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**The Uskok “Problem” and Habsburg, Venetian, and Ottoman Relations at the
Turn of the Seventeenth Century**

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Introduction

The Ottoman Empire and the European System of Powers circa 1600

A European or international system of powers was in a nascent state in 1600; its participants were still involved in the process of state-building. Growing tensions between the different Christian confessions complicated the state-building process during this period, finally leading to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618. The Ottoman Empire, which endangered Habsburg rule in Austria during the course of the sixteenth century, did not participate in this struggle. So we could ask, were the Ottomans of any importance to the genesis of a European system of powers? One might suspect that this was not the case because they, in general, neither participated in nor accelerated the characteristic processes of the European early modern period — the emergence of different confessions,^[1] the genesis of the modern territorial state, and early colonizing efforts in the non-European world. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire is often mentioned as a causal factor in the emergence of a European consciousness in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries^[2] because the Ottoman “threat” was one of the outward factors which gave the European powers a sense of identity.

This article will explore ways in which the Christian powers acted and reacted both against and with Ottoman power in the period around 1600. Simultaneously, a determination will be made concerning the state of the European system of powers during this period and how or if the Ottoman Empire can be viewed as a participant in that process. How secular was the behavior of the Christian participants within this system? Did strategies of argumentation based on the difference between Christianity and Islam play any role in justifying and representing political decisions and actions? In

which processes or relationships were Ottoman political agents involved with the Christian powers, or were they were involved at all? Did a sense of European unity emerge in opposition to the Ottoman Empire that was based on something other than Christian unity? In other words, did the process of “Europeanization” involve the genesis of modern territoriality which defines the state and state system and involve more diplomatic and military quarreling than feelings of unity in the face of a common enemy?

We will approach these questions through a special “problem” in the region of the Adriatic Sea around 1600, a problem which involved — politically, militarily, and mentally — the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman powers. By presenting a view of interactions between the different powers, this case study will make it possible to perceive which factors influenced the decision-making of leading political agents and which strategies they used in their political behavior toward each other. This “problem” was in fact a people, the Uskoks, a Dalmatian population group living in the coastal fortification Zengg (or Senj), situated in modern-day Croatia.

The Uskoks of Zengg

Uskok is derived from the Serbo-Croatian word *usko?iti*, “to jump away or to jump between.” It describes the origin of this population group, which fled in the face of Ottoman expansion into the Balkans territories occupied by the Habsburgs, rulers as inheritors of the Hungarian king. Hints about the ethnic and cultural identity of the Uskoks can be gleaned from several sources. Zuanne Bembo, the Venetian Commissioner General of the Navy in the Gulf, warned in his diplomatic report of 11 September 1598 against using Croat forces against the Uskoks, because they were “of the same nation.”^[3] The names transmitted also show that many of the Uskoks were at least of Slavic origin.^[4] Still, the cultural and social background of this people was not very clearly defined. Difficulty in identifying them arises because the term *Uskok* was not neatly confined to a well-defined group of people. Some Italians, mostly Venetian subjects, joined the Uskoks and became Uskoks themselves, which led to their status as *farsi Uscocchi* — meaning those who fled from jurisdiction. The Uskoks had a blurred status in relation to other groups living in the border region between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires. The Haiducks and the Morlachs, for instance, received their names from various military functions they fulfilled in the region’s permanent guerilla war. Such groups were often connected to each other by parental relationships, thus

reflecting the multifaceted cultural, political, and social nature of the Balkan societies, which is one of their characteristics even today.^[5]

The question of why these people turned to piracy rather than living on agriculture, like most of the Dalmatian population, is a topic of extensive historical debate. Philip Longworth is of the opinion that there were mostly psychological and economic reasons responsible for the difficulties in “socially disciplining” the Uskoks. They simply did not care to lead any other sort of life.^[6] He also asserts that the Uskoks claimed to be enemies of the Ottoman infidels and their allies in order to justify their behavior. Catherine W. Bracewell agrees that the economic and social conditions of the Uskoks’ life at Zengg were an important factor in motivating them to continue their raids in the Adriatic Sea; however, Bracewell, in contrast to Longworth, believes that the Uskoks were sincere in their claims to be fighting for Christianity. She argues the differentiation between Christians and non-Christians was one of the most fundamental characteristics of the Uskok religious and moral world view^[7]. Most of the Uskoks seem to have been social outcasts who had been cut off from the traditional patterns of integration. This is particularly true of Uskoks who were forced to leave their traditional homelands because of the Ottoman expansion, as well as those who had fled from, mainly Venetian, jurisdictional persecution. The difficult economic situation in which these groups found themselves at Zengg was advantageous to the Habsburg military organization. Conditions in the Zengg territory ensured that the Uskoks would provide an effective buffer against Ottoman attacks and Venetian demands for domination of the Adriatic — a point that will be discussed subsequently. This essay is not the place for a detailed discussion of Uskok religious attitudes. It is sufficient to say that their actions followed a moral pattern of antagonistic differentiation between Christians and infidels. This pattern was often exploited by the great powers interacting in the Adriatic region.

