as had been decided at the assembly in Pozsony earlier that year. In response, the king's envoys dissolved the assembly on 15 August, declaring it illegitimate – a position supported by the loyalist (Catholic) Hungarian estates.⁵⁴ While Ferdinand's supporters – including the delegates of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet – withdrew from Besztercebánya, the remaining faction of the Hungarian nobility continued their session, culminating in the election of Bethlen as King of Hungary on 25 August.⁵⁵

The Assembly in Zagreb on 26 August 1620: A New Opportunity on the Horizon

Just one day after the Habsburgs lost a second crown, the Croatian-Slavonian estates convened a session of the Diet in Zagreb, most likely unaware of the election in Besztercebánya.⁵⁶ The number of adversaries to the Austrian House was steadily growing, and the fact that many were emerging from within the Monarchy itself posed a particular threat. At that time, Ferdinand's authority largely depended on external support,⁵⁷ although considerable concern was also directed towards those remaining territories that continued to demonstrate loyalty. Just as his grandfather had convened the assembly in Graz in 1537, Ferdinand II did the same in 1620. This gathering was preceded by a session of the Croatian-Slavonian estates, during which, according to established practice, Austrian envoys were present in order to follow discussions on military affairs. Accordingly, Bishop Leonhard II Götz of Lavant and the commander of the Croatian Military Frontier, Gottfried Stadl, arrived in Zagreb as royal envoys, accompanied by Baron Georg Galler von Schwamberg on behalf of the Styrian estates.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Géza Pálffy, "Fordulópont vagy katalizátor? Az 1620. évi fehérhegyi csata és Magyarország", in: *Az Ünnepi kötet Papp Klára 70. születésnapjára*, ed. Annamária Jeney-Tóth, Orsolya Tóth and Attila Bárány (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézet, 2022), 309.

⁵⁵ Klaić, "Banovanje", 178; see a recent study about the Diet in Besztercebánya: Kármán, "Not ruler", 143-156.

⁵⁶ The session was originally scheduled for August 10, then postponed to nine days later, and finally took place on August 26. Valentinitsch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 108-110.

⁵⁷ In addition to the assistance received from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Ferdinand II benefited from substantial support provided by Bavaria and Spain, along with a more modest contribution from Pope Paul V. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 296-297.

⁵⁸ Rudolf Horvat notes that Leonhard Götz and Gottfried Stadl represented Carinthia – or more precisely, Carniola – although this information is not mentioned in the official conclusions of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet. Similarly, according to H. Valentinitsch, the arrival of the commander of Slavonian Frontier, Siegmund Friedrich von Trauttmansdorff, was also expected, though it appears that he ultimately did not attend the diet's session. At the conclusion of the discussions, the three delegates were granted noble status (*indigenatus*), which Vjekoslav Klaić interprets as a reflection of the Croatian-Slavonian

The address delivered by the aforementioned trio to the Diet served a dual purpose. On the one hand, they aimed to dissuade the Croatian-Slavonian estates from any potential cooperation with the (Protestant) Hungarian nobility loyal to Bethlen, who were attempting by all means to win their support. On the other hand, they sought to encourage military cooperation against a new common enemy.⁵⁹ However, the demands presented by the Croatian-Slavonian nobility at that time left the envoys without a proper response.

The course and outcome of the negotiations in Zagreb are best illustrated by three historical sources written in the days that followed, all authored by participants in the events. The most recent of these provides the least amount of detail. On 30 August, the *ban* of Croatia and Slavonia, Nikola Frankopan Tržaćki, briefly informed the king that both sides had agreed on the need to confront a common enemy, and that the specifics would be discussed subsequently.⁶⁰

Considerably more detail is provided by the remaining two sources. The first of these was produced on 26 August 1620, when the Croatian-Slavonian Diet agreed upon conclusions that specifically refer to the potential alliance. At the beginning of the session, the three Austrian envoys presented their proposal, which stated that Croatia and Slavonia should participate in a common defence against the growing threat. The Croatian-Slavonian estates not only opposed the Hungarian Diet by rejecting Bethlen as King of Hungary, but also accepted the proposal made by the Austrian envoys. Moreover, they concluded that Inner-Austria, Croatia and Slavonia could withstand "in the storms of war" only through united resistance. It was emphasised that both sides would act in the name of ancestral honour and loyalty, and that their mutual dependence was evident in their intention to resist the enemy with combined forces. For this reason, they considered it appropriate to establish an alliance or confederation (*mutuam unionis et certae confederationis*) as a defensive mechanism not only for immediate needs, but also for potential future threats. The sole condition set by the estates of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia was that all rights, privileges, and benefits they enjoyed within the Realm of Saint Stephen be preserved, along with the authority of the legitimate king and the Holy Crown of Hungary as their guarantors.⁶¹ The Diet also noted that this matter would be discussed further, and for that purpose authorised a group of negotiators: Bishop of Zagreb Petar Domitrović; *ban* Frankopan Tržaćki; former *ban* Toma Erdődy; Stjepan Patačić as a protonotary of the Kingdom; and from the Slavonian nobility Grgur Pethő de Gerse; and Juraj Urnoczy. To cover the expenses of this diplomatic mission, the negotiators

Diet's favourable reception of their proposal. Horvat, *Povijest Hrvatske*, 332; Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 109; Klaić, "Banovanje", 182; Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 282.

⁵⁹ Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 113.

⁶⁰ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 285.

⁶¹ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 282-283

were granted 1,000 forints, with reimbursement guaranteed should the amount prove insufficient. Finally, it is worth noting that the Croatian-Slavonian Diet once again issued a call to arms, requesting a greater number of soldiers than in the previous year.⁶²

The proposal to form a confederation has been the subject of various interpretations. According to Rački, the Croatian-Slavonian estates were unwilling to sever their connection with the Holy Crown and were also hesitant to unite with the Inner-Austrian provinces – fearing the loss of their privileges and the lawful rights of the Kingdom.⁶³ V. Klaić and Šišić express similar views concerning the autonomy of the Diet, emphasising the formulation which they interpret as evidence that the alliance was not directed against the Kingdom of Hungary, but solely against the Transylvanian usurper, the elected king, Bethlen.⁶⁴ In contrast to their views, N. Klaić argued that the acceptance of the “king’s idea of a Styrian-Croatian confederation” was indicative of the Diet’s political weakness.⁶⁵ Guldescu contends that the Diet was prepared to establish a permanent alliance, one that would ultimately lead to the annexation of Croatian lands – a prospect particularly feared in Hungary⁶⁶ – suggesting that the unification ideas of 1526 and 1527 had not entirely disappeared.

