

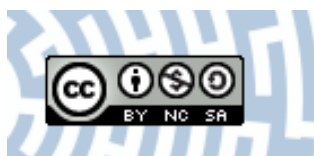


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INTRODUCTION

The crisis of political history, particularly profound since the 1960s and the subsequent cultural turn, has penalised the scientific investigation of “international” relations¹ in the early modern period for many years². Over the last decades, though, there have been several calls for new methodological and conceptual approaches to diplomatic studies, some of them extraordinarily fruitful and inspiring³. Nowadays, as Tracey Sowerby observed, «the *New Diplomatic History*, no longer so new, has become a broad church. It has successfully integrated wider concerns into a field that was once dominated by the study of bureaucracy and foreign policy»⁴. Integrated, but not replaced, which is also essential to emphasise. That is mainly why scholars no longer consider diplomacy and foreign policy making as coterminous, but do assimilate plenty of different aspects diplomatic practice entailed.

One cannot notice that from the point of view of contemporary research on the early modern history of diplomacy, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth constitutes an interesting phenomenon that has not been sufficiently developed yet, especially in the international forum of researchers along with their various historiographical traditions. There are still many blank spots in exploring this topic, which remain open to a contemporary historian. This special issue of *Eastern European History Review* seeks to encourage a more profound reflection on particularities and significance of the Polish-Lithuanian diplomatic practice in the early modern period, especially during the seventeenth century, by conveying into conversation an international set of scholars from Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Australia, interested in various aspects of diplomatic history. By bringing consciousness of diplomatic agency to bear on various areas of cultural and political practice, our authors have pressed their research beyond the horizons of their “national histories” that continue to dominate most treatments of premodernity.

On the threshold of the early modern period, *Rzeczpospolita* found itself among the political entities that adopted the praxis of permanent diplomatic missions exchange very late (only in the eighteenth century), relying on the old system of extraordinary embassies, of medieval provenance. However, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was no exception on a European scale. The general rules for foreign relations’ conduct appeared similar in Portugal, Scotland, Hungary, Scandinavia (Sweden and Denmark), Switzerland, and several German states⁵.

Federico Chabod considered the permanent diplomatic service, next to the professional army and elaborated bureaucratic apparatus, as the basis for the affirmation of the “early modern state”⁶. *Rzeczpospolita* did not possess any of these elements, but can it be denied the character of statehood from a historical point of view⁷? Subsequently, for Matthew Smith Anderson, the history of early

1 I put the word “international” in quotation marks, considering the imperfection of this concept for the analysis of political relations in early modern Europe. Cf. Tracey A. Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History”, *History Compass*, 14, 9 (2016): 444.

2 Stefano Andretta, *L'arte della prudenza. Teorie e prassi della diplomazia nell'Italia del XVI e XVII secolo* (Roma: Binklink, 2006), 7.

3 Karl W. Schweizer and Matt J. Schumann, “The Revitalisation of Diplomatic History”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 19, 2 (2008): 149-86; John Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38, 1 (2008): 1-14; Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, “A New Diplomatic History and the Networks of Spanish Diplomacy in the Baroque Era”, *The International History Review*, 36, 4 (2014): 603-18; Dorothea Nolde, “Was ist Diplomatie und wenn ja, wie viele? Herausforderungen und Perspektiven einer Geschlechtergeschichte der frühneuzeitlichen Diplomatie“, *Historische Anthropologie*, 21, 2 (2013): 180-98.

4 Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History”, 441.

5 Giuseppe Galasso, “Le relazioni internazionali nell’età moderna (secoli XV–XVIII)”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 111, 1 (1999): 10.