The Austrian military border

In order to comprehend why the Habsburg military organization used the Uskoks as irregular troops in Zengg, one must understand how the Austrian military border functioned. Minuccio Minucci, the archbishop of Zara (modern day Zadar), stated in his *Storia degli Usocchi* that the Uskoks were used, as early as 1537, by the rulers of the fortified town of Klis (modern day Clissa, Bosnia) as a defense against the Turks. The Uskoks had fled from Zara to Zengg after the town was taken by Ottoman soldiers.^[8] The Uskoks’ antagonistic attitude toward the Ottomans was inevitable, since, as refugees after the Ottoman takeover, the Uskoks were forced to leave their homes and

families. They continued fighting the “infidels” even after their flight. Their unsettled existence can be further explained by the fact that they left behind their traditional way of life, along with their social ties, but received no help resettling on the military border. Instead, they were used as inexpensive soldiery for manning the defensive zone against the Ottoman expansion.

Zengg, the main Uskok urban center, was both a fortification and a town. As early as the fifteenth century, the Hungarian King Matthias employed the town as a part of his defensive system against the Ottoman threat. Because of its geographic location, it was very difficult to access and could, therefore, be easily defended against invasion. The Venetian Commissioners of the Gulf often complained about the difficult nature of the Zengg coast and the narrowness of its bay.^[9] It was not possible for large Venetian vessels to enter the bay and conduct a direct assault against the Uskoks at Zengg.

The Austrian Habsburgs’ involvement with the organization of the military border, which divided Christian and Ottoman territories, began in 1522. In this year, Ferdinand I, brother of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and regent of Austria, the Habsburg German lands, and Württemberg, responded to a plea for help against the encroaching Ottoman forces from the Croatian nobility. He concluded a treaty with the Croat *Banus*,^[10] obligating himself to protect the Croatian coast, especially its main fortification at Zengg.^[11] The cost of this defense was born by the estates of Krain, Kärnten, and the Steiermark. Due to the political struggle between *Landesheer* and the estates, this arrangement did not guarantee a steady funding source with which to improve the situation of the troops and fortifications on the Croatian military border. The estates’ willingness to guarantee taxes necessary for funding the military organization improved only when their own territories were threatened by the Ottoman expansion.

This funding arrangement was reflected in some of the names given to the Uskok groups. The *stipendiati* (salaried workers) were paid for raids against the Turks, and those who received nothing were referred to as *venturini* (adventurers or volunteers). Because the payment was very irregular, both the *venturini* and *stipendiati* participated together in piratical activities on the Adriatic Sea.^[12]

Only in the second half of the sixteenth century did the Austrian defense system on the military border assume a more centralized and efficient structure. In 1578 the estates of Krain, Kärnten, and Steiermark agreed that the Archduchy of Inner-Austria should take direct responsibility for military administration of the frontier zone.^[13] This change of administrative responsibility increased tensions between the imperial and archducal

courts of the Hapsburg dynasty. The imperial court made an agreement with Venetian diplomats to control the Uskoks' behavior at Zengg. The archducal court, however, failed to follow imperial orders. The archducal court did not wish to enforce the agreement because they used the Uskoks as a defense system for their Croatian territories and for the purpose of curbing Venetian demands on land and sea. At times Archduke Charles chose to ignore the imperial court, in other situations he argued that he could not act without direct imperial orders, if he failed to have specific instructions at hand. The discord between the two Hapsburg courts was a source of constant worry for the Venetian ambassadors who were trying to negotiate an agreement on the Uskok topic.

The Sources

The subsequent analysis of Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman relations centered on the Uskoks of Zengg is based on rather specialized research concerning the Uskoks, as well as select primary sources. The majority of the primary sources were produced by Venetian historians and representatives of the Venetian civil administration. A smaller number were created by Austrian officials. Only a few of the sources are by Ottoman representatives.^[14] The analysis, therefore, is only a partial portrait: a thorough investigation of the Ottoman viewpoint is needed. Additionally, there are almost no testimonies by the Uskoks themselves, which prevents any attempt at drawing a more subtle picture of their social and cultural circumstances. These sources, however, do allow a apt analysis of Habsburg-Ottoman-Venetian interactions in the Adriatic region during this period. Indeed, it is possible to discern a distinct shift in Habsburg, Ottoman, and Venetian attitudes toward the Uskoks in the sources from the period around 1600. This shift can tell us a great deal about the nature of these early modern states and the power relationships that existed among them.

Political and Military Relations among the Habsburgs, Ottomans, and Venetians

The Austrian-Turkish War of 1593-1606: Patterns of Confrontation

The period following the Treaty of Adrianople,^[15] concluded between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans in 1568, never produced a state of complete peace at the border dividing the two spheres of influence. It was characteristic of Ottoman-border warfare

to keep the enemy in a constant state of alarm by raids led by mobile cavalry troops, the *akinci*. This pattern of Ottoman military tactics reveals the aggressive character of the Ottoman foreign policy during this period. The expansive character of Ottoman foreign policy can be explained partially through the Islamic concept of *jihad*, which finds its analogy in the Christian concept of the crusade. It can be explained further by the ideology of the house of Ottoman, which claimed domination of the world for itself.^[16]