Behind the Diet’s resolution, a set of underlying processes was unfolding – processes that help illuminate the internal dynamics of the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom and its relationship not only with its Inner-Austrian neighbours but also with the king himself during those turbulent times. These developments should not be overlooked when attempting to understand the conclusions concerning the proposed confederation. On 7 April 1620, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet submitted a list of grievances to the king, demanding the subjugation of the Vlachs to feudal jurisdiction, the full restoration of the *ban*’s authority, and the appointment of local noblemen to commanding positions within the Military Frontier. All these demands were directed against the Inner-Austrian nobility and, more broadly, against the system instituted at Bruck an der Mur. Such petitions of complaint were not uncommon; however, on this occasion, the document concluded with a warning, stating that the nobility would be compelled to seek an alternative solution should the king fail to fulfil their demands – or rather, his previously given promises.⁶⁷ Valentinitich interprets this formulation as a calcu-

⁶² In August 1620, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet decreed that one cavalryman be provided for every four households, along with two foot soldiers per household. Šišić, HSS, vol. V; Klaić, “Banovanje”, 181-182.

⁶³ Rački, “Ob obrani”, 537.

⁶⁴ Klaić, “Banovanje”, 182; Šišić, *Politika*, 139.

⁶⁵ Klaić, *Društvena previranja*, 123.

⁶⁶ Guldescu, *The Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom*, 126.

⁶⁷ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 249-252.

lated threat issued by the Croatian-Slavonian nobility at a time when Ferdinand's rule was hanging by a thread.⁶⁸ However, it should not be overlooked that this was by no means the first occasion on which the estates used such threatening language. One need only recall the speech delivered by Bernardin Frankopan before the Imperial Diet in Nuremberg in 1522, or even more significantly, the episode in 1535, when the Croatian nobility demanded the return of Ferdinand's oath—and, by implication, his royal title,⁶⁹ to conclude that the local estates, when unable to advance their interests by other means, resorted to similar – often empty – threats. The overall situation was, in fact, highly tense, as evidenced by the reactions of the Inner-Austrian nobility to the grievances. Not only were most of these complaints dismissed with relative ease, but the commander of the Slavonian Frontier was also instructed to mobilise the Grenzers and suppress any potential unrest instigated by the Croatian-Hungarian nobility.⁷⁰

Both sides had reasons for heightened tension. They found themselves at war, unable to defend themselves independently, each acting primarily in pursuit of their own interests. This time, the lands of Inner-Austria were directly threatened, and unlike during the period of Ottoman expansion – when the Croatian territories had served as a protective bulwark – there was no longer any geographical buffer separating them from the enemy.⁷¹ As a result, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the Inner-Austrian estates to fight on two fronts; that is, to use the Grenzers as a means of exerting pressure on the Croatian-Slavonian nobility while simultaneously defending their own lands from coordinated Hungarian-Ottoman attacks.

The Croatian-Slavonian nobility, meanwhile, expressed dissatisfaction, but were also experiencing a degree of financial recovery,⁷² which contributed to a modest increase in their political influence. It may be assumed that they were fully aware of the challenges facing Inner-Austria, and that, combined with the weakness

⁶⁸ Valentinitich, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 68.

⁶⁹ Varga, "Az 1527. évi horvát-szlavón kettős", 1130.

⁷⁰ Valentinitich, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 68-69.

⁷¹ Posch, "Die innerösterreichische Defensionsordnung", 45.

⁷² Between 1578 and 1620, significant shifts occurred in the political and economic power of the Inner-Austrian and Croatian-Slavonian nobility. On the one hand, Carinthia, Carniola, Styria, and Gorizia experienced an intense wave of the Counter-Reformation at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which led to the departure of approximately 11,000 Protestants. Shortly thereafter, these lands suffered considerable devastation during the Long Turkish War and the uprising led by Stephen Bocskai. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 72; Valentinitich, "Die Steiermark", 94; According to Adamček, the Ottoman advance towards Hungary and not Croatia and Slavonia at the end of the 16th century contributed to a degree of economic growth among the nobility in Croatia and Slavonia. This development was reflected in their increased engagement in the deliberations of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet. Josip Adamček, *Agrarni odnosi u Hrvatskoj od sredine XV do kraja XVII stoljeća* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber), 506.

of central authority, prompted them to submit grievances and capitalise on the situation. Nevertheless, as they stated in August 1620 during the session of the Diet, they too found themselves in a hostile environment, which made it logical for them to seek common ground with their western neighbours. Nada Klaić observed that the local nobility, positioned between Austrian officers along the Military Frontier and the Ottomans, could not align themselves with the Hungarian rebels.⁷³ Although the Croatian and Slavonian estates were indeed caught between two adversaries, it appears that these were the Ottomans and the Transylvanian-Hungarian forces, rather than the Austrian officers. In cooperating with Inner-Austria, the Croatian-Slavonian political elite sought to ensure their survival and to protect both their shared and particular interests.

In other words, although relations were strained, a direct escalation of conflict between the estates was unlikely. Above all, they shared a common interest, as demonstrated during the negotiations concerning the proposed confederation. The Habsburg ruler played a pivotal role: he initially pacified the Croatian-Slavonian estates with various explanations and assurances, expressed gratitude for their demonstrated loyalty,⁷⁴ and ultimately sent his envoys to Zagreb. As the course of the war became increasingly unfavourable for Vienna, the need emerged to bring together the Inner-Austrian and Croatian-Slavonian noble elites and to encourage them not only to reach a mutual understanding but also to discuss measures for joint defence. The Inner Austrian estates, however, could no longer formulate military plans independently of Croatia and Slavonia, as they had done in the past. Although they still retained the dominant position in decision-making, the Inner-Austrians were now obliged to involve the Croatian and Slavonian political elite in the development of new military strategies.

