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# Challenges of Early Modern Diplomacy: Elizabethan Envoys to German Imperial Diets

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**Abstract:** *A Diet was an assembly of the Estates of the Holy Roman Empire, summoned by the Emperor to deliberate on political and judicial matters. As a multilateral forum of deliberation and communication within the Holy Roman Empire, Emperors, and Estates, Diets also attracted the attention of foreign princes, who thus sent their envoys to these Estate assemblies. Because of the variety and quantity of these foreign envoys, Diets developed into specific multilateral spaces of early modern diplomacy. The formal exclusion of the envoys from the Diets' negotiations and meetings built up challenges and required strategies of "diplomatic" communication beyond the formal process. By comparing two envoys sent by Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603), Christopher Mundt (1559/1566) and George Gilpin (1582), this paper shows what impact dispositive factors, such as expertise or confessional inclination, could have on an envoy's status, his recognition by hostile and allied partners, and his assertiveness at a Diet. Furthermore, these factors mainly influenced and drove cooperation and conflict between England and the Habsburg Emperors and the Imperial Estates, and so contribute to further understanding 'diplomatic relations' in the 16th century.*

**Keywords:** *Imperial Diet, Elizabethan Diplomacy, England, Holy Roman Empire, Early Modern Diplomacy*

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## The Imperial Diet – A diplomatic space

According to Gasparo Bragaccia in his treatise on the Ambassador published in 1626, assemblies of estates, and amongst them the Imperial Diet of the Holy Roman Empire (“Reichstag”), were “diplomatic arenas” (“forte di Ambasciarie”) for which an envoy should be well prepared. These assemblies were – so Bragaccia continues – like a “public performance” (“publico arringo”), in which all competing envoys participated.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gasparo BRAGACCIA, *L'Ambasciatore. Libri Sei*, Padua 1626, pp. 305–315, here p. 305. Amongst “Dieta” Bragaccia counts every form of assembly of (delegates of) princes or republics deliberating political matters, including the Roman Senate, attic assemblies, the French Assemblée, the Spanish Cortès, and, explicitly, the German Diet. On Bragaccia and his treatise see Dante FEDELE, *Naissance*

Bragaccia, writing in about 1600 and referring to his own practical insights as an ambassador, provides an early systematic approach to the specific challenges envoys and ambassadors had to face when sent to multilateral assemblies. Bragaccia advises that they should generally compete with wisdom, skill, appropriate behaviour, and their representative status. Elaborating on the best ways of reporting and negotiating at those multilateral assemblies, Bragaccia presents them as diplomatic spaces with specific distinguishing features.

The Holy Roman Empire's Diets fit well into Bragaccia's characterisations. The Imperial Diet was an assembly of the Estates of the Empire, summoned by the Emperor to deliberate on political and judicial matters. This gathering of spiritual and temporal Electors, Princes of the Empire, and Imperial cities was an important political institution in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period that went on for weeks or even months and brought together 10,000 to 15,000 people in one city.<sup>2</sup>

For political negotiations, the participants met in three different Colleges, according to their status as an Elector, a (temporal or spiritual) prince, or a city. As both an institution and an event, the Imperial Diet has gathered increasing attention in academic research in recent decades thanks to the "Cultural Turn" and "New Political History", which have added new paths to understanding the Diet. It has been a long-lasting historiographical

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*de la diplomatie moderne (XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles). L'ambassadeur au croisement du droit, de l'éthique et de la politique*, Baden-Baden – Zurich – St. Gallen 2017; Joanna CRAIGWOOD, *The Place of the Literary in European Diplomacy: Origin Myths in Ambassadorial Handbooks*, in: Tracey A. Sowerby – Joanna Craigwood (eds.), *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World*, Oxford – New York 2019, pp. 25–40, esp. pp. 35–36; Andrea GARDI, *Parole di negoziatori? La trattativa sul legato pontificio in età moderna*, in: Stefano Andretta – Stéphane Péquignot – Jean-Claude Waquet (eds.), *De l'ambassadeur: Les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen Âge au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome 2015, pp. 199–226, here pp. 215–216; Daniela FRIGO, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'Jus Gentium'. L'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Settecento*, Rome 1991, pp. 119–120, 255–256; IDEM, *Prudenza politica e conoscenza del mondo. Un secolo di riflessione sulla figura dell'ambasciatore (1541–1643)*, in: S. Andretta – S. Péquignot – J.-C. Waquet (eds.), *De l'ambassadeur*, pp. 227–268, here pp. 261–263; Rodolfo DE MATTEI, *Il problema della 'Ragion di stato' nell'età della controriforma*, Milan – Naples 1979, pp. 278–293; Daniela FRIGO, *Virtù politiche e 'pratica delle corti': l'immagine dell'ambasciatore tra Cinque e Seicento*, in: Chiara Continisio – Cesare Mozzarelli (eds.), *Repubblica e virtù. Pensiero politico e Monarchia Cattolica fra XVI e XVII secolo*, Rome 1995, pp. 355–376. Citations from non-English sources have been translated into modern English by the author. The original version can be found in the respective footnotes.

2 Gabriele ANNAS, *Hoftag – Gemeiner Tag – Reichstag. Studien zur strukturellen Entwicklung deutscher Reichsversammlungen des späten Mittelalters (1349–1471)*. 2 volumes, Göttingen 2004; Rosemarie AULINGER, *Das Bild des Reichstages im 16. Jahrhundert. Beiträge zu einer typologischen Analyse schriftlicher und bildlicher Quellen*, Göttingen 1980, pp. 146–147. For the Diets prior to 1555 see Thomas F. HARTMANN, *Die Reichstage unter Karl V. Verfahren und Verfahrensentwicklung 1521–1555*, Göttingen 2017.

tradition to describe the history of the Holy Roman Empire in terms of its decline and failure, but – mostly German – studies since the 1970s have rejected this narrative firmly and, on the contrary, have put the Diet at the centre of a re-evaluation of Imperial policy. It is now seen not only as a political institution of decision making, but as a space of social interaction, information, and symbolic performance as well.<sup>3</sup>

This spatial approach has recently been deepened in an interdisciplinary study on the Diet in the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Here, the Diet is understood as a “hybrid structure” consisting of and divided into several spaces, such as courts and households, monasteries, urban communities, the Colleges, and ceremonies and feasts. The limits of these spaces were formed not only by city walls, but by the temporal presence of delegates and princes, as well as by the various media reporting and memorialising the Diet. Previously to this study, the Diet had been described in terms of spaces of action (“Handlungsräume”) by Albrecht Luttenberger and spaces of communication by Maximilian Lanzinner.<sup>5</sup> According to Luttenberger, the Diet was a complex system of action (“komplexes Handlungssystem”) operating on three levels: a ceremonial level, an informal level of political communication, and a formalised level of political deliberation, with all three opening up different “spaces of action” for participants. Similarly, Lanzinner distinguished between a closed space of formal deliberation and an open space of the Diet’s presence in media, informal and official meetings at feasts and dinners, and private conversations.<sup>6</sup> Whilst the first was only accessible to the Princes and delegates of the Estates, the second was open for the broader public, including foreign ambassadors and envoys.