Specific economic and social structures were underlying this militarily expansive policy. All profit from conquered territories automatically belonged to the sultan, who gave away this profit as a *timar*—a sort of fief. The fief was used as reward for those soldiers involved in this *timar* system, but might also be acquired by former owners of the occupied territory, provided they converted to Islam.^[17] This arrangement clearly shows that Ottoman society was (theoretically) commanded from the center. The elite of the former non-Ottoman territories could become the elite of the Ottoman-occupied territories, but this depended on the will of the sultan to recognize the old elite families with *timar*. The *timar* system became an important factor in establishing centralist structures in the conquered territories of the Ottoman Empire because it made the body of elites dependent on the Sultan's largess.^[18] The reward of a *timar* became especially important in the second half of the sixteenth century, when inflation of the entire European market undermined cash payments to the military.^[19] Under the strains of devalued currency, another war became quite desirable to the Ottoman court as a way to occupy the discontented Janissaries and cavalry and to obtain new *timar* for payments.^[20] The end of further Ottoman expansion at the beginning of the seventeenth century—traditionally marked by the treaty of Zsitva-Torok (1606)—led to a serious crisis of the Ottoman military system because no new land was available for the granting of *timars*.

Another consistent trait of Ottoman foreign policy was the aim of political agents to avoid war on the European and Persian borders simultaneously. Due to religious concerns—the Persians were Shiites rather than Sunnis—the Persians represented an ideologically more dangerous enemy. It was much more likely that prisoners of war from the Ottoman side would convert to Shiitism than Catholicism.^[21] Attempts by the Habsburg, Papal, and Persian courts to coordinate efforts against the Ottomans never produced anything more than protracted discussions, partly because it took years for the ambassadors to travel between the courts.^[22] Nevertheless, the evidence of an attempt at a coordinated effort reinforced Ottoman fears of military involvement in a two-front war. One example of the Ottoman policy to avoid a two-front war occurred during the

Austrian-Turkish War of 1593-1606. In 1590, one year before Pasha Hassan of Bosnia led an attack on the fortification of Sisak (Sissek), the Ottoman and Persian Empires signed a peace treaty. Furthermore, during the final stages of this war, after the Persians attacked in 1603, there was a general wish for peace with the Habsburgs.

Between 1593 and 1606 the confrontation between the Habsburgs and Ottomans came to a virtual standstill. Every victory was being presented as a great step towards the final victory for both sides, but never led to a decisive loss or territorial victory for either side. One could speak of a “territorialization” of the conflict, manifesting itself in the frontier zone of the military border, which existed until the breakdown of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire. Seldom did two regular armies meet. The majority of the skirmishes were military actions with no significant results. The most important outcome was that for the first time the expansive movement of the Ottoman troops was stopped, less because of the excellence of the Habsburg troops than from the inner crisis from which the Ottoman society suffered at the end of the sixteenth century.

How can Venice's attitude towards the Ottoman and Habsburg Empire be characterized during this period? The *Serenissima*, as Venice was known, was keen on not endangering peaceful relations with the Ottoman Empire since the peace treaty of 1573 and the loss of Cyprus. Venice, therefore, reacted with constant reserve to every Habsburg and Papal plea for help during the Austrian-Turkish War of 1593-1606.^[23] The argumentative strategies of the Venetian Senate were consistent during this period since Venice's relationship with the Ottoman Empire was not affected by the Austrian-Turkish conflict. The following quotation demonstrates the strategies used by the senate to avert any involvement which might endanger the position of power established by the policy of “*bilancia*”—a foreign policy pursuing neutrality and the establishment of a balance of power between the stronger powers influential in the Mediterranean region:

Because the Pope did not cease to push his plea further and further, the senate gave order to Paruta on January 15th 1594 to praise the Pope for his intentions but to let him consider too, that the Venetian State of Dalmatia and the Levant, bulwark of Italy and Christendom, how generally well known has a very long frontier zone with the Turkish territory in common and therefore is easily attacked too. Thus he should consider, that we, who are of the best intentions, out of sheer necessity being in a quite different situation from the rest of the European rulers, see ourselves forced to be very cautious while negotiating about an alliance against the Turks, because the tiniest suspect would let them raise their arms against us and this would be of harm to all Thus we do not see how we could decide to join such a federation without the obvious danger to be attacked from the enemy. But if the zeal and authority of His Holiness would find other

Christian Rulers for such an alliance, we, the Serenissima will not fail to show the best and most pious mentality.^[24]

This quotation is remarkable because one of the topics usually mentioned when speaking about Venice's relations to the Ottoman Empire—Venetian merchants' desire for good relations between the two states to prevent harm to commercial activities—is not used at all. Instead, the first argument is concerned with the geopolitical situation of the state of Dalmatia and the Levant. The *Serenissima* feared for her territorially defined power. Still, failure to mention merchant interests does not necessarily represent the role they played in political decisions within the Venetian senate. The rest of the argument shows diplomatic skill, as the Venetians refused the papacy's plea for help without explicitly saying that they would not join a federation. They avoided openly opposing the aim of a Christian confederation and left open the possibility of another league against the Turks.

These argumentative subtleties were difficult for the Uskoks to understand. The Uskoks suspected the Venetians of secretly cooperating with the Turks and thus became—for the Uskoks—traitors to Christendom. This misunderstanding between the Uskoks and the Venetians festered until the outbreak of the War of Gradisca, approximately a decade later, which led to the resettlement of most of the Uskoks a little further from the coast to prevent their raids on Venetian shipping. This conclusion would have been impossible during the long war against the Turks (1593-1606) because the Habsburg military system relied heavily on the Uskoks as military irregular troops. Additionally, since the Uskoks praised themselves as “the first defense of Christendom,”^[25] there would have been little support for their resettlement during the war against the Ottomans. Religious zeal was one of the best ways of inciting the people of Dalmatia to cooperate with the Habsburgs.