6 Federico Chabod, *Idea di Europa e politica dell’equilibrio* (Bologna: Mulino, 1995).

7 Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society. A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London-New York: Routledge, 1992), 185-86: «The kingdom of Poland had increased its power and influence by a dynastic union with Lithuania and expansion eastward, and had made itself the principal bulwark of Latin Christendom on the eastern marches. But the heterogeneous population, the dual governmental structure of Poland-Lithuania and the practice of elective monarchy prevented its consolidation into an effective stato». Cf. Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z*

modern diplomacy constituted a slow but increasingly evident evolution towards the system of permanent representation. He considered contacts between polities that failed to conform to that model «less developed ones, [...] where diplomacy was less important and diplomatic organisation more primitive». Anderson believed that from the point of view of diplomatic practice, one could speak of two “separate Europes” and that «between these two Europes there were as yet only slender links»⁸. Nowadays, historiography views the issue of permanent diplomatic posts in a significantly different way. As Riccardo Fubini suggests, the general deficiency of institutionalisation of the then diplomacy makes the equality of residency and modernity dubious⁹. Also, Sowerby appropriately stated that «the exchange of resident ambassadors did not extend across all of Europe. Rather, asymmetrical relations were not uncommon within Europe and continued to be so into the eighteenth century»¹⁰.

Therefore, nothing could be more erroneous than assuming the passivity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on the “international” arena of early modern Europe. The young Polish Vasa dynasty, the more as it functioned within the elective monarchy, manifested a strong need to affirm its position on the European forum. Moreover, the necessity to maintain intensive contacts with foreign partners was caused by the continuous involvement of *Rzeczpospolita* in armed conflicts on various fronts. Due to its geopolitical position, the vastness of the territory and the leading role for the implementation of the Catholic Reform, Poland-Lithuania occupied a distinctive part in the entire system of “international” relations of early modern Europe. All the more so, its specific tradition and political practice concerning the implementation of foreign policy, conducting diplomatic activity outside its borders, as well as accepting foreign legations *in loco*, requires further attention of contemporary historiography.

The special issue of *Eastern European History Review, Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (XVII century)*, opens with a group of articles regarding some general institutional and technical aspects of the functioning of the Polish-Lithuanian diplomatic service.

Dorota Gregorowicz (*Diplomacy of the Commonwealth, Diplomacy of the King: the Peculiarity of Foreign Policy Making in the Seventeenth Century Poland-Lithuania*) deals with the topicality of research on the history of diplomacy in the early modern Poland-Lithuania, in the context of scant development of permanent diplomatic missions. The article presents considerations on the subjectivity of the *ius legationis* in *Rzeczpospolita*. Gregorowicz reflects on the competencies of the monarch and of the Commonwealth (personified in the *sejm* and Senate councils) in this matter. To this end, she primarily analyses the content of the sixteenth – and seventeenth-century parliamentary constitutions regarding the conduct of foreign policy. Moreover, the article refers to political practice as a determining factor for the legal structure of Poland-Lithuania.

The Union of Lublin (1569), as the basis for the execution of a joint diplomatic activity of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, is analysed by Marius Sirutavičius (*Partnership in a Union with Diverging Interests: Cooperation between the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Diplomatic Activities at the Turn of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*). The author emphasises the initially divergent interests of both states in addressing the directions of the foreign policy of *Rzeczpospolita* (especially concerning contacts with Muscovy) and their influence on the functioning of the diplomatic service. Moreover, Sirutavičius draws attention to the evolution and gradual uniformisation processes of the Polish and Lithuanian visions of conducting foreign policy,

nowoczesną formą (Kraków: Universitas, 2011). According to Sowa, «the concept of the “ghost body of the King” [inspired by Ernst Kantorowicz] marks a notional horizon in which *Rzeczpospolita* presents itself as a non-existent state entity, or in the process of its disappearance, utterly unsuitable for any modern form of social, political and economic organisation, which took shape in Europe from the early modern age, with the nascent capitalism and parliamentarism» (285). Sowa’s perspective is certainly interesting, although historically not sustainable. Translation in English is of the author.