On 28 August, the Austrian envoys composed a detailed ten-page document addressed to Ferdinand II. This valuable source offers new insights into the Zagreb assembly, revealing the deeper significance of the confederation proposal. The authors recorded the entire discussion and the way it was conducted, including the intentions of the king, the Styrian estates, and the Croatian-Slavonian Diet. Notably, this is one of the few extant sources from the period in which Croatia and Slavonia are explicitly referred to as a Kingdom (*Königr[eich] Crobaten vnd Windischlandt*).⁷⁵ The term *Land* is more frequently used for Croatia and Slavonia, while the term *Kingdom* is generally associated with Hungary. Although this topic requires further research, it may cautiously be concluded that the designation was employed to underscore the distinct status of Croatia and Slavonia in relation to Hungary. It appears that such a status was particularly important to

⁷³ Klaić, *Društvena previranja*, 123.

⁷⁴ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 270-274.

⁷⁵ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193.

emphasise when a region belonging to a larger political entity was preparing to enter into a distinct form of cooperation or alliance.

The three representatives, adopting a conciliatory tone, aimed to secure the loyalty and support of the Croatian-Slavonian nobility for the Habsburg king, as well as to foster military cooperation with Inner-Austria. To this end, they reminded the estates that His Majesty, with his "royal grace and paternal affection", was fully committed to the welfare of the Kingdom. They urged the estates to join the king and the Inner-Austrian provinces in a collective struggle against the enemy. The Croatian and Slavonian estates appeared acutely aware of their precarious position between the Ottoman Empire and Bethlen's supporters in Hungary and promptly sought information on the number of soldiers available to assist Croatia and Slavonia in the event of an attack.⁷⁶

It appears that the Croatian-Slavonian estates recognised a new opportunity on the horizon and sought to capitalise on the situation. Although not stated explicitly, it appears that this was the first known attempt to reconsider the regulations of 1578 – that is, to replace the Military Frontier with an alternative system. As the Ottoman expansion had been halted, the Croatian and Slavonian estates regarded a permanent (or rather mercenary) army stationed along the Frontier as no longer necessary. Indeed, the Military Frontier had been the principal source of the aforementioned grievances. With the eventual dissolution of the Frontier in view, it seemed sufficient merely to determine the number of soldiers that would be dispatched as aid. Finally, the estates presented their proposal before the two royal envoys, just as they had previously submitted their grievances directly to the king. It seemed like a potential resolution to the ongoing dispute.

Götz, Stadl, and Galler remained reserved in their response to the proposal. It is unclear whether they fully grasped its implications. Firstly, they stated that they did not possess the requested information at that time. Secondly, they declared that they were not authorised to commit anyone to provide specific military assistance. Finally, there were no clear indications that Croatian and Slavonian territory was under immediate threat. The local nobility was dissatisfied with such a response, and it appears that their distrust intensified. The representatives attempted to reassure them that assistance would indeed be provided in the event of imminent danger, as had been the case over the previous several decades.⁷⁷ In response to the offered assurances, the Croatian and Slavonian estates requested a recess for internal consultation and, following a brief deliberation, presented a proposal for the permanent unification of the Hereditary Lands (*ein rechte beständige vereinigung zwischen dißem Königreich vnd deren rainenden Erblanden*). This

⁷⁶ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193.

⁷⁷ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193. Also, compare with: Valentinitich, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 109-110.

proposal reportedly took Stadl, Götz, and Galler by surprise. They responded that, lacking the necessary authority, they were unable either to accept or to reject the proposal.⁷⁸

The Croatian and Slavonian political elite demonstrated differing approaches in the pursuit of their interests. Although it remains unclear how vigorously these positions were advocated, two factions were discernible. One recognised only Ferdinand II as the legitimate monarch. The other appeared more open to Bethlen, although it is uncertain whether they genuinely supported his political objectives or merely sought to exploit his activities in order to exert pressure on the king and the Hereditary Lands. During the discussions, these two factions had to determine the nature of the proposed unification with the Hereditary Lands. The report indicates that the Diet debated and voted on the form such unification should take with the Inner-Austrian provinces. It was ultimately agreed that the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia should not be separated from the Kingdom of Hungary.⁷⁹ As a result, the estates resolved to propose an arrangement in the form of a military alliance – namely, a confederation. Presumably, the idea of confederation represented a second attempt to revise the framework established at Bruck an der Mur. Although the local nobility did not succeed in securing a defined commitment regarding troop numbers, through the confederation they sought both to free themselves from Inner-Austrian control over the Military Frontier and to secure the necessary military support. In the aforementioned resolution of the Croatian and Slavonian Diet, it is stated that the confederation should be formed not merely as a temporary measure, but also as a permanent structure to address future military threats. Accordingly, if an alliance could ensure sufficient military aid, the existence of the Military Frontier in its traditional form would no longer be necessary.

The source does not provide details regarding the voting process, except in the case of the Bishop of Zagreb, Petar Domitrović. He advocated for unification, and the report emphasises that he carried out his duties commendably during the session.⁸⁰ The bishop, a royalist, appears to have had a clear mandate at the Zagreb assembly: to ensure that Croatia and Slavonia remained under Habsburg rule. Domitrović was indeed a trusted confidant of Ferdinand II, as it was common practice for the bishops of Zagreb to support Habsburg authority in the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia.⁸¹ A few weeks later, he strongly advocated for the

⁷⁸ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193.

⁷⁹ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193.

⁸⁰ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193. I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Mario Šain, for his generous assistance and valuable advice during the transcription and translation of a portion of the text.