The treaty of Zsitva-Torok (1606) marked a new beginning for Habsburg-Ottoman relations. For the first time, Ottoman political agents were willing to accept the legitimacy of the Habsburgs' status and demands. For example, it was concluded that both rulers should regard each other as having the same status. Now, the Ottomans would call Rudolph II and the inheritors of his title “the Habsburg Emperor” instead of “the King of Vienna,” and the Austrian would only pay the tributes to the Ottomans one final time.

The Long War with the Turks and the peace-treaty of Zsitva-Torok of 1606 can be interpreted as signs of change in the relationships between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires because they showed the inability of the Ottoman expansion to

penetrate further into Habsburg territory. This circumstance made it necessary for the Ottoman political agents to start accepting the equal status of their opponent—as the change of title demonstrates. The end to further aggression accelerated the emergence of more clearly defined military and territorial borders, which made it more and more possible to rely on a juridical basis for confirming the state of relations with the Ottoman Empire. Warfare on the Adriatic Sea and in Croatian territory thus became a more “modern,” more calculable, part of a formalized relationship in which antagonistic and anarchic elements, like the Uskoks, did not fit.

The War of Gradisca (1615-1617) and the Relocation of the Uskoks

Like the Austrian-Turkish War of 1593-1606, the War of Gradisca can be described as a conflict whose outcome did not end in any notable territorial changes but resulted in a formalization of both the Venetian-Austrian and the Venetian-Ottoman interdependencies. The peace treaty of 1617, which ended the military conflict between Venice and Archduke Ferdinand II of Inner-Austria, prescribed that “the Uskok pirates from Zengg and from the other coastal places being under Habsburg rule should be relocated from these places.”^[26] The wording of the treaty established a differentiation between the *stipendiati* and the *venturini*. All *venturini* were subject to this regulation. *Stipendiati* who were found guilty of piracy, on the other hand, but undertook this action as part of a military action during the Habsburg-Ottoman conflict, were not be relocated from Zengg. Later in the treaty its authors were not preoccupied with these subtleties, but generally referred to the Uskoks as “*pirati*” (pirates).^[27]

On the surface one would suspect that Venice simply forced the Archducal court to submit to its demands by attacking its territory, but it is questionable whether Venice was at that moment capable of forcing any territorial power to submit by force of arms. It seems more probable that the Habsburgs agreed with the resettlement of the Uskoks for political reasons. The Habsburgs were at that moment involved in an open conflict with the Bohemian Estates and wanted at all costs to keep the frontier zone stable — if not totally peaceful, then at least in a neutral state.^[28] It was necessary for them to keep the risk of a new conflict with the Ottomans as low as possible. Venice and the Habsburgs now followed convergent political aims in the Adriatic Region, which resulted in the Uskoks’ expulsion from Zengg.

The lines of conflict which continued even after the official peace treaty of 1617 anticipated the alliances of the Thirty Years’ War, not in regard to confessionally

motivated federations, but in an anti-Habsburg coalition formed by Venice in confederation with France, England, and the Netherlands against the attacks led by sea by the viceroy of Naples and Sicily, Pedro Téllez- Giron, Duke de Osuna^[29]. In this conflict settled in the Adriatic Sea and in Venice herself, the “Turkish menace” no longer played a role, a remarkable circumstance considering the close proximity of the battlefield to Ottoman territory.

Venice and the Uskoks of Zengg

The eminent Venetian scholar Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623) summarized the arguments the Habsburgs used for justifying the raids of the Uskoks.

The Uskoks and the Austrian Ministers apologize for these actions by arguing that the Turks are enemies of the Christian creed and of the Christian rulers and thus the Uskoks justly attack them, and there is no way of hindering them from doing this.^[30]

Paolo Sarpi’s commentary unfolds into a two part argument. First the Uskoks themselves declared “the Turks” (and all who co-operated with them) enemies of the Christian religion. Second, the Habsburg court alleged this line of argument in order to justify why they could not, or did not, prevent the Uskok raids. They were, simply put, supporting the Christian fight against infidels. The basic differentiation of the world into (good) Christians and (bad) Muslims was not questioned by Venetian writers. Instead, they tried to prove that the Uskoks would harm Christians as well and that the Uskoks could, therefore, not claim the title of “Christian fighters” for themselves. In other instances, they claimed the title *antemurale Christianitatis* (“the outer wall of Christendom) for Venice, because the *Serenissima's* role consisted of preventing the Turks from invading Italy. Venice would even fulfill this role more actively and attack the Turks, if only the other Italian powers would show the necessary *concordia* (agreement).^[31]

It is remarkable that Venice, like the Habsburg Empire, tried to prevent Uskok raids only after the peace treaty of 1573. In fact, the Venetians had employed Uskok irregulars during a conflict over Cyprus before the treaty. But the peace treaty obliged the Venetians to ensure the safety of Ottoman shipping in the Adriatic as a condition of Venice’s *dominium golfi*— its rule over the Adriatic. If Venice did not prevent raids on Ottoman vessels, the Ottomans would have legitimate grounds for military action in the Adriatic. In 1604 the Venetians capitalized on Ottoman political weakness by extricating themselves from this duty, which had been carried out under threat.^[32]

During this time, Venice's political attitude was usually expressed with the previously mentioned term *bilancia*.^[33] The Uskoks were a fundamental threat to this policy line. Venice took the side of neither the Habsburgs nor the Ottomans in an official manner, neither through treaty nor propaganda. She only came to an agreement with the Habsburgs when they also followed a policy of avoiding open military and political conflicts with the Ottomans. Unofficially, Venice was not immune to demands for cooperation from either the Ottoman or the Habsburg Empire. This pressure is demonstrated by the negotiations pursued with the Habsburgs, concerning irregular unofficial subsidies paid to the Habsburg Court to help fulfill some Venetian demands concerning the Uskoks. Similarly, the Venetians supported Ottoman troops during siege of Klis in 1596.

It was part of Venice's immediate state interest to avert threat to its dominion over the Adriatic. If this status were questioned by either the Habsburg or the Ottoman Empire, it was doubtful that Venice could succeed in preventing a military invasion by sea. She tried every means to prevent such a situation because failure to do so would have resulted in the *Serenissima's* renunciation of dominion the Adriatic Gulf—as she was forced to do in the eighteenth century.

The break with this policy of *bilancia* in 1615, which precipitated an invasion of Habsburg territory, was obviously directed against Spanish attempts to extend Spain's influence into the eastern Mediterranean. With her invasion of the Habsburg territory, Venice risked Spanish troops from Naples coming to aid the Habsburgs. In addition, during this period Venice subsidized the Duke of Savoy Carlo Emanuele I's conflict with Spanish-ruled Milan. The fact that even in this conflict, after having broken with the policy of *bilancia*, Venice did not openly cooperate with the Ottoman Empire shows that it seemed too dangerous for the Venetians to risk the full power of the Ottoman military entering the Adriatic Sea. Most likely, ideological attitudes of both the ruling class and the population would also have presented too great an obstacle for realizing any such plans.

The fact that Venice did not accept religion as a leading factor in its foreign policy at the turn of the seventeenth century does not imply that religious and cultural motives were of no importance in the Venetians' attitudes regarding the Turks. The attitude of the representatives of the Venetian ruling class toward Ottoman policy demonstrated neither an uncompromising refusal of cooperation with the Ottoman representatives, nor an overestimation of the possibilities which good relations to the Ottoman court

would offer. This “skeptical realism” probably reflects the experience the Venetians gained during decades of direct contact with the Ottoman court.

During the siege of Klis in 1596 the Dalmatian population under Venetian rule identified more and more with the goals of Habsburg warfare, because it lacked, like the Uskoks, any understanding of why Venice did not openly support Habsburg military aims. The local clergy played a role in inciting the population against the Muslims and planned uprisings. The Patriarch Athanasius of Ohrid, one of the leaders of the Christians in Albania, offered Venice dominion over the region if she supported a revolt against Ottoman occupation.^[34] Venetian agents reacted to these suggestions much as they had to Uskok raids: sternly. The suggesters were usually imprisoned.

It would be quite inaccurate to assert that Venetian political agents reacted against the clergy and the Uskoks because the Venetians no longer embraced the Christian faith. Venetian politicians showed that they were able to separate their actions for advancing the well-being of their community from their private religious opinions. This separation expressed itself very clearly in the attitude Venetian political agents demonstrated towards the Uskoks’ dualistic view of the world which separated humanity into Christians and infidels, or good and bad. Alberto Tenenti referred to an episode in his *Venezia e i Corsari*^[35] in which the crew of a Venetian ship refrained from attacking an Uskok vessel. Hearing the Uskoks’ battle cry “Iesù,” they responded in the same manner and left the battleground. Thus they were demonstrating that they lacked the emotional will to fight against other Christians.^[36]

In conclusion, on the level of political decision making, one can view the attitude of Venice towards the Uskoks as developing away from using them as irregular troops against the Turks in conflicts which still recognized the unity of the Christian league. This evolved toward the establishment of an always endangered but still existent juridical basis for relationships with the Ottoman Empire. This pattern reveals the development away from a foreign policy based on religion and toward a more secular way of establishing foreign relationships. This did not, however, detract from the importance the Venetian population and its political agents placed on Christian belief.

Habsburg attitudes towards the Uskoks of Zengg

The great policy line pursued by the Archduke Ferdinand and Emperor Rudolph compares with the foreign policy pursued by Venice, in the sense that it also followed, in general terms, the goals determined by specific state interest. The differing attitudes

toward the Uskoks at Zengg displayed different interests originating from each sphere of influence and power. Archduke Ferdinand of Inner-Austria was mainly interested in using the Uskoks as effective irregular military forces in building up and widening the defensive zone against the Turks. It probably suited him to use them as indirect pressure against Venice, which still represented a rival power in the Adriatic region during this period, and Venice was always in peril of plunging into open conflict with the Ottomans because of Uskok raids. The Uskoks could also distract the attentiveness of Ottoman observers and reduce the possibility of Ottoman attacks on the archduke's Inner-Austrian territories. Because the imperial court of Vienna was not as heavily involved in a rivalry with the Venetians as the archduke was, its political agents were less interested in directing Uskok actions against the Venetians. Instead, Emperor Rudolph pursued the aim of maintaining a state of peace in the Southeast European territories of the Hungarian Crown in order to direct his attention toward the conflict with the estates of Bohemia and the domination of the duchy of Transsylvania.