8 Matthew S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450–1919* (London-New York: Longman, 1993), 27-8.

9 Riccardo Fubini, *La “residentialité” de l’ambassadeur dans le mythe et dans la réalité: une enquête sur les origines* (Paris: PUF, 1998); Id., “Diplomacy and government in the Italian city-states of the fifteenth century (Florence and Venice)”, in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 26-8.

10 Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic History”, 442.

which took place in the initial period of the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, pointing to the multilateral origins of those developments.

The problem of the source material's characteristics for studying the history of diplomacy is discussed by nunciatures' specialists Henryk Litwin and Paweł Duda in a joint article *Correspondence of Warsaw Nuncio Antonio Santa Croce with Roman Catholic Bishops from 1629 – Frequency, Intensity and Content*. The researchers focused on the analysis of "internal" correspondence maintained by the apostolic nuncio with hierarchs of the Polish-Lithuanian Catholic Church, underlining its parallel importance in relation to the mainstream canals of diplomatic information exchange (between the Polish-Lithuanian periphery – nunciature's chancellery and Roman centre – Secretariat of State).

Finally, the first part of the book includes the reflection of Michał Salamonik on some non-institutional structures and mechanisms of diplomatic activity in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, along with the case study on the diplomatic context of the postal and news-spreading duties of the Gdańsk merchant and postmaster Francesco Gratta [1613–1676] (*News Agents and Postmasters: Background Figures or Active Diplomats?*).

The second part of this book is devoted to diplomacy as to the art of great politics' conduct and to the geopolitical position of Poland-Lithuania in seventeenth-century Europe. The advantages of diplomatic negotiations as an alternative to pursuing *Rzeczpospolita's* foreign policy in the military field are highlighted here. This group of articles may seem of a more traditional topicality. Still, it is significant to accentuate its emphasis on the multilateral character of early modern diplomatic relations, strongly including the subject of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Miguel Conde Pazos analyses the impact of the Catholic Monarchy's diplomacy on the involvement of *Rzeczpospolita* in the pan-European conflict (*Spanish Diplomats in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Thirty Years' War*). This example perfectly illustrates the breadth of political, economic and dynastic interactions that were determined by the diplomatic activities of all major European countries, even those geographically distant from each other. Conde Pazos also draws attention to the personal profile of diplomats sent on specific missions and to their respective political culture, experience, and preparation for dedicated charges.

The role of political nuances and, at first glance, of less important elements in conducting a diplomatic activity is treated by Ryszard Skowron (*Palatinate: the Key to Europe. On the Art of Diplomacy of Władysław IV Vasa*). The author points to the role of a seemingly secondary German state, as well as to the complicated system of ties between single European states at that time, in the perspective of the implementation of the great political and dynastic plans of the Polish-Lithuanian monarch, primarily related to his efforts to reclaim the Swedish throne. In fact, it is worth observing how the interests represented and defended through early modern diplomatic negotiation were primarily dynastic, typical of the sovereign families that divided the European spaces between themselves¹¹. In his article, Skowron has distinguished two basic categories defining Władysław IV's foreign policy: peace tactics (diplomatic activity and matrimonial policy) and war (military involvement in connection with the events of the Thirty Years' War).

The English point of view on the last years of the Polish Vasas' rule and on the election of 1669 is presented by Aleksandra Ziober (*The Last Years of the Reign of John Casimir Vasa and Interregnum after his Abdication in the Light of Reports of Francis Sanderson and Robert Yard*). The author shows how the image preserved in diplomatic accounts of various backgrounds' services allows us to recreate the historical narrative for many research topics with more detail. Thus diplomacy becomes a way of acquiring knowledge about single courts and state entities. Ziober also refers to the degree of understanding of the particular form and functioning of the Polish-Lithuanian political structures in seventeenth-century Europe.

The universalist-political dimension of the Holy See's diplomats' activity during the short reign of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki (1669-1673) is discussed by Alessandro Boccolini (*Diplomacy and Papal Politics during the "Unfortunate" Reign of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki*). The author analysed the

11 Claudio Rosso, "Burocrazