

Abstracts

Politics, Diplomacy, Battles

Geoffrey Symcox

This chapter analyses the role played by the Savoyard state in the pattern of alliances during the War of Spanish Succession, down to 1706. After the outbreak of hostilities early in 1701, precipitated by the Habsburg emperor Leopold I's bid to conquer the duchy of Milan, Duke Vittorio Amedeo II of Savoy allied with the emperor's opponents, Louis XIV and his nephew Philip V, the new Bourbon king of Spain. The Bourbon alliance however offered the duke no possibility of territorial expansion, and threatened him with encirclement. The formation of the Grand Alliance (Austria, England and the Dutch Republic) against the Bourbons opened a way for Vittorio Amedeo to escape from Louis XIV's tutelage, and to obtain territory in Lombardy from the Habsburgs in return for his military support. In September 1703 he broke with Louis XIV, gambling that the support of his new allies would counterbalance the superiority of the Bourbon armies arrayed against him. This gamble paid off, but at a heavy cost. Through 1704 and 1705 the Bourbon army conquered much of Piedmont, and in 1706 besieged Turin. On 7 September of that year Vittorio Amedeo routed the besiegers and liberated Turin with the aid of a Habsburg army under his cousin Prince Eugenio of Savoy, recruited and paid to a large extent by his English and Dutch allies. This decisive victory assured the future autonomy of the Savoyard state, but it unleashed an escalating conflict between the duke and his Habsburg ally. The Habsburgs' conquest of Milan and Naples in 1707 established them as the dominant power in the Italian peninsula, threatening to block any further expansion by the Savoyard state, and setting the stage for more than a century of political and territorial rivalry between the Houses of Austria and Savoy.

Eugenio of Savoy: A Portrait

Alessandro Barbero

Prince Eugenio of Savoy is an evasive character, who has left us neither memoirs nor private correspondence. Son of a Savoy prince and nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, he was born and lived in France until he was eighteen. Subsequently immersed in the highest ranks of the Austrian nobility, he represents an extreme example of the cosmopolitan nature of high society during the *ancien régime*. His life can be clearly divided between his first eighteen years, spent in the shadows at the court of the Sun King, the next thirty-five, during which he fought in no less than thirty campaigns, and the remaining eighteen of his old age, when politics prevailed over soldiery. This essay mainly concentrates on the central period, in which Eugenio emerges as the most famous general of his time. His twelve great battles,