An Ottoman naval offensive in the Adriatic Sea, as the worst scenario of the Uskok raids, might have precipitated the founding of an alliance between Christians. Consequently, Venice would have been forced to renounce her rights over the *dominium golfi*, which could then be claimed by the Habsburgs. These matters were hotly debated at the Court of Graz, which indicates that the archduke took a much more lively interest in gaining dominion over the Adriatic Sea than did the Habsburg emperor.

After the peace treaty of Zsitva-Torok (1606), the political situation between the Archduchy of Inner-Austria and the Venetian Republic did not improve, but reasons for maintaining peace in the Adriatic finally outweighed the archduke's own power interests — as the relocation of the Uskoks after the peace treaty in 1615 shows. The line of Christian argumentation was no longer used to justify the Uskoks' presence and behavior because it was essential for the Habsburgs not to disrupt the state of peace which then existed with the Ottoman Empire. An Ottoman invasion of Habsburg territory would certainly have had detrimental effects on the political and military situation of the Habsburgs at the beginning of the Thirty Years War.

Regulations for the treatment of the Uskoks at Zengg, laid down in the treaty concluded between Venice, the Court of Vienna, and the Court of Graz, show how blurred the administrative responsibility for these people became. The Habsburgs often demanded that persons with damage claims following Uskok raids should be directed to Venetian officials because there were, as Habsburg officials pointed out, Venetian subjects among the Uskoks. In this way, the responsibility for the Uskoks was rejected by the

Habsburg administration, despite the fact that they used the Uskoks as irregular forces for their defense system.

From the very beginning of this defensive system, the archaic Uskoks ideology was of great advantage, because it guaranteed that the Uskoks would fight against the Ottomans (and from time to time against the Venetians) without any, or at least with minimal, regular payment. Their relocation after 1617 was an indication of the modernization and institutionalization of the Habsburg military system, combined with a process of territorialized relationships between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and the Venetian Republic. In both cases, the zones of conflict stabilized and became based on a more institutionalized structure. Like Venice, the political attitude of Habsburg political agents toward the Uskoks of Zengg evolved into a secularized concern over the “Turkish menace,” because Christian fighters were of no use once a juridical basis was established. “Christendom,” as an argumentative and symbolic pattern for justifying and forming foreign policy decisions, only worked as long as it served the interest of the state. Again, it must be stressed that this does not imply that the Habsburg political and military agents were atheistic politicians, it only shows the widening gap between public/political responsibilities and religion in the formation of foreign policy.

Attitudes of the Ottoman Empire toward the Uskoks of Zengg

Remember, most dignified seigneur, a happy, simple and great enterprise, remember the acquisition of the dominium Candia, which unjustly has been taken over by the Venetians, an enterprise, in that you will easily excel, the Venetians being occupied to guard some few places, which they keep under their control in Croatia and Dalmatia against lawful regulations. In addition to that they are being constantly molested by my fleet, which I sent into the Adriatic gulf and which attacks them in their own territories and expulses them from there to their own disgrace. Therefore they now have recognized their military feebleness at sea — now it is the right moment for you, most dignified seigneur, to venture in your youth an enterprise, which for Venice will be the auspices of its final decline and for you the auspices of a great reign and an advance of your glory. I will note this enterprise with joy, and I will not lack anything to help your fleet and your army.^[37]

This letter was written by the Duke Pedro de Osuna, viceroy of Naples, dated 10 June 1617 and directed to the Sultan Ahmed I.^[38] If authentic, it was meant to indirectly incite the sultan to cooperate with Osuna against Venice, by attacking Crete, called in the letter Candia.^[39] Such action would have rendered the Spanish position in the Adriatic far more powerful. By offering an alliance with the Spanish Habsburgs during

the War of Gradisca, it was clearly demonstrated to Ottoman agents that the threat of pan-Christian union in the Adriatic Sea was no longer to be feared. Nevertheless, in 1600 this threat seemed imminent to Ottoman agents, who used the Uskoks' existence and behavior as a diplomatic device to prevent political unity between the Habsburgs and Venice.

Is it possible to speak of an "instrumentalization" of the Uskoks by Ottoman diplomats or was their anger concerning Uskok raids real and without underlying political motivation? Uskok raids certainly affected the interests of merchants sailing under the Ottoman flag. It was thus harming the economic interests of the Ottoman Empire, which relied heavily on material supply for the markets in Constantinople. Not only the ship owners suffered from the Uskoks' attacks; the population living in Ottoman territory was harmed as well. The Uskoks often stole cattle or took hostages. The historical sources even tell of the capture of an Ottoman administrator.^[40]

Despite the real damages done to Ottoman subjects, the possibility that Ottoman officials were using the Uskoks as diplomatic instruments cannot be completely excluded. The argument used by Ottoman officials was based on the following pattern. Ottoman courts asked for indemnities after the Uskok raids and directed these demands towards Venice because the Habsburgs denied any responsibility for them. Political agents argued that Venice was in possession of the *dominium golfi* and was therefore responsible for maritime security. They asserted that, since some of the Uskoks were Venetian subjects, Venice should pay indemnities. Ottoman officials reminded Venice of her obligations set by the treaty of 1573. They maintained this line of strategy even after Venice relieved herself from this duty in 1604. If the Uskok raids seriously disturbed Ottoman interests, it must be asked why they did not try to attack the Uskoks directly. An Ottoman invasion might have caused an alliance of Christian rulers comparable to the one that defeated the Ottomans at Lepanto. The Ottomans wanted to prevent such a scenario in a time when their Empire suffered from internal and external problems.

By using the Uskoks as a diplomatic device to place pressure on the Venetians, the Ottomans threatened Venice diplomatically and prevented political unity between the Habsburgs and the Venetians. Ottoman administrative representatives demonstrated that they were willing to use these devices in order to establish and confirm their position in the power system of the Mediterranean region. In this sense the Ottoman Empire was part of a European power system, but without the complete integration of open military alliances, since it was not a Christian power. This circumstance was clearly

demonstrated by the fact that neither Venice nor the Habsburgs used the threat of a federation with the Ottomans as a direct means to bring political and military pressure on the other power. The Uskoks of Zengg became a way of reckoning with the Ottoman power as a part of the Adriatic balance of power. Similarly, the Ottomans used the Uskoks as a device for acting politically (not militarily) in order to prevent another Christian league like that which won the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. There is yet another difference between the way the Habsburgs and the Ottomans used the Uskoks of Zengg as a diplomatic device in their interactions with Venice. Unlike Habsburg political agents, Ottoman diplomats never claimed the *dominium golfi* for the Ottoman Empire. They did, however, keep up threats of military invasion in the Adriatic Sea. This too shows the limits of the Ottoman integration into a European system of powers circa 1600. A claim of the *dominium golfi* would have been a juridical device contrary to the centralist understanding of power which was characteristic of the Ottoman Empire. It could not, for this reason, get involved in juridical struggles typical of those used by European states to establish spheres of power.

A system of powers in the Adriatic Sea at 1600 as a part of a nascent European system of powers?

The Ottoman “threat” does partly explain the religious zeal displayed by the Uskoks in justifying their piratical raids in the Adriatic Sea around 1600. This attitude was also displayed by the Dalmatian population in the Venetian territories, who became more and more loyal to the Habsburg Empire as they saw that the *Serenissima* would not support the Habsburgs during the long Austrian-Turkish War of 1593-1606.

On the level of foreign policy, both political agents of Venice and the Habsburg Monarchy politically promoted the idea of a world divided into Christians and infidels, only as long as it helped preserve or develop their power interests. As soon as the religious antagonism between Christianity and Islam opposed one another in their ragione di stato (reasons of state), both powers resolved to abolish this antagonistic behavior. This was always the case, as the state of peace, which was concluded by treaty, had to be preserved between either Venice or the Habsburg Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Because the arguments concerning “Christendom” still worked in the state of war with the Ottoman Empire, it might be interesting to compare the arguments used during the seventeenth century in conflicts of both powers with the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, it would prove interesting to conduct a similar search for patterns of argument along the fault line between Christianity and Islam.

A European conscience instead of a Christian one cannot be found in the relationship between the Habsburgs and Venice in their confrontation with the Ottoman Empire in the Adriatic Sea in 1600. Instead, it can be stated that the “Ottoman threat” was used, via the Uskoks of Zengg, as a factor in struggling with the other powers in a manner characteristic of the period of state formation. It was used as a device for ensuring and disputing certain territorial and other jurisdictional rights, like the *dominium golfi* — which is peculiar because these conflicts were situated in a region endangered by Ottoman expansion. If a European consciousness, as a consciousness of *concordia* against the Turks, had been raised in response to the Turkish menace, it should have occurred in this region between the Venetian and Habsburg powers. The fact that the powers did not unite themselves in order to fight the “Turks” effectively was contradicted by the fact that both powers tried to preserve and to enlarge their sphere of domination and *ragione di stato* in competition with each other. The Ottoman Empire was partly involved in this process. The fact that its political agents agreed to conclude the peace treaty of Zsitva-Torok in 1606 and renew it in 1615 shows only that they became conscious of the fact that their expansive policy had reached its limit. The Ottoman Empire could not expand any further due to structural limitations. Hungary and Croatia became more clearly defined, which guaranteed the Habsburgs that the foreign political situation in its Southeastern European territories would not be a serious source of conflict during the Thirty Years War.

Notes

[1] For an argument which couples the process of the successful installation of the reformation in the Reich and the threat of the Turks against the Habsburg Monarchy, see Stephan A. Fischer-Galati, *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism 1521-1555* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959). Winfried Schulze has undertaken research about the interdependence of the "Türkenfurcht," the fear of the "Turks" felt in the Old Empire, and the establishment of a tax system and the beginning of publicity: Winfried Schulze, *Reich und Türkengefahr im späten 16. Jahrhundert*, Studien zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen einer äußeren Bedrohung (Munich: Beck, 1978).

[2] See Winifred Schulze, "Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit - Begriffsgeschichtliche Befunde," in *"Europäische Geschichte" als historiographisches Problem*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz Abtlg. Universalgeschichte Beiheft 42, ed. Heinz Duchhardt and Andreas Kunz (Mayence: P. von Zabern, 1997), 35-65.