The presence of foreign princes’ envoys was part of the institution from the late Middle Ages onwards.<sup>7</sup> Although they could not participate in the Diet’s decision making, foreign

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3 Harriet RUDOLPH, *Das Reich als Ereignis. Formen und Funktionen der Herrschaftsinszenierung bei Kaisereinzügen (1558–1618)*, Cologne – Vienna 2011, p. 16, Ann. 17: “Raum sozialer Interaktion, in dem Akteure in symbolischer Form [...] um die Durchsetzung ihrer Rang- und Statusansprüche rangen”. See also the concise interdisciplinary perspective on the Diet in Rena SCHWARTING, *Organisationsbildung und gesellschaftliche Differenzierung. Empirische Einsichten und theoretische Perspektiven*, Wiesbaden 2021, pp. 110–116.

4 Moritz KELBER, *Die Musik bei den Augsburger Reichstagen im 16. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2018, pp. 20–21.

5 Albrecht P. LUTTENBERGER, *Reichspolitik und Reichstag unter Karl V.: Formen zentralen politischen Handelns*, in: Heinrich Lutz – Alfred Kohler (eds.), *Aus der Arbeit an den Reichstagen unter Kaiser Karl V. Sieben Beiträge zu Fragen der Forschung und Edition*, Göttingen 1986, pp. 18–68, here pp. 20–23, citation p. 23.

6 Maximilian LANZINNER, *Fürsten und Gesandte als politische Akteure beim Reichstag 1566*, in: Bernhard Löffler – Karsten Ruppert (eds.), *Religiöse Prägung und politische Ordnung in der Neuzeit. Festschrift für Winfried Becker zum 65. Geburtstag*, Cologne – Weimar – Vienna 2006, pp. 55–82.

7 See G. ANNAS, *Hoftag*, vol. 1, pp. 201–217; Jörg FEUCHTER, *Der Reichstag im 15. Jahrhundert – ein europäisches Forum?*, *Zeitsprünge* 18/1/2, 2014, pp. 30–43; Johannes HELMRATH, *Reichstagsakten*,

diplomats attended the Diet and thus made it a diplomatic space. They eventually came to be “participants in a Diet”,<sup>8</sup> enjoying more opportunities to exert influence than some of their contemporaries favoured. Brandenburg’s representative at the Diet in 1613, Abraham of Dohna, for example, complained in his poetic report:<sup>9</sup> “*To foreign princes’ envoys, these truly cunning spies, / Stoke the fire sharply on their lords’ advice, / By disguise, malice and deceit, / They sent back whatever they could read.*”

Almost every European monarchy or republic in the sixteenth century sent its ambassadors to the Holy Roman Empire’s Diets.<sup>10</sup> This variety of delegating powers has two

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Lexikon des Mittelalters 7, 1995, pp. 643–645; Heinz ANGERMEIER, *Der Wormser Reichstag 1495 – ein europäisches Ereignis*, Historische Zeitschrift 261/1, 1995, pp. 739–768, here pp. 744–749.

- 8 See R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 143–151, here p. 144; Guido BRAUN, *Imagines imperii. Die Wahrnehmung des Reiches und der Deutschen durch die römische Kurie im Reformationsjahrhundert (1523–1585)*, Münster 2014, pp. 347–348.
- 9 Anton CHROUST, *Abraham von Dohna. Sein Leben und sein Gedicht auf den Reichstag von 1613*, Munich 1896, pp. 294–295, vers 1570–1579: “*Der frembden hern gesanten als rechte espionen / bliesen ins feuer laut ihren instructionen, / hezten beide zusammen durch hinterlist und tuk, / was sie heimlich erfuhren, das schrieben sie zuruk*”. On this poem see Friedrich H. SCHUBERT, *Die deutschen Reichstage in der Staatslehre der frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 1966, pp. 326–328. For the context of this Diet’s embassies see Stefanie FREYER, *Lügen im Namen des Friedens. Strategien der englischen Diplomatie vor Beginn des Reichstages 1613*, in: Stefanie Freyer – Siegrid Westphal (eds.), *Wissen und Strategien frühneuzeitlicher Diplomatie*, Berlin – Boston 2020, pp. 103–133.
- 10 For an overview on foreign envoys to German Imperial Diets see Jonas BECHTOLD – Guido BRAUN, *Diets as Spheres of Diplomatic Interaction*, in: Dorothee Goetze – Lena Oetzel (eds.), *Early Modern European Diplomacy. A Handbook*, Berlin (forthcoming 2023). Further reading on diplomatic interaction at Diets has so far to rely on specific studies on several princes/states that sent representatives: for France see Pierre de VAISSIÈRE, *Charles de Marillac, ambassadeur et homme politique sous les règnes de François Ier, Henry II et François II: 1510–1560*, Paris 1896, pp. 357–358; Friedrich BEIDERBECK, *Die Wahrnehmung des Reichstages in der Reichspolitik König Heinrichs IV. von Frankreich*, in: Maximilian Lanzinner – Arno Strohmeyer (eds.), *Der Reichstag 1486–1613: Kommunikation – Wahrnehmung – Öffentlichkeiten*, Göttingen 2006, pp. 497–521, here pp. 500–501; IDEM, *Heinrich IV. von Frankreich und die protestantischen Reichsstände. Teil I*, Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte 23, 1996, no. 2, pp. 1–32; IDEM, *Zwischen Religionskrieg, Reichskrise und europäischem Hegemoniekampf. Heinrich IV. von Frankreich und die protestantischen Reichsstände*, Berlin 2005; for England see R. AULINGER, *Bild*, p. 147; Ernst SCHÜTZ, *Die Gesandtschaft Großbritanniens am Immerwährenden Reichstag zu Regensburg und am kur(pfalz-)bayerischen Hof zu München 1683–1806*, Munich 2007, pp. 18–23; for Spain see Alfred KOHLER, *Bemerkungen zur Wahrnehmung von Reich und Reichstag in den spanischen Königreichen*, in: M. Lanzinner – A. Strohmeyer (eds.), *Reichstag*, pp. 453–460; for the papal envoys see G. BRAUN, *Imagines*, pp. 341–340; IDEM, *Die Wahrnehmung der Reichstage des 16. Jahrhunderts durch die Kurie*, in: M. Lanzinner – A. Strohmeyer (eds.), *Reichstag*, pp. 461–495, here pp. 461–490; Severino VARESCHI, *La legazione del cardinale Ludovico Madruzzo alla Dieta Imperiale di Augusta 1582. Chiesa, Papato e Impero nella seconda metà del secolo XVI*, Trento 1990; Alexander KOLLER, *La dieta di Augusta del 1582 come spazio di esperienza diplomatica. L’esempio dei rappresentanti della curia romana*, in: Guido Braun (ed.), *Diplomatische Wissenskulturen der Frühen Neuzeit. Erfahrungsräume und Orte der Wissensproduktion*, Berlin – Boston 2018, pp. 113–134; R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 148–151; Albrecht P. LUTTENBERGER, *Kaiser, Kurie und Reichstag*:

significant consequences: first, the variety of these delegating powers corresponds with the post-Reformation diversity at the Diet with its Protestant and Catholic, powerful and less powerful, and monarchic and republican entities. No European Christian prince or republic was *a priori* excluded from sending envoys to the Diet. Therefore, the Diet grew to be a diplomatic forum at which all European powers could assemble, allowing for a more intense field of study for the Early Modernist “New Diplomatic History” as it can only be found in the peace congresses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or the Perpetual Diet in Regensburg after 1663. In Imperial Diets, special conditions prevailed, as foreign diplomats had neither a seat nor a vote in its negotiations and were formally limited to only observing the proceedings. But this does not mean that they could not assert any influence at all. Studies on networks, knowledge, and cultural transitions,<sup>11</sup> as well as analysis of communications,<sup>12</sup> have fostered and deepened our understanding of the political scope for foreign envoys at Diets.