⁸¹ Nataša Štefanec, "Hrvatska i Mađarska od 16. do 18. stoljeća", in: *Ars et Virtus. Hrvatska – Mađarska. 800 godina zajedničke kulturne baštine*, ed. Dragan Damjanović et al. (Zagreb: Klovićevi dvori; Mađarski nacionalni muzej, 2020), 49.

provision of 2,000 soldiers to the king, opposing both *ban* and the estates.⁸² As previously noted, Domitrović was also among the Croatian-Slavonian Diet's appointed deputies for the forthcoming negotiations on the confederation in Graz.⁸³ In a more comprehensive sense, Croatian and Slavonian nobles – particularly the lower and middle nobility – had become increasingly dependent on the Habsburg ruler, having lost significant portions of their land and wealth to the Ottomans. Simultaneously, their ties with the Protestant Hungarian nobility had weakened during the early decades of the seventeenth century. During this period, the bishops of Zagreb played a prominent role in shaping the political direction of the Croatian and Slavonian assemblies, consistently promoting the interests of the Habsburg dynasty.⁸⁴ In other words, Ferdinand's supporters held a majority in the Croatian-Slavonian Diet.

Valentinitisch argued that the bishop acted as a counterbalance to Bethlen's supporters, suggesting that their influence was not insignificant. However, the available reports and the conclusions of the Diet provide no information regarding this faction. In general, little is known about the members and activities of the Croatian and Slavonian supporters of the Prince of Transylvania – and this should come as no surprise. Despite underlying tensions, efforts to pressure the king, and strained relations with Inner-Austria the Croatian-Slavonian Diet acted decisively against the Prince of Transylvania.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, it appears that there may have been some internal disagreement concerning the choice between Bethlen and Ferdinand II.

In his book, Juraj Rattkay, one of the contemporary noblemen, revealed the names of individuals sympathetic to the Prince of Transylvania. He wrote of rumours that "Bethlen's turmoil" would spread across Slavonia, identifying Grebengrad – owned by Franjo Batthyány, a Transdanubian aristocrat – as a key gathering point for supporters of the newly elected King of Hungary. Rattkay later accused a member of the noble Patačić family, as well as an individual named Grgur Peteon/Puteon, of assisting in the defence of Grebengrad during the siege led by *ban* Frankopan. A third person, the lawyer Ivan Krušelj, was accused of "conspiracy against the homeland."⁸⁶

⁸² Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 111; Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 286.

⁸³ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 184-193.

⁸⁴ Štefanec, "Hrvatska", 49-50.

⁸⁵ The Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia raised an army in 1619 in anticipation of a potential attack by Bethlen, and did so again the following year. At least at first glance, this suggests that the Kingdom had no intention of rebelling against Vienna.

⁸⁶ Juraj Rattkay, *Spomen na kraljeve i banove Kraljevstva Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije*, prev. Zrinka Blažević et al. (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Sveučilište u Zagrebu – Hrvatski studiji, 2016), 249-250.

Political opposition within the Croatian-Slavonian Diet was by no means uncommon. Several examples demonstrate that some Croatian and Slavonian noblemen did not hesitate to oppose the conclusions of the Diet on crucial political matters. In 1527, for instance, one of the most prominent and influential magnates in Croatia, Bernardin Krsto Frankopan, opposed the majority of the Croatian nobility when they elected Ferdinand as their king. Furthermore, certain Croatian-Slavonian magnates resisted the conclusions of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet on religious issues in 1604 by expressing support for Protestantism. Similarly, in 1712, a faction among the Croatian and Slavonian estates supported the Hungarian cause in opposition to the Pragmatic Sanction.⁸⁷ Following this pattern, one might infer that in 1620 there could have been noblemen or magnates who sympathised with Bethlen.⁸⁸ However, Pálffy argues that, at that time, no such supporters were present among the Croatian-Slavonian elite. In this context, the case of Count Juraj V Zrinski – who would later rise to the rank of imperial general⁸⁹ – deserves particular attention. In August 1620, *ban* Frankopan accused Zrinski of attempting to assassinate him with the assistance of Hungarian soldiers,⁹⁰ although no evidence supports such an allegation. The historian Antonio Schmidt-Brentano believes that Zrinski supported Bethlen's rebellion until 1620,⁹¹ but due to the lack of sources, this question remains unresolved.⁹² Whoever they may have been, it can reasonably be assumed that Bethlen's supporters were disillusioned with the House of Habsburg and sought to improve their own position by aligning themselves with the Prince of Transylvania but also with a significant portion of the Hungarian estates. It should not be overlooked that the Croatian and Slavonian estates had traditionally been linked to Hungary, as they occupied prominent positions within the Realm of Saint Stephen, which provided them with supreme social and political status.

Ultimately, Stadl, Götz, and Galler had no choice but to delay their response in order to preserve the fragile trust of the Croatian-Slavonian nobility. They sent

⁸⁷ At the beginning of the 18th century, namely in years 1708 and 1712 two different political factions existed in Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom and both were led by influential magnates. The first one defended pro-Habsburg positions, whereas the other endorsed pro-Hungarian views. See detailed in: Ivana Jukić, "U sjeni hrvatske pragmatičke sankcije", *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 26 (2008), 145-147; Štefanec, "Hrvatska", 53.

⁸⁸ Géza Pálffy asserts that there were very few, if any, supporters of Bethlen in Slavonia and Croatia. Pálffy, "Crisis", 738.

⁸⁹ Antonio Schmidt-Brentano, *Die kaiserlichen Generale 1618 – 1655. Ein biographisches Lexikon* (Wien: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, 2022), 552.

⁹⁰ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 280.

⁹¹ Schmidt-Brentano, *Die kaiserlichen Generale*, 552.

⁹² On the discussion of Juraj Zrinski's loyalty see: Filip Hren, "Zrinski kao vojna elita XVII. stoljeća", *Rad Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti. Razred za društvene znanosti*, no. 560=57 (2023), 10.

a request to Graz, urging that a new assembly be convened as soon as possible, where all parties could deliberate on the proposed plan and potential defence strategies.⁹³

The Assembly in Graz on 7 September 1620: The Limits of the Cooperation

Further negotiations between the Croatian-Slavonian and Inner-Austrian nobility took place as part of a broader plan to organise the defence of Carinthia, Styria, and Carniola. Developments in 1620 – particularly in August – led the Inner-Austrian estates to revise and renegotiate the existing defence order.⁹⁴ This was largely a result of the prolonged neglect of defence matters, especially given that the last such meeting had taken place in 1607. Ultimately, the specific demands of the Croatian-Slavonian estates also prompted the assembled estates to make concrete decisions regarding military coordination.