- [3] "di una istessa nazione" Grga Novak, comp., *Commissiones et Relationes Venetae*, vol. 5, 1591-1600, Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium 4 (Zagreb: Academia Scientiarum et Artium, 1966), 255.
- [4] Catherine W. Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Zengg. Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth Century Adriatic*, (Ithaca/New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 54-55.
- [5] See Philip Longworth, "The Zengg Uskoks Reconsidered," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 57 (1979): 348-368.
- [6] Longworth, 348-368.
- [7] See Bracewell, 160.
- [8] Annemarie Grünfelder, "Studien zur Geschichte der Uskokken" (Ph.D. diss., University of Innsbruck, 1974), 21-49.
- [9] Grünfelder, 21.
- [10] The *Banus* was a high administrative officer invested by the Hungarian/Croatian king in certain regions. See Jamos M. Bak's definition under "Banus" in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* (Munich/Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 1424.
- [11] Grünfelder, 59, n. 2.
- [12] The regular Habsburg troops complained also constantly about these activities.
- [13] See Karl Kaser, *Freier Bauer und Soldat. Die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft an der kroatisch-slavonischen Militärgrenze (1535-1881)* Zur Kunde Südosteuropas II, no. 22 (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Bohlau, 1997), 54-55.
- [14] For further bibliographical information see Grünfelder, Bracewell, Longworth, and Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Venice and the Uskoks of Zengg: 1537-1618" *Journal of Modern History* 33 (1961):148-156.
- [15] It would be juridically correct to talk of an "armistice agreement" because there could be no end of the Holy War of Islam against the infidels. See Hans-Jachim Kissling, *Rechtsproblematiken in den christlich-muslimischen Beziehungen, vorab im Zeitalter der Türkenkriege*, Kleine Arbeitsreihe zur europäischen und vergleichenden Rechtsgeschichte 7 (Graz: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei Styria, 1974).

[16] See Herbert Jansky, "Das osmanische Reich in Südosteuropa 1453 bis 1648," in *Handbuch der Europäischen Geschichte*, ed. Joseph Engel, vol. 3 of *Die Entstehung des neuzeitlichen Europa* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1971), 1170-1188.

[17] See Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," in *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy*, Collected Studies (London: Variorum, 1978), 103-129.

[18] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods," 122.

[19] In this regard the Ottoman Empire can be certainly seen as a part of the European market of the early modern age.

[20] See Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590-1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914*, eds. Halil İnalcık and David Quataert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 411-636.

[21] For Persian-Ottoman relations during this period see: Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran. A Developing Nation in World Affairs, 1500-1941* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 15-19.

[22] See Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453-1600*, Freiburger Islamstudien 1 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1968), 115-117; Renato Lefevre, "Su un'ambasciata persiana a Roma nel 1601" *Studi Romani* 35, 3-4 (1987): 359-373; Karel Stloukal, "Das Projekt einer internationalen gesamteuropäischen Liga mit Persien aus dem Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts" *Persica* 1 (1963-1964): 292-295.

[23] See Jan Paul Niederkorn, *Die europäischen Mächte und der "Lange Türkenkrieg" Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1593-1606)*, Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte 135 (Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), 373-385.

[24] All quotations are translated by Ruth Simon. Niederkorn, 303.

[25] "Antemurale christianitatis"

[26] Jean DuMont, *Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens (800-1731)*, vol. 5, pt. 2 (Amsterdam/The Hague: Chez P. Brunel, R. et G. Wetstein, les Janssons Waesberge, et l'Honoré et Chatelain., etc., 1728), no 170. A treaty of the same wording had already been concluded in 1612 but had no effect: See DuMont, vol. 5, pt. 2, no. 111.

[27] DuMont, vol. 5, pt. 2, no. 170.

[28] Bracewell, 290-291.

[29] His full title was: Pedro Téllez-Giron 'el Grande' marqués de Peñafiel, Duke de Osuna, conde de Ureña, virrey de Sicilia y de Nápoles, caballero del Toisón. He lived from 1574-1624.

[30] Sarpi, 18.

[31] Compare, for example, Lazzaro Soranzo, *Ottomanus ... sive de Repubs Turcicis Liber Unus in tres partes divisus; continens exactissimam descriptionem non modo potentiae Mahemetis III Turcarum Imper. hodie regnantis, & quo nomine cum aliis Principibus obstrictus; quidve contra Christianos machinetur, quave ratione hi ipsi nocere possint, verum etiam plurimorum Populorum, Regionum, Urbium & Itinerum aliorumque; rerum ad cognitionem belli, quod nunc in Hungaria geritur, necessarium*, (Rome: G. Antonius, 1600).

[32] See Niederkorn, 277-299.

[33] Heinrich Kretschmayr, "Der Niedergang," in *Geschichte von Venedig*, vol. 3, (1934; reprint, Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1986), 3-77.

[34] Niederkorn, 288-291.

[35] Alberto Tenenti, *Venezia e i Corsari 1580-1615*, Biblioteca di cultura moderna 564 (Bari: Laterza, 1961).

[36] Tenenti, 23-24.

[37] Karlo Horvat, ed. *Monumenta Historiam Usocchorum Illustrantia. Ex Archivis Romanis, praecipue e Secretario Vaticano Desumpta (1550-1620)*, vol. 2, *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium 32/34* (Zagreb: Societatis Typographicae, 1910-1913) pt. 2, no 582.

[38] Sultan Ahmed I reigned from 1603-1617.

[39] There is no discussion of the used manuscripts in the edition of Horvat, pt. 2 (compare bibliography).

[40] Horvat, pt. 1, no. 58.

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