Besides the varying scope of action, the types of diplomatic missions also differed. Documents such as the credentials and instructions of English envoys in the second half of the sixteenth century reveal three types of envoys to an Imperial Diet, distinguishable

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*Kardinallegat Contarini in Regensburg 1541*, in: Erich Meuthen (ed.), *Reichstage und Kirche. Kolloquium der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. München, 9. März 1990, Göttingen 1991, pp. 89–136; for Venice see R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 152–158; G. BRAUN, *Imagines*, pp. 490–495; for Poland see Hans-Jürgen BÖMELBURG, *Die Wahrnehmung des Reichstags in Polen Litauen. Mitteleuropäische Kommunikationsstrukturen und die polnischen Gesandtschaften zum Reichstag 1486–1613*, in: M. Lanzinner – A. Strohmeyer (eds.), *Reichstag*, pp. 405–438; for the Muscovite Empire see R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 159–164, 460–463; Helmut NEUHAUS, *Russische Gesandtschaften auf den Reichstagen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, in: Alois Schmid (ed.), *Bayern und Russland in vormoderner Zeit: Annäherungen bis in die Zeit Peters des Großen*, Munich 2012, pp. 197–225, here pp. 207–218; IDEM, *Die Gesandten Zar Iwans IV. auf dem Regensburger Reichstag des Jahres 1576. Mit zwei Quellenanhängen*, in: Guido Braun – Arno Strohmeyer (eds.), *Frieden und Friedenssicherung in der Frühen Neuzeit, Das Heilige Römische Reich und Europa. Festschrift für Maximilian Lanzinner zum 65. Geburtstag*. Münster 2013, pp. 155–180; Ekkehard VÖLKL – Kurt WESSELY (eds.), *Die russische Gesandtschaft am Regensburger Reichstag 1576*, Regensburg 1992; Michail A. BOJCOV, *Die Erlebnisse der Vertreter Iwans des Schrecklichen auf dem Reichstag zu Regensburg im Jahre 1576 und ihr Nachwirken*, in: A. Schmid (ed.), *Bayern und Russland*, pp. 227–257; for the Italian States see R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 145–146.

11 See G. BRAUN, *Imagines*.

12 Susanne FRIEDRICH, *Drehscheibe Regensburg. Das Informations- und Kommunikationssystem des Immerwährenden Reichstags um 1700*, Berlin – Boston 2007, pp. 96–99; Guido BRAUN, *Französisch und Italienisch als Sprachen der Diplomatie auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongress*, in: Annette Gerstenberg (ed.), *Verständigung und Diplomatie auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongress. Historische und sprachwissenschaftliche Zugänge*, Cologne – Weimar – Vienna 2014, pp. 23–65; A. KOLLER, *Dieta. The state of research presented in Nikolaus LEIHER, Die rechtliche Stellung der auswärtigen Gesandten beim Immerwährenden Reichstag zu Regensburg. Eine rechtshistorische Untersuchung unter Auswertung der Schriften zum Ius Publicum des Alten Reiches*, Aachen 2003, pp. 70–75, remains partly incorrect and outdated.

by the Empire's bipolarity between Emperor and Estates. Some diplomats were at a Diet to communicate the Queen's issues to the Emperor alone. Others interacted with all or some of the Imperial Estates without any communication to the Emperor, and a third type was sent to the institution of the Diet itself, thus to the assembly of the Imperial Estates and the Emperor.<sup>13</sup> This typology corresponds to the Diet's system in the sixteenth century. A written account of the ordinary course of business at a Diet from 1570, the so-called "Treatise on the Diet",<sup>14</sup> lists three different procedures for the accreditation of foreign envoys, depending on their address: to the Emperor, to the Imperial Estates, or to both being assembled in the Diet. All of them were considered "legates of foreign princes at the Diet".<sup>15</sup>

In the light of the "New Diplomatic History", early modern diplomacy has been described as a transcultural space with coexisting cultures, languages, and political backgrounds, which was shaped by intercultural communication processes as well as problems and challenges. In a diplomatic space such as a Diet, *a priori*, the challenges seem to be intensified, because the multilateral character causes a broader range of different participants with various cultural and political backgrounds. Moreover, the Diet offered more than just one bilateral level for negotiating, and diplomatic action in this sixteenth-century diplomacy at a Diet was accompanied by plenty of attention by the media. Foreign envoys at Imperial Diets came face to face with these challenges. How they managed

13 Christopher Mundt to Maximilian II. [Copy], Augsburg [9] April 1566, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), State Papers (hereafter SP), sign. 70/83, fol. 260r: "*in hec presentia ordinem Imperii comitia*".

14 The treatise was first published in 1905 by Karl Rauch, dated to 1576 and classified as a semi-official document (*Traktat über den Reichstag im 16. Jahrhundert. Eine offiziöse Darstellung aus der Kurmainzischen Kanzlei*, ed. by Karl RAUCH, Weimar 1905, pp. 1–37). Having found two differing versions of the text, Fritz HARTUNG, *Zum Traktat über den Reichstag im 16. Jahrhundert*, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 29, 1908, pp. 326–338, was able to modify Rauch's assumptions by dating the treatise to 1569 and started a debate on its official status (see the replies in Karl RAUCH, *Zum Traktat über den Reichstag im 16. Jahrhundert*, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 30, 1909, pp. 510–524; R. AULINGER, *Bild*, p. 47; Helmut NEUHAUS, *Wandlungen der Reichstagsorganisation in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, in: Johannes Kunisch (ed.), *Neue Studien zur frühneuzeitlichen Reichsgeschichte*, Berlin 1987, pp. 113–140, here pp. 115–116). The state of research given here refers to Maximilian LANZINNER, *Die Rolle des Mainzer Erzkanzlers auf den Reichstagen in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, in: Peter-Claus Hartmann (ed.), *Kurmainz, das Reichserzkanzleramt und das Reich am Ende des Mittelalters und im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 69–88, here pp. 73–75, and is now also pursued in Gabriele HAUG-MORITZ, *Deliberieren. Zur ständisch-parlamentarischen Beratungskultur im Lateineuropa des 16. Jahrhunderts*, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 141, 2021, pp. 114–155. Dietmar HEIL, *Verschriftlichung des Verfahrens als Modernisierung des Reichstags (1495–1586)*, in: M. Lanzinner – A. Strohmeier (eds.), *Reichstag*, pp. 55–76, here p. 71.

15 K. RAUCH, *Traktat*, Chap. XI: 'Von den Legationibus frembder Potentaten auff den Reichstagen', pp. 90–91.

or failed to handle the diplomatic situation and what structural reasons fostered or hindered their achievements is illustrated in a rarely studied example of Elizabethan envoys to the Imperial Diets of the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century.