In early September, forty representatives of the Inner-Austrian estates convened in Graz, joined by six envoys from Croatia and Slavonia. A wide range of issues was on the agenda, most of them related to the organisation of defence and the system of mutual military assistance among the Inner-Austrian provinces. However, one of the most pressing questions concerned how to respond to the demands of the Croatian-Slavonian estates – particularly their proposal to establish a confederation. At the outset, Ferdinand II, through his envoys and written correspondence, reminded all the estates of their traditional loyalty.⁹⁵

The representatives of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet insisted on forming a formal alliance that would include a precisely defined number of soldiers to be provided if military aid was required. However, their proposal was ultimately rejected, as the Carniolan, Carinthian, and especially Styrian estates opposed such a request. The Inner-Austrians responded that signing such an agreement with the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia would constitute direct interference in the internal affairs of the Realm of Saint Stephen, potentially exacerbating the conflict.⁹⁶ On the one hand, invoking the legal framework of the Realm served as a shrewd response to what was perceived as an equally strategic proposal. On the other hand, the nature of the reply closely resembled that of Ferdinand I in 1527, when the Croatian estates raised the question of unification.

⁹³ Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 110.

⁹⁴ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 158-159.

⁹⁵ Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 113-114.

⁹⁶ Valentinitisch, "Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen", 114-115.

Nevertheless, the Inner-Austrian estates did not entirely dismiss the request for assistance. After all, mutual defence remained a common interest. Unsurprisingly, they considered the existing mechanism established in 1578 to be sufficient. The Inner-Austrians aimed to preserve the Military Frontier and maintain their influence within the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom, along with all the associated benefits. To justify their stance, they reminded the assembly – just as they had done previously in response to the Croatian-Slavonian grievances – of the substantial resources that they, alongside the Emperor and the Imperial estates, had invested in the defence of Croatian and Slavonian territory during the war against the Ottomans. Additionally, they reiterated their willingness to defend Croatian-Slavonian lands in the event of a future emergency, as they had done in the past. They sought to assure the Croatian and Slavonian representatives that they could rely on the support of their neighbours, as long as they remained loyal to the Habsburg ruler.⁹⁷

The envoys of the Carinthian estates clearly articulated their positions, demands, and capacities regarding the new defence arrangement in five points. In the fourth point, they summarised the essence of the entire negotiations, stating that the new defence order should account not only for protection against the Ottomans and the rebellious Hungarian nobility, but also for any other enemy wherever the need might arise.⁹⁸ This formulation effectively defined the framework within which Carinthian participation in the common defence was to be considered. One of the most significant issues – recurring across several points – was military aid to Croatia and Slavonia. In the first point, the Carinthians expressed concern over the election of a new Hungarian king. Since Croatia and Slavonia were within his immediate reach, this development posed a direct threat to Carniola as well. The Carinthian estates confirmed their willingness to assist their Croatian-Slavonian neighbours in the event of an attack, in cooperation with Carniolan forces. Crucially, however, such aid was to be provided strictly within the framework of the Bruck agreement. While no specific number of troops was mentioned for Croatia and Slavonia, the number of soldiers allocated to Styria was clearly defined. Unlike the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom, Styria was considered directly threatened and thus prioritised. The Carinthian estates agreed to provide 100 cavalymen and 100 foot soldiers for a period of three months. Furthermore, if a general mobilisation (*Aufboth*) was to be declared – by conscripting every thirtieth man – Carinthia could raise an additional 800 troops.⁹⁹ Although Croatian lands were not mentioned explicitly in this regard, one may reasonably assume that a comparable number of troops would be sent to

⁹⁷ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol., 270-274; Valentinitisch, “Die steirischen Wehrmaßnahmen”, 114.

⁹⁸ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol., 278-288.

⁹⁹ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 278-288; See also Posch, “Die innerösterreichische Defensionsordnung”, 46.

assist them in case of immediate danger. Historical precedents, such as the Battle of Sisak in 1593 and the capture of Petrinja in 1595, support this interpretation. The latter event was highlighted by the Carinthian envoys in the fifth point as evidence of their commitment to assisting their south-eastern neighbours. Although unable to enter a formal alliance, in conclusion they remained firm in their intention to cultivate good neighbourly relations – on the condition that Croatia and Slavonia remained loyal to the Habsburg ruler.¹⁰⁰ The estates of the County of Gorizia expressed a similar view. Their report made little reference to Croatia and Slavonia, yet affirmed their intention to maintain unity and cooperation in the service of His Majesty.¹⁰¹

The overall conclusions of the Graz assembly aligned with the positions of the Inner-Austrian provinces. They agreed to mutual assistance in the event of immediate danger, with particular emphasis on the defence of Styria. The Croatian-Slavonian delegates, however, failed to secure the signing of a formal alliance that would allow for the revision of the 1578 regulations and obligate the Inner-Austrians to dispatch a precisely defined number of military units. While the promises of military assistance offered little comfort to the Croatian and Slavonian estates, the negotiations nevertheless defined a strategic partnership during the escalation of the war.

The Consequences and Significance of the Negotiations

The consequences of the assemblies were manifold and may be interpreted from several perspectives. From Vienna's standpoint, one of the most significant outcomes was the continued loyalty of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia to the Habsburg dynasty. Firstly, the importance of the agreement was all the greater given that more than half of the Monarchy had risen up against him. Secondly, the long-term significance lies in the fact that a substantial number of soldiers from the Kingdom took part in the Thirty Years' War, during which they played a notably prominent role.

Despite minor tensions and particular interests, Croatia and Slavonia strengthened their ties with their Inner-Austrian neighbours by rallying around a common cause. This is evident in the example of military aid sent to Styria, which took two distinct forms. The first involved Grenzers – up to several thousand soldiers – led by commanders of the Croatian and Slavonian frontiers.¹⁰² However, this form of support was not discussed during the negotiations in Zagreb or Graz

¹⁰⁰ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 278-288.

¹⁰¹ SI-AS-2/I, fasc. 92, b. 145, fol. 258-264.

¹⁰² Croatia (hereafter: HR) – Hrvatski državni arhiv (hereafter: HDA) – fond 913 – Zbirka preslika na papiru, Croatia et Vindica (1566.-1749.) 2. Vindica, box 30, fascicle 54, fol. 600-615; HR-HDA – fond

and therefore cannot be directly linked to the idea of a confederation. Moreover, these units largely operated independently of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet. The second form of assistance more clearly reflected the emerging good-neighbourly relations, as it involved units raised directly by the Croatian-Slavonian estates. At the session of the Diet held on 23 November 1620, it was resolved that the Kingdom would dispatch troops, *as previously promised*, to be led by the *ban* for a period of one month.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, it remains unclear whether the resolution was ever fulfilled – not due to a lack of will, but rather to shifting internal and external circumstances. During the winter of 1620/1621, the *ban* was sent to (re)capture the fortress of Grebengrad from Bethlen's supporters.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, following the defeat of the Bohemian rebels at the Battle of White Mountain in November 1620, Bethlen's forces withdrew, bringing the immediate threat to the Styrian border to a temporary end.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the Croatian-Slavonian estates had, by that point, become an integral part of the broader defence system. For instance, in August 1621, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet approved further military aid to Styria and authorised the *ban* and other noblemen to determine how many troops the Kingdom could spare.¹⁰⁶

To understand the significance of the negotiations held in August and September 1620, it is useful to draw parallels with the royal election of 1527 and the Pragmatic Sanction of 1712. These two events are frequently cited as clear evidence of the autonomy and political self-awareness of the Croatian-Slavonian Diet, particularly in relation to the Hungarian Diet.¹⁰⁷ While all three episodes unfolded

1450 – Zbirka mikrofilmova, Croatica et Vindica (1566.-1749.), 2. Vindica 1620, D-2009, fol. 54, no. 20; Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 286.

¹⁰³ ...*per regnicolas promissum attinet, cum iidem regnicolae praemisum subsidium penes auxiliares, copias confinium horum regnorum et inclytarum provinciarum Styriae, Carinthiae et Carniolae...* Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 288-289.

¹⁰⁴ The siege of Grebengrad in 1620/1621 is described in detail by J. Rattkay. Rattkay, *Spomen*, 249-250. See also: Filip Hren, "Juraj Rattkay o/u Tridesetogodišnjem ratu", in: *Juraj Rattkay (1613-1666) i njegovo doba: Zbornik radova s međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa 'Juraj Rattkay (1613-1666) i njegovo doba', Zagreb – Veliki Tabor, 27. i 28. listopada 2016.*, ed. Maja Matasović and Tamara Tvrtković (Zagreb: Hrvatski studiji Sveučilišta u Zagrebu), 67-85.

¹⁰⁵ Valentinitich, "Die Steiermark", 102-103; on the relations between the Battle of the White Mountain, Gabriel Bethlen and Hungary, see: Pálffy, "Fordulópont", 303-320.

¹⁰⁶ Šišić, HSS, vol. V, 296-297.

¹⁰⁷ Numerous examples in Croatian historiography emphasise the significance of the decisions made by the Diet in 1527 and 1712. With regard to the role of the Croatian Diet in 1527 and the election of Ferdinand as king, Šišić notes: "On [Cetingradski sabor] je u političkom pogledu snažan izražaj, kako je hrvatski narod u bitnim prilikama mjerodavno odlučivao u najvažnijim državopravnim pitanjima, smatrajući sebe i svoju domovinu osobitim političkim narodom i zasebnom političkom teritorijom, nezavisnom od Ugarske". Šišić, "Izbor", 42. Margetić said: "Cetinski sabor važan jer je na njemu potvrđena opstojnost nezavisnog *regnum Croatia*", Margetić, "Cetingradski sabori", 36. Josip Kolanović shares the similar views: „S državopravnog stajališta on je dokaz samostojnosti u odlučivanju o temeljnim pitanjima sudbine naroda. Smatrajući sebe i svoju domovinu posebnim političkim

within distinct historical contexts, a closer examination reveals notable similarities. In each instance, although political opposition was present, decisions were made in favour of the Habsburgs rather than the Hungarians.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, by rejecting Bethlen and advancing the proposal for a confederation in 1620, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet demonstrated a certain degree of autonomy in matters of state-building – just as it had done in 1527 and 1712 – albeit firmly aligned with the ruling dynasty.

Given that the Habsburgs were elected solely by the Croatian nobility (and not the Slavonian) at Cetingrad, it is possible to draw parallels with the situation in 1620, when the local estates once again identified a political partner in (Inner-) Austria in an attempt to preserve their status and ensure survival. As in 1527, the principal motive for concluding a new agreement in 1620 was the shared interest in common defence – an interest that had already been shaped through prior cooperation. One of the most intriguing ideas to emerge was that of unification with the Inner-Austrian provinces. At this stage, it cannot be stated with certainty whether the 1620 proposal for closer ties with the Inner-Austrian neighbours was based on a similar concept to that advanced in 1526. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether such unification would have implied a formal separation from Bethlen's Hungarian kingdom – or, in the earlier context, from one of the domains ruled by John Szapolyai – or even from the loyal part of the Hungarian Kingdom, which appears unlikely.