## **Challenges of Early Modern Diplomacy at Imperial Diets: Christopher Mundt (1559/1566) and George Gilpin (1582)**

### *Biographical backgrounds and diplomatic dispositions*

During the reign of Elizabeth I from 1558 to 1603, eight Imperial Diets took place, in Augsburg and Regensburg. To four of them, namely those in 1559, 1566, 1570, and 1582, the Queen explicitly sent one or more representatives to act and negotiate on her behalf. Of all these diplomats who were sent to the Diets, two stick out: Christopher Mundt and George Gilpin.

Mundt was a German-born lawyer who had been in English service during the reign of Henry VIII. He was German secretary to the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, and served as an assistant to many English diplomatic missions to the Empire in the 1540s.<sup>16</sup> Released from service by Queen Mary, he was living in Strasbourg when he was reemployed in 1558 by his former acquaintance William Cecil, now Secretary of State to the new Queen Elizabeth. Until his death in 1572, he – as Cecil put it – served as “*a man who by reason of his extreme diligence and fidelity in watching over the interests of this kingdom, as attested by the experience of many years, was most highly esteemed by her majesty and by every one of us*”.<sup>17</sup> Mundt – skilled in German, English, and Latin, and knowing the Holy Roman

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16 Biographical knowledge on Christopher Mundt can be based on several older studies, which sometimes contradict each other or lack source evidence: Esther HILDEBRANDT, *Christopher Mont, Anglo-German Diplomat*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, 1984, no. 3, pp. 281–292; Adolf HASENCLEVER, *Christof Mundt*, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 52, 1906, pp. 537–540; Christian SEPP, *Christopher Mont und die deutsch-englischen Beziehungen im 16. Jahrhundert*, in: Heidrun Kugeler – Christian Sepp – Georg Wolf (eds.), *Internationale Beziehungen in der Frühen Neuzeit. Ansätze und Perspektiven*, Hamburg – Münster 2006, pp. 69–101; Gary M. BELL, *The Men and their Rewards in Elizabethan Diplomatic Service, 1558–1585*, Los Angeles 1974, pp. 348–353; Arnold O. MEYER, *Die englische Diplomatie in Deutschland zur Zeit Eduards VI. und Mariens*, Breslau 1900. The author’s PhD project aims to address this gap.

17 William Cecil to John Sturm, Woodstock 15 November 1572, in: *The Zurich Letters. Second series, comprising the Correspondence of several English Bishops and others, with some of the Helvetian reformers, during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. 1, ed. by Robinson HASTINGS, Cambridge 1845, no. 85, p. 210.

Empire's law – acted as an English agent in Southern Germany and, in this position, came to the Diets in 1559, 1566, and, for a couple of days only, in 1570. His foremost task was to deliver information on a possible confessional alliance, the state of the Holy Roman Empire, and a potential Habsburg marriage of Elizabeth.

George Gilpin was an Englishman and counts amongst the most important Elizabethan diplomats in Central Europe in the second half of her reign.<sup>18</sup> He was mainly located in Antwerp and the Netherlands, where he acted as secretary of the English trading company the *Merchant Adventurers*<sup>19</sup> and simultaneously served in diplomatic missions for the English crown. He also organised Francis Walsingham's spy contacts in the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> In 1582, he was sent to the Diet in Augsburg to defend the cause of English merchants against the Hanseatic League. Some years earlier, in 1579, he had published a translation of the famous Dutch anti-Catholic pamphlet "*De roomsche byen-korf*" by Philipps van Marnix.<sup>21</sup> With this translation, Gilpin stated his strong Protestantism, which he shared with his patron Walsingham and his brother Bernard, an influential theologian in the North of England, urging the prevention of any Catholic attack against England.

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18 George Gilpin died in 1602. The scant biographical evidence was collected by Gary M. BELL, *George Gilpin (d. 1602)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 23 September 2004, available online URL <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10758>>, [accessed 29 January 2022]. See the recent and profound overview and study of his career in Elizabeth's service by Elizabeth R. WILLIAMSON, *Elizabethan Diplomacy and Epistolary Culture*, New York – London 2021, especially pp. 40–45.

19 See Gary M. BELL, *Elizabethan Diplomacy. The Subtle Revolution*, in: Malcolm R. Thorp – Arthur J. Slavin (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Honor of De Lamar Jensen*, Kirksville 1994, pp. 267–288, here p. 273; on his activity for the Merchant Adventurers see George D. RAMSAY, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor*, Manchester 1975, pp. 207, 232, 257–258, 260–261.

20 See Erkki I. KOURI, *Die Entwicklung eines Systems der europäischen Außenpolitik in der Zeit von 1558–1603 aus englischer Perspektive*, in: Friedrich Beiderbeck – Gregor Horstkemper – Winfried Schulze (eds.), *Dimensionen der europäischen Außenpolitik zur Zeit der Wende vom 16. zum 17. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2003, pp. 307–336, here p. 321; Douglas R. BISSON, *The Merchant Adventurers of England. The Company and the Crown, 1474–1564*, Newark 1993, p. 6.

21 Complete title: "The Beehiue of the Romish Church. Wherein the Authour (Isaac Rabbotenu) a zealous Protestant, under the person of a superstitious Papist doth so driely reffell the grose opinions of Popery, and so divinely defend the articles of Christianie. There is not a book to be found sweeter for thy comforte". The translation was published in five editions in 1579, 1580, 1598, 1623, and 1636, the first edition having an alternative title: "The bee hiue of the Romishe Church. A worke of al good Catholikes too bee read and most necessary to bee vnderstood: wherin both the Catholike religion is substantially confirmed, and the heretikes finely fetcht ouer coals. Translated out of Dutch into English by George Gilpin the Elder".



These two representatives were characteristic for Elizabethan diplomacy: they were both low-ranking Protestants with few means and equipment – in 1559, Mundt arrived with only one servant and two horses. Furthermore, commissioned agents were typically already at the designated location and had more expertise than representative rank. With their social and professional backgrounds, their patronages, language skills, and experience in the German lands, they qualified as Elizabethan envoys to German Diets. In the personal dimension of early modern “international relations”, which the “New Diplomatic History” has pointed out many times,<sup>22</sup> they shaped English diplomacy in the Holy Roman Empire because of the length of their stays, their expertise, and their missions.

### **Challenge I: The Envoy's Status**

The dense diplomatic space of the Imperial Diet was a forum for showing one's status through representative means such as rich entourages of an embassy, a high rank in ceremonies, or seats close to the Emperor as head of the Empire. Just as Bragaccia states in the term of “publico arringo”, the Diets set the scene for symbolising power relations and rank, and allowed the negotiators to tear these relations apart and reforge them anew.<sup>23</sup> When advising the English Queen, envoys also considered the symbolism of power relations: here, at the Diet, were “*other neighboured kings and princes*”;<sup>24</sup> as Mundt put it. Similarly, an Italian in English service asked why the most noble Queen of England should not be represented at the Diet, as “*there will be the majority of all the great princes of Europe*”.<sup>25</sup>

In actual diplomacy, however, things were entirely different: Elizabeth's envoys attracted very little ceremonial attention either in other ambassadors' reports or in the media around

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22 For the importance of actor-centred perspectives see Daniel RICHES, *Protestant Cosmopolitanism and Diplomatic Culture. Brandenburg-Swedish Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden 2013, pp. 1–24, here p. 4–5.