narodom i zasebnim područjem, staleži su neovisno o Ugarskoj i Češkoj izabrali habsburšku dinastiju za svoje vladare..." Kolanović, "Hrvatski sabor", 30. When discussing the Pragmatic Sanction of 1712 – along with the related events of 1708 and 1715 – Vjekoslav Klaić argues that it is: "Čin hrvatske samosvijesti i osjećaja samosvojnosti, kojim je hrvatski sabor bez obzira na Ugarsku, prvi od svih naroda i zemalja prostrane monarkije proglasio žensko nasljedstvo kuće Habsburg". Vjekoslav Klaić, "Priprave hrvatskoj pragmatičkoj sankciji od god. 1712.", *Hrvatska*, 1912, br. 106. cited in Vjekoslav Klaić "Hrvatska pragmatička sankcija", *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti. Razredi historičko-filološki i filozofičko-juridički* 88 (1915), br. 206: 62. Ivan Beuc, referring to the legal article of the Hungarian Parliament from 1715, claims: "Ovaj zakonski član zajedničkog sabora pokazuje da je Hrvatsko-slavonski sabor ne samo samostalno nego i neovisno od zajedničkog Hrvatsko-ugarskog sabora stvarao zakone te da su zaključci Sabora postali zakonom, ako ih je kralj potvrdio." Beuc, *Povijest*, 192. Kolanović agrees with Beuc: "Njome su hrvatski staleži potvrdili svoju samostalnost upravo u trenutku kada je Ugarska htjela suziti prava Hrvatskog sabora i okrnjiti njegovu zakonodavnu funkciju...". Kolanović, "Hrvatski sabor", 47. Moreover, Ivana Jukić Vidas concludes: "Hrvatska pragmatička sankcija, potpomognuta čl. 14./1712. i čl. 120./1715., neosporivo je i trajno osigurala zaseban položaj Hrvatskog Kraljevstva unutar Zajednice Krune sv. Stjepana". Jukić, "U sjeni", 162.

¹⁰⁸ As interpreted by Nataša Štefanec, the estates' declarations of loyalty to the crown were motivated by pragmatic considerations, reflecting a hope that the ruler would intervene on their behalf when their own influence proved inadequate. Nataša Štefanec, "Vjerska politika u habsburškim zemljama u Srednjoj Europi (od 20-ih godina 16. st. do 30-ih godina 17. st.)," in: *Tridentska baština. Katolička obnova i konfesionalizacija u hrvatskim zemljama. Zbornik radova*, ed. Zrinka Blažević and Lahorka Plejić Poje (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, Katolički bogoslovni fakultet u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet Družbe Isusove u Zagrebu, 2016), 50.

It is particularly noteworthy that, in 1620, the idea of uniting Croatia and Slavonia with the Inner-Austrian lands had not yet disappeared. Although the proposal was never realised, it reflects a certain level of cohesion and affinity towards Inner-Austria and the Habsburg dynasty among the Croatian-Slavonian nobility.

During the negotiations concerning the proposed confederation, similar patterns of political behaviour can be identified among the Croatian-Slavonian elite as later observed in 1712. Drawing such parallels reveals that the reorganisation – or even dissolution – of the Military Frontier was neither their sole objective nor their principal one. Supporters of the recognition of Maria Theresa's hereditary rights simultaneously promoted their own interests by seeking to maintain their political standing within the Monarchy, a position guaranteed and safeguarded by the Habsburg ruler. The most prominent among these figures were the Bishop of Zagreb, Emerik Esterházy, and the Kingdom's protonotary, Juraj Plemić. They would likely have been joined by the *ban* Ivan Pálffy, had he not been occupied with military operations against Francis II Rákóczi – yet another Transylvanian prince fighting against the Habsburgs.¹⁰⁹

Significantly, at the Zagreb assembly in August 1620, the Bishop of Zagreb emerged as the principal supporter of the House of Habsburg. Given that the *ban* traditionally served as the king's confidant, and that Protonotary Patačić was a member of the delegation, it may be inferred that both shared the bishop's position. But how could they safeguard their corporative political and religious interests – or more precisely, those of the Croatian-Slavonian elite?

Gabriel Bethlen was a Protestant, as were most of his supporters. The Croatian-Slavonian nobility, by contrast, had unequivocally reaffirmed their commitment to the Catholic Church in both 1604 and 1607/1608.¹¹⁰ Aligning with the Protestant cause was therefore not a viable option, as it would likely have endangered their status and privileges – privileges enjoyed under the protection of the Catholic ruling dynasty, to which they remained firmly loyal.¹¹¹ By securing their status, along with their political, military, and economic strength, as well as their social influence, the Croatian-Slavonian nobility could continue to function as part of the Monarchy's elite. As such, they could also be integrated into the Military Frontier system, thereby taking advantage of existing structures. Supporting the king and Inner-Austria thus entailed not only military protection against a shared enemy but also the preservation of established rights and privileges. Even in the proposal for confederation, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet explicitly emphasized the importance of maintaining these rights and privileges.

¹⁰⁹ Ivana Jukić, "Why was the Habsburg Princess Granted the Right to Rule the Kingdom of Croatia in 1712?", *Povijesni prilozi* 37 (2018), no. 54: 220, 228-229.

¹¹⁰ Klaić, *Povijest*, vol. 5, 565-568; Šišić, *Politika*, 131-133.

¹¹¹ For example, the Bishop of Esztergom, Peter Pázmány, was exiled following the initial successes of Bethlen's campaign. Pálffy, "Fordulópont", 314.

Despite the political upheaval, relations between Croatia and Slavonia and the Kingdom of Hungary did not undergo fundamental change after 1620. For example, the Croatian-Slavonian Diet, following established practice, continued to send delegates to the Hungarian Diet – some of whom had previously been involved in negotiations over the proposed confederation with Inner-Austria.¹¹² The primary reason for this stabilisation can be found in the peace settlement reached between Ferdinand II and Bethlen at Nikolsburg (today Mikulov, Czech Republic), in which Bethlen formally renounced his claim to the Holy Crown. This was followed by the pacification of the Hungarian estates at the diet session in Sopron during the summer of 1622, when the Viennese court extended conciliatory measures towards the previously rebellious Hungarian nobility, who thereafter had little reason to rise again against the House of Austria.¹¹³

Conclusion

Despite various tensions, the relationship between the House of Habsburg – particularly the Hereditary Lands, and most notably Inner-Austria – and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia grew increasingly strong from the 16th century through the first half of the 17th century. This relationship was based on mutual interests, which were continuously challenged by external threats, whether in the form of the Ottoman Empire or Transylvanian-Hungarians. The same dynamic was evident during the Thirty Years' War. At the onset of the conflict, the ties between Inner-Austria and the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom were put to a severe test. Several critical issues emerged, including the election of a monarch, territorial defence, and the possibility of forging alliances with neighbouring provinces. Even the idea of unification with Inner-Austria resurfaced.

In summer 1620, the Croatian-Slavonian estates sided with the king by rejecting decisions made by the Hungarian Diet regarding Bethlen. Moreover, they entered into direct negotiations with their Inner-Austrian neighbours concerning the organisation of collective defence – an important development, given that they had previously been largely marginalised. Through these actions, the Cro-

¹¹² Szabolcs Varga, Dénes Sokcsevi, *A horvát szábor története* (Budapest: Országos Könyvtár, 2022), 220, 222.

¹¹³ As a symbolic gesture of the agreement between Ferdinand II and the Hungarian estates, Empress Eleonora Anna Gonzaga was crowned Queen of Hungary. Pálffy, "The Kingdom", 9, 17. On the topic of Hungarian Diet held in Sopron in 1622 see entire volume: Péter Dominkovits, and Csaba Katona, eds., *Egy új együttműködés kezdete. Az 1622. évi soproni koronázó országgyűlés/Anfang einer neuen Kooperation. Der ungarische Krönungsreichstag in Ödenburg 1622/Beginning of a New Collaboration: The Hungarian Diet and Coronation at Sopron in 1622* (Sopron; Budapest: MNL Levéltár Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára – MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, 2014).

atian and Slavonian noble elite, at least temporarily, regained political relevance within the broader regional context.

During the assemblies in Zagreb and Graz, the idea of establishing a confederation or military alliance between Inner-Austria and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia became particularly significant. While the true motives behind the proposal remain unclear, two principal objectives seem probable. By addressing the king's envoys directly through the Diet, the Croatian-Slavonian estates aimed to replace the existing Military Frontier system with an alternative arrangement – such as a confederation or military pact – that they considered more equitable and politically advantageous. Through such cooperation, the Croatian and Slavonian estates sought to bind Inner-Austria to providing military assistance not only during the current crisis, but crucially, in all future contingencies. In this scenario, the Military Frontier would become obsolete, allowing the estates to reassert jurisdiction over the entire territory of the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom.

However, the nobility of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola rejected the proposal, considering the existing framework established in 1578 to be sufficient. Still, to demonstrate a willingness to maintain cooperative relations with the Croatian-Slavonian nobility, they reiterated their commitment to provide military aid, invoking past examples of solidarity. This limited concession may well have been the primary objective sought by the Croatian-Slavonian estates. Confronted with the military successes of the Protestant Hungarian nobility under their elected king and commander Gabriel Bethlen, the Croatian-Slavonian elite recognised that their status, rights, and privileges were under threat. Drawing upon earlier precedents, they were prepared to accept Inner-Austrian protection in exchange for loyalty, and they unequivocally expressed their allegiance to the king as the guarantor of their corporative political, social and religious interests. Following the rejection of their proposal and the subsequent defeat of the Bohemian rebels at the Battle of White Mountain in November 1620, the immediate threat subsided, and the question of establishing a confederation between Inner-Austria and the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia was removed from the political agenda for the foreseeable future. Finally, the negotiations held in Zagreb and Graz in the late summer of 1620 demonstrate that the crisis of the Habsburg Monarchy during the early stages of the Thirty Years' War had the short-term but distinct political implications for the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia.

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*Filip Hren**

Zajedno u „olujama rata”: pregovori između hrvatsko-slavonskih i unutrašnjoaustrijskih staleža glede zajedničkih mjera obrane 1620. godine

Sažetak

U kasno ljeto 1620. godine vatre Tridesetogodišnjega rata širile su se prema Hrvatsko-Slavonskom Kraljevstvu i zemljama Unutrašnje Austrije. Štoviše, opstanak čitave Habsburške Monarhije u tom je trenutku doveden u pitanje. U kratkom razdoblju od 1619. do 1620., nakon pobuna čeških i ugarskih staleža, novoizabrani car i kralj Ferdinand II. izgubio je krune svetoga Vavilava i svetoga Stjepana. Stanje je dodatno otežano činjenicom da su dvije strane stupile u savez pod nazivom Češka konfederacija. Ferdinand II. nalazio se u očajnoj situaciji, a njegova je vlast gotovo isključivo ovisila o stranoj pomoći. Međutim, u Monarhiji je još uvijek bilo zemalja lojalnih austrijskoj dinastiji. To su bile unutrašnjoaustrijske provincije Štajerska, Koruška i Kranjska te Hrvatsko-Slavonsko Kraljevstvo. Premda su Hrvatska i Slavonija bile u sastavu Zemalja krune svetoga Stjepana zajedno s Ugarskom, one su 1620., za razliku od dijela ugarskoga plemstva, odbile prihvatiti Bethlena za svojega kralja, a jednako su postupile glede zaključaka Ugarskoga sabora. Njihova povezanost s Unutrašnjom Austrijom bila je snažna zbog suradnje na vojno-političkom planu koja je trajala dulje od stoljeća. Ferdinand II. stoga je potaknuo razgovore na kojima su hrvatske i unutrašnjoaustrijske zemlje trebale dogovoriti mjere zajedničke obrane. Prvi dio pregovora održan je u Zagrebu, gdje su hrvatsko-slavonski staleži predložili nekoliko mjera, među kojima i formiranje vojnoga saveza ili konfederacije. Razgovori su potom nastavljeni u Grazu, gdje su donijete konačne odluke o obrani tih zemalja.

Ključne riječi: Habsburška Monarhija, Hrvatsko-Slavonsko Kraljevstvo, unutrašnjoaustrijski staleži, Hrvatski sabor, konfederacija, Vojna krajina, Tridesetogodišnji rat

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