23 Barbara STOLLBERG-RILINGER, *Die Symbolik der Reichstage – Überlegungen zu einer Perspektivenumkehr*, in: M. Lanzinner – A. Strohmeier (eds.), *Reichstag*, pp. 77–93. See also M. LANZINNER, *Fürsten und Gesandte*, pp. 55–82; Albrecht P. LUTTENBERGER, *Pracht und Ehre. Gesellschaftliche Repräsentation und Zeremoniell auf dem Reichstag*, in: Alfred Kohler – Heinrich Lutz (eds.), *Alltag im 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zu Lebensformen in mitteleuropäischen Städten*, Munich 1987, pp. 291–326, esp. p. 318.

24 Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Strasbourg 4 December 1565, TNA, SP, sign. 70/81, fol. 73r: “*alii vicini Reges et potentatus*”.

25 Alessandro Citolini to the Earl of Leicester, [London] 13 December 1565, TNA, SP, sign. 70/81, fol. 110r: “*sara la maggior parte de i piu potenti Prencipi di Europa*”. See Alessandro Citolini to Queen Elizabeth, Strasbourg 28 January 1566, TNA, SP, sign. 70/82, fol. 50r.

the Diet.<sup>26</sup> Most of them were unnoticed by the public and the majority of the Diet.<sup>27</sup> Mundt and Gilpin's low rank and lack of nobility only partly explain this ignorance. At the Diet of 1566, even Christopher Mundt was received by the Emperor and was led into his private chambers – regardless of his civil status. Instead, the kind of diplomatic mission and perception of the envoy's role should be considered. Both missions, Mundt's and Gilpin's, oscillated between officiality and espionage. In Augsburg in 1559, Mundt was sent with credentials to all German Estates, but he did not act openly. Unless he presented himself in person to the representatives of other German princes, they were unaware of the presence of an English envoy.<sup>28</sup> Also, in London his name and presence were kept secret from the

26 Moreover, no report or mention is given by any other foreign envoys on English representatives at the Diet; see, for example, the Spanish reports in *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España por el Marqués de la Fuensanta del Valle. Vol. 87: Correspondencia de Felipe II con sus embajadores en la corte de Inglaterra*, ed. by José S. RAYON – Francisco de ZABÁLBURU, Madrid 1886 (Reprint 1966), pp. 57–59, 70–72; the French reports in *Mémoires-journaux de François de Lorraine, duc d'Aumale et de Guise (1547 à 1561)*, ed. by Joseph F. MICHAUD – Jean J. F. POUJOLAT, in: Idem (eds.), *Nouvelle collection des mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France, depuis le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup>*, vol. 1/4, Lyon – Paris 1851, pp. 1–539, here pp. 39–418, 438–442. For 1559 see Paul Hector Mair's chronicle, *Die Chroniken der schwäbischen Städte: Augsburg*, vol. 7, ed. by Historische Kommission bei der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Göttingen 1966<sup>2</sup>, pp. 374–379. In 1566, neither Mundt nor Thomas Danett was mentioned in Mameranus published list of the participants in the Diet in Augsburg (Nikolaus MAMERANUS, *Kurtze und eigentliche Verzeychnus der Teilnehmer am Reichstag zu Augsburg 1566*, ed. by Hanns JÄGER-SUNSTENAU, Neustadt a. d. Aisch 1985). Only Mundt appears in some versions of the Diet's printed recess (Nikolaus MAMERANUS, *Der anhängig thail des Catalogi von Röm. Kay. May. vnnnd dann aller Fürsten vnnnd Herren des Reichs, so auff dem Reichstag zu Augspurg gewesen, Rhät vnd Hofgesind: Mit zusatz des Rennspils, so den 12. Maij auff dem Weinmarkt vor Kay. May. Palast gehalten, vnnnd Beschluß des Reichstags*, Dillingen 1566; *Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Reichsversammlungen 1556–1662. Der Reichstag zu Augsburg 1566*, vol. 2, ed. by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, rev. by Maximilian LANZINNER – Dietmar HEIL, Berlin 2002 (hereafter RTA 1566), p. 1579, Ann. w). In lists of ambassadors present at the Diet in 1570, neither Cobham nor Mundt appears (*Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Reichsversammlungen 1556–1662. Der Reichstag zu Speyer 1570*, vol. 2, ed. by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, rev. by Maximilian LANZINNER, Berlin 1988 (hereafter RTA 1570), Nr. 388, p. 995). In 1582, English envoys were again absent from the printed lists of participants (Peter FLEISCHMANN, *Description: Des aller Durchleüchtigisten, Großmechtigisten ... Herrn, Herrn Rudolfen des andern, Erwölten Römischen Kaisers ... Erstgehaltenem Reichstag zu Augspurg, der sich dann vermög gethaner Proposition, den 3. Julij Anno 82. angefangen*, Augsburg 1582, pp. 107–115).

27 An exception can be found in Sir Henry Cobham, who was briefly present at the Diet of Speyer in 1570.

28 See Delegates of Württemberg to Duke Christoph of Württemberg, Augsburg 4 April 1559, in: *Briefwechsel des Herzogs Christoph von Wirtemberg. Vol. 4: 1556–1559*, ed. by Viktor ERNST, Stuttgart 1907, no. 550, pp. 633–634; Delegates of the Palatinate to Count Palatine Frederick III, Augsburg 28 March 1559, in: *Briefe Friedrich des Frommen, Kurfürsten von der Pfalz: Mit verwandten Schriftstücken. Vol. I: 1559–1566*, ed. by August KLUCKHOHN, Brunswick 1868, no. 19, p. 43.

Spanish ambassador<sup>29</sup> in order not to hinder Mundt's possible forging of a Protestant alliance. Thus in 1559, Mundt was more of an agent or spy than he was a publicly acting envoy.<sup>30</sup> Or, as the councillor John Mason put it in the 1540s: "*Mont is a sufficient man what so ever shall be committed unto him, and things may sonner be compassed by the secrete name of an agent than by the pompous name of an Ambassador*".<sup>31</sup>

Even when acting openly, the status of Elizabeth's envoy could be more of a challenge than an opportunity. George Gilpin came to Augsburg in 1582 to negotiate on the behalf of the *Merchant Adventurers*, whose secretary he was in Antwerp. He was also appointed as an envoy of the crown, probably to support his mission as mercantile ambassador. However, Gilpin was exclusively regarded as the envoy of a trading company, but never seen in his official and accredited role as the Queen's ambassador. This latter role was even denied when Brandenburg's representative voted in the Diet that "*it is unnecessary to treat with the English envoy, as he is only a merchant and secretary and no principal envoy of the Queen of England*".<sup>32</sup> The Venetian ambassador in Augsburg went even further and suspected that Gilpin's "*real mission is to spy out the Imperial policy*".<sup>33</sup> It is thus not surprising to see every effort made by Gilpin to treat with delegates of the Imperial Estates or to have an audience with the Emperor rejected. When he received the Emperor's answer to his request, it was only brought by a common secretary of the chancellery without any of the usual honours.<sup>34</sup> As England's ally, the Count of East Friesland, put it: even the king of Poland had sent "a very noble embassy", and it would have been better to do so, too, instead of

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29 It was not until 1561 that the Spanish ambassador managed to discover Mundt's name and identity (Bishop Quadra to Philipp II., London 5 May 1561, in: *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas. Vol. 1: Elizabeth. 1558–1567*, ed. by Martin A. S. HUME, Cambridge 1892, no. 128, p. 203). Even afterwards, Spanish ambassadors in England tried to discover the source of information from Germany (see de Spes to Philipp II., London 18 January 1567, in: *Calendar*, vol. 1, ed. by M. A. S. HUME, no. 402, p. 610; de Spes to Philipp II., London 9 January 1570, in: *Calendar*, vol. 1, ed. by M. A. S. HUME, no. 172, p. 226).

30 The assumption of David S. GEHRING, *Anglo-German Relations and the Protestant Cause. Elizabethan Foreign Policy and Pan-Protestantism*, London 2013, p. 33, that "*by means open and official England was well represented at an Imperial Diet*", must therefore be corrected.

31 John Mason to William Paget, Heidelberg 11 March 1546, TNA, SP, sign. 1/218, fol. 70r.

32 Protocol of the Electoral College, 12 November 1582, in: *Deutsche Reichstagsakten. Reichsversammlungen 1556–1662. Der Reichstag zu Augsburg 1582*, vol. 1, ed. by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, rev. by Josef LEEB, Berlin 2007 (hereafter RTA 1582), no. 50, p. 413: "*Mitt dem gesanten auß Engellandt zuhandeln sey onnötig, quia der von Embden handtir und secretarius [i.e. Gilpin, JB] und nitt principalum der königin von Engellandt*".

33 Hieronimo Lippomano to the Doge and Senate, Augsburg 1 September 1582, in: *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy. Vol. 8: 1581–1591*, ed. by Horatio F. BROWN, London 1894, no. 105, p. 42.

34 See George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 27 October 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 83r.

sending “a notary or such like [who was] not accepted or accounted as the ambassador from so noble a Queen, which animated the contrary parts, their complaints being better regarded and our defences and causes esteemed according to the person by whom they were solicited”.<sup>35</sup>

When facing the challenge of status, Elizabeth’s envoys at the German Diets did not meet the expectations of the diplomatic space of a Diet.

### **Challenge II: Integration into the Diet’s procedure**

Despite the severe political problems resulting from this lack of representativeness, the political scope for the Elizabethan diplomats was not altogether hindered by their low rank. When sorting out the conditions for a confessional alliance at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, the Diet seemed to be an appropriate opportunity for the English diplomats to reach many different partners at the same time. Christopher Mundt, who could rely on his mother tongue, his legal knowledge, and his many contacts and religious zeal, exerted the most influence. Alas, without precise instructions or authority from England, he was limited to fostering contacts and making the Protestant Imperial Estates willing to send an embassy to the Queen themselves. Therefore, he never acted within the official procedure of the Diet but talked to representatives and princes separately and in private. He made use of the multilateral forum and intended to pursue his aims outside the official procedure.<sup>36</sup> In his mission, Mundt discovered a higher potential than just bringing friendly messages,<sup>37</sup> yet although he often asked for further instructions, the lack of commitment from the Elizabethan government ultimately limited his scope of action. What he could achieve,

35 John More (Deputy of the *Merchant Adventurers* in Emden) to Nicholas Woodruff (Gouverneur of the *Merchant Adventurers*), Emden [10] December 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 88r. Rudolf HÄPKE, *Reichswirtschaftspolitik und Hanse nach den Wiener Reichsakten des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Hansische Geschichtsblätter 50/30, 1925, pp. 164–209, here p. 201, naming Gilpin as “a rather unimportant person”.

36 See Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Augsburg 5 July 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 93r-v; Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Augsburg 19 July 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 145; Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Augsburg 26 July 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 173r–174r; Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Strasbourg 15 August 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/6, fol. 92r. See also *Briefe*, vol. I, ed. by A. KLUCKHOHN, no. 70, p. 91. Even though the project between the German Protestant Princes and England did not come into effect, Mundt’s proceeding gives a good example of establishing communication at the multilateral forum.

37 See Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Strasbourg 25 January 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/2, fol. 59; Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Strasbourg 15 March 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/3, fol. 51; Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Augsburg 5 April 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/3, fol. 131r. Mundt constantly asked for specific instructions on whether and how to seek an alliance but did not get them prior to his departure from the Diet (see Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Strasbourg 15 August 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/6, fol. 94r-v; see G. D. RAMSAY, *London*, pp. 220–221).

he did by his transcultural competences as a go-between, experienced in both English diplomacy and the Holy Roman Empire's politics.

Gilpin's mission, on the contrary, did not fail because of lax instructions – his point was very clear: he had to convince the German Estates that English monopoly trade in the North was no reason to ban English merchants from Imperial markets. He failed because the three colleges of the Diet resolved to ban all English merchants from the Holy Roman Empire and its trade. When the Diet changed its vote against the English merchants, Gilpin protested heavily. In his opinion, the decision was “contrary to law, equity and reason” and was forced by a majority vote without any respect for opposite arguments.<sup>38</sup> Shortly afterwards, Gilpin submitted a written protestation to the Diet's Chancery and the Emperor<sup>39</sup> in which he skilfully mentioned possible English reactions to the trade ban.<sup>40</sup> The very same day, the Emperor's councillors in the Imperial Privy Council decided to delay the execution of the Diet's resolution<sup>41</sup> – it was eventually implemented in 1597, when many years of open war between England and Spain had worsened the relationship with the Austrian Habsburgs.<sup>42</sup> An earlier start of the disastrous embargo in 1582 had effectively been prevented by Gilpin.<sup>43</sup>

Gilpin's capability to influence the Imperial party proves the potential political agency that foreign envoys at Diets had despite formal limitations. Gilpin managed to act both officially through written interventions to the Imperial Estates and unofficially by private meetings and discussions. He met with many delegates of the Estates and even made friends at the Diet who kept him up to date. Thus, he could at least provide an acceptable outcome for English affairs. His small scope of action was limited by the strict formal procedure

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38 George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 19 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 67r-v; George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 27 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 69r; George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 27 October 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 83r.

39 George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 19 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 67r.

40 See RTA 1582, no. 229, pp. 888–890.

41 See also Rudolph II to George Gilpin, Augsburg [1 October] 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 75r-v; Rudolph II to Queen Elizabeth [Translation by Gilpin], Augsburg 27 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 79r-v; Rudolph II to George Gilpin [Translation], Augsburg 27 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 71r-v; George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 27 October 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 83r.

42 See RTA 1582, p. 890, Ann. 4, p. 894, Ann. 2.

43 Although nineteenth-century historiography – based on documents by Gilpin's adversaries – suspected the English envoy of bribery, no such evidence can be found. See RTA 1582, p. 893, Ann. 3. Bernhard HAGEDORN, *Ostfrieslands Handel und Schifffahrt vom Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts bis zum Westfälischen Frieden (1580–1648)*, Berlin 1912, pp. 47–48 with Ann. 2; *Kölner Inventar. Vol. II: 1572–1592*, ed. by Konstantin HÖHLBAUM, Leipzig 1903, no. 174, p. 739; Jürgen WIEGANDT, *Die Merchants Adventurers' Company auf dem Kontinent zur Zeit der Tudors und Stuarts*, Kiel 1972, p. 180, Ann. 290.

excluding his participation and his low rank on the one hand and strengthened by his preparation of the issue and his communicating at the Diet on the other hand.

### ***Challenge III: Channels of communication in a multilateral forum***

For the diplomats' foremost task, the collecting of information, the envoys depended on broad channels of communication.<sup>44</sup> The social network of Elizabethan envoys at Imperial Diets was shaped by four conditions: first, confession – they only talked to Protestant or reformed delegates; second, political tradition – that is to say, political partners at the time of Henry VIII, such as the Palatine Princes, Saxony, and Wurttemberg; third, personal friendship. Undoubtedly, both envoys established strong interpersonal networks with people who helped contact the Imperial Estates or gather news from the Diet's sessions. In Mundt's case, Paul Vegerio, a former Catholic bishop, now Protestant councillor of Wurttemberg, was the agent responsible for helping him navigate the Diet. George Gilpin, for his part, knew a scholar of law from Flanders, Peter of Rotis, who “*by often meetinge and conferences grewe more familiar*”<sup>45</sup> and made Gilpin understand “*how matters passed abroad*”.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the diplomats' communication was based on reciprocity: for his intelligence services, Rotis was offered royal patronage for his economic writings, and surely, both envoys made use of bribes for spies and secret information, as a bill in Mundt's records demonstrates.<sup>47</sup>

Through these confessional, traditional, and personal channels of communication, Elizabethan envoys were able to overcome the formal limitations at the Diet. Their personal dispositions, such as their expertise and experience, their ability to forge friendships and diverse political contacts, and their language skills in German and Latin, helped them navigate the diplomatic space of the Diet.

These channels of communication enabled Mundt and Gilpin to benefit from the multilateral forum of the Diet: for the English government, the foremost advantage of the Diet was as a news hub, with news not only from the Holy Roman Empire, but also from faraway regions, especially the Ottoman military progress in the Balkans. In the multilateral convention, many different parties were present and active in the Diet's negotiations – a helpful and open door for English intelligence diplomacy.

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44 In general see Tracey A. SOWERBY, *Elizabethan Diplomatic Networks and the Spread of News*, in: Joad Raymond – Noah Moxham (eds.), *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, Leiden – Boston 2016, pp. 305–327, and just recently E. R. WILLIAMSON, *Elizabethan Diplomacy*.

45 George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Antwerp 1 December 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 83/17, fol. 137r.

46 Ibidem, fol. 137r.

47 Christopher Mundt to John Mason, Augsburg 14 June 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 44v and Christopher Mundt to William Cecil, Augsburg 26 July 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 175r.

While often a boon, the very same multilateralism was also a challenge for Elizabethan envoys.

Mundt and Gilpin, both very pious Protestants, the first Lutheran, the second a Protestant with a more zealous early Puritan affiliation, limited their communication to confessional partners only. This circle shrank until 1582 because of the inner-confessional differentiation in the evangelical confessions.<sup>48</sup> Simultaneously, both diplomats made the Catholic majority of the Diet the main enemy of English political interest in the Holy Roman Empire and drafted a very strict concept of a Catholic enemy. They described a monolithic bloc at the Diet of Catholic Princes, the spiritual Lords, the Emperor, and foreign powers such as the Pope, as well as the kings of Spain and France. There was no chance of unity, as “*the Papists behave insolently as ever before*”;<sup>49</sup> Mundt wrote to the Queen. As the Catholic front seemed unwilling to move even a little, for Mundt, “*much tyme and monie is spent hier [sic!] in vayne*”.<sup>50</sup> Gilpin made the same point twenty years later: “[I]ll is the liking or contentment of this place and disposition of the people”.<sup>51</sup> In many observations, whether they were on the political level of negotiations or on the social level, the division of confessions dominated Mundt’s and Gilpin’s general impressions of the Diet. The Catholic counterparts were – despite all their differences – thrown together in the envoys’ perception. Furthermore, prominent representatives such as Cardinal Otto of Waldburg in 1566 or the papal legate Ludovico Madruzzo in 1582 were stigmatised as mean Catholic schemers, asserting sinister practices and secretly whispering into the Emperor’s ear.<sup>52</sup>

This anti-Catholic perception was increased by its integration into the perceived international conspiracy against Protestantism and England. The fear of a pan-Catholic alliance against Protestant England was a decisive catalyst of the English need for security, especially in the turmoil of the Dutch Revolt and with the appeal of the “black legend” (“leyenda negra”).<sup>53</sup> Mundt and Gilpin combined this macro-political issue with the micro-political

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48 See the extensive study of D. S. GEHRING, *Relations*.

49 Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Augsburg 21 May 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/5, fol. 50r: “*Ego nullam iudeo in hic presentibus comitiis concordiam iniri posse in religionis negotio nam papistę modo insolentius se gerunt quam ullo unquam tempore et quam diu inter tam dissidentes animos et exacerbatas voluntates publica pax consistere possit*”.

50 Christopher Mundt to Queen Elizabeth, Augsburg 17 May 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/4, fol. 85v.

51 His judgement was based on his perception of several conflicts and incidents between Protestant and Catholic participants, guards, and citizens at Augsburg (George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 27 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 69r-v).

52 For further examples of the perception of Waldburg and Madruzzo at the Diet in 1582 see Josef LEEB, *Stereotype und Feindbilder an einem Ort interkultureller Begegnung: Augsburg während des Reichstages von 1582*, in: Michael Rohrschneider – Arno Strohmeyer (eds.), *Wahrnehmungen des Fremden. Differenzenerfahrungen von Diplomaten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Münster 2007, pp. 171–200.

53 See Malcolm R. THORP, *Catholic Conspiracy in Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, 1984, no. 4, pp. 431–448.

observation of a unanimous Catholic bloc at the Diet. To them, everything seemed to be inclined to the Catholic side, and thus, everything seemed to be perilous for England. Gilpin described the Diet as “*a greate assembly of the princes and nobells of Germany, especially Bishops and priests*”.<sup>54</sup> In 1559 as well as in 1582, the most powerful influence on the Diet’s proceedings was attributed to the Pope and the Spanish king. So, in Gilpin’s view, the Diet was mostly ‘spiritual or inclined to that [Spanish] side’ and thus always voted in favour of the Spanish king.<sup>55</sup>

As a result, the image of the Diet shifted, and the institution became viewed as the most hostile political environment that English diplomacy could imagine. This mistaken perception on the one hand and the fear of a Catholic conspiracy on the other favoured false causalities by the English diplomatic personnel. In 1582, when the English attempt to avoid an embargo officially failed, English agents in the Netherlands recommended more offensive means of foreign policy. Propaganda attacks on the Empire, for example, “*would doo more good for defence of England’s honour and innocencie then any more voyages of Mr. Gilpin to such Diets where prevayle the voices and sinister practises of Papists, whose hearts towards her Majesty and the state of England (God be thanked) are suffieciently revealed*”.<sup>56</sup>

The confessional interpretation and stereotyping of the Diet were a constant element in English reports, mainly shaped by Mundt and Gilpin. Not surprisingly, the choice of personnel already foreshadowed this perception. If Wolfgang Reinhard states that there was a “bigoted perspective” (“bornierter Blick”) of papal ambassadors in the Holy Roman Empire, whose perception was predicted by their confessional prejudice,<sup>57</sup> the same can be stated for Elizabethan diplomats at the Diets. Just like the papal legates, the English envoys had hermetic confessional mindsets that limited both their communication and

54 George Gilpin to Tomson [Walsingham’s secretary], Augsburg 6 May 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 83/16, fol. 6r: “*At the Diet of Ausborough there wilbe a greate assembly of the princes and nobells of Germany, especially Bishops and priests, and some greate matter fall out, or at least be talked of, concerning religion. The Jesuyts increase in those parts mavelously, and are supported both by the Emperor and all his favours, buylding churches and schools wheresoon they can get in foote*”. Similarly, George Gilpin to Francis Walsingham, Augsburg 16 August 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 48r.

55 So Gilpin’s argumentation at the end of the Diet in 1582 (Gilpin to Walsingham, Augsburg 16 August 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 80/1, fol. 48r-v). For similar argumentation and conclusions see the informant William Herle’s letters (William Herle to Francis Walsingham, Antwerp 1/2 September 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 83/17, fol. 1r-3r).

56 William Longston to Francis Walsingham, Antwerp 11 November 1582, TNA, SP, sign. 83/17, fol. 106v.

57 Wolfgang REINHARD, *Historische Anthropologie frühneuzeitlicher Diplomatie: Ein Versuch über Nuntiaturreporte 1592–1622*, in: Michael Rohrschneider – Arno Strohmeier (eds.), *Wahrnehmungen des Fremden. Differenzenerfahrungen von Diplomaten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Münster 2007, pp. 53–72, here p. 59. Reinhard already stated that this might be applicable to temporal diplomats, too. See also Guido BRAUN, *Reichstage und Friedenskongresse als Erfahrungsräume päpstlicher Diplomatie. Kulturelle Differenzenerfahrungen und Wissensgenerierung*, in: Idem (ed.), *Wissenskulturen*, pp. 89–112.



political scope of action and continued to vilify the Diet as a hostile political environment. They only communicated with Protestant participants,<sup>58</sup> vilified Catholic representatives in their reports, and avoided Catholic services, even the funeral service for Queen Mary of England.<sup>59</sup>

The envoys' perceptions had concrete political consequences. The Imperial Diet was increasingly rejected as a political forum for English diplomacy. The English diplomats themselves could rely on their own negative perception to delegitimise the Diet. However, the challenge of multilateral plurality at the Diet, where representatives of many different European powers gathered, surpassed the Elizabethan diplomatic capability. The supposed Catholic inclination hindered further diplomatic steps at this institution.

### Conclusion

These spotlights on the dealings and behaviour of Christopher Mundt and George Gilpin at the Imperial Diets of 1559, 1566, and 1582, illustrate how English diplomats handled, managed, and failed challenges in the diplomatic space of the Diets. The challenges for foreign envoys at a Diet varied. Although formally excluded from the negotiations *in curia*, they could exert great influence on individual participants or the public at the Diet. Just like other examples that have been studied so far, the case of the English diplomats underlines the need for combined case studies of the “New Cultural History” of the Diet

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58 Similar to papal nuncios, who needed a special faculty to treat with Protestant counterparts, English envoys asked for approval before communicating with papal representatives (see Tracey A. SOWERBY, *Renaissance and Reform in Tudor England. The Careers of Sir Richard Morison, c. 1513–1556*, Oxford 2010, p. 208). Compared to French perceptions of the Diet, the confessional character of the English sticks out (Friedrich BEIDERBECK, *Feindbilder französischer Gesandtschaften ins römisch-deutsche Reich um 1600 und ihr Verhältnis zu machtpolitischen Interessen*, in: M. Rohrschneider – A. Strohmeyer (eds.), *Wahrnehmungen*, pp. 291–312, here p. 295).

59 Queen Mary's exequies were celebrated in the context of the Diet in March 1559, after Charles V's exequies (R. AULINGER, *Bild*, pp. 309–310; Josef LEEB, *Das Reichstagsgeschehen von 1559 und die Problematik der Kaiserwahl Ferdinands I.*, in: E. Meuthen (ed.), *Reichstage und Kirche*, pp. 236–256, here p. 298; Achim AURNHAMMER – Friedrich DÄUBLE, *Die Exequien für Kaiser Karl V. in Augsburg, Brüssel und Bologna*, Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 62–63/2, 1981, pp. 101–157, here pp. 106–107, 108–114). Being very costly and extravagant, they attracted broad attention in the contemporary media (see Friedrich STAPHYLUS, *De exequiis Caroli V. Maximi, imperatoris, quas Ferdinandus Augustissimus imperator germano fratri suo charissimo, Augustae Vindelicorum fecit fieri*, Augsburg 1559; IDEM, *Aigentliche vnnd warhaffte Beschreibung weiß bey der herrlichen Besingknuß, so die Röm. Kay. May. Kaiser Ferdinand etc. jrer May. lieben Bruder vnnd Herrn Kayser Carlen dem fünfften Hochlöblichster gedächtnus am 24. vnd 25. Februarij des 59. Jars ordenlich vnd zierlich gehalten, sich allenthalben verlossen vnnd zugetragen*, Dilingen 1559; H. RUDOLPH, *Ereignis*, pp. 480–481). The English envoys Thomas Challoner and Mundt were not present in Augsburg at the time. Mundt judged the exequies to be only a pretext to attract the princes to the Diet (see Mundt to Cecil, Strasbourg 21 March 1559, TNA, SP, sign. 70/3, fol. 65r).

and “New Diplomatic History” with a focus on the diplomats themselves, in order to define the specific role and function of a foreign envoy at a Diet.

For the English, a Diet was a news hub and a forum of communication, where information on the Empire, its princes, and other regions could be found and transmitted to the court. Individual dispositions such as language skills, juridical expertise, and social engagement defined the limits and chances of this foremost task. The Diet furthermore proved to be a junction for communicating with Protestant partners in the Holy Roman Empire, in addition to the circulating bilateral embassies of Elizabeth.<sup>60</sup> However, it did not appear effective to English diplomacy. Determined by the fear of a Catholic strike, negotiating and communication at the Diet was always limited to some of the Protestant and Reformed partners. Diplomacy at the Diet was thus selective and did not use the estate assembly for proactive policy. In addition, the difficulty of ceremonial assertiveness and the reduction of the Diet to a bloc of the Catholic policy of containment grew stronger in time.

A Diet was a multilateral forum and – because of its myriad assortment of parties, confessions, ranks, and interests – a melting pot of diplomatic strategy and capability. In this “publico arringo”, as Gaspardo Bragaccia named it, low rank could hinder political communication in an institution whose participants mainly communicated in ceremonial signs, and perceptions of otherness could easily develop into political realities. On the other hand, language skills, juridical expertise, and social engagement could open doors beyond the formal negotiation of the Diet. Thus, the English example demonstrates strikingly that foreign envoys at the Diets could exert more influence than their exclusion from voting and having a voice might suggest. The challenges which diplomats then had to face in the diplomatic space of the Diet – political communication with a variety of actors at the same time and the difficulties of ceremonial representation – appear to be specific diplomatic challenges at Imperial Diets. Of course, they could also occur in bilateral diplomatic embassies of courtly diplomacy,<sup>61</sup> but the premises of a multilateral forum such as a Diet intensified them and made the Diet a difficult part of English Elizabethan diplomacy in the German lands.

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60 For those diplomatic contacts see D. S. GEHRING, *Relations*.

61 See the study of Tomáš ČERNUŠÁK – Pavel MAREK, *Gesandte und Klienten. Päpstliche und spanische Diplomaten im Umfeld Kaiser von Kaiser Rudolf II.*, Berlin – Boston 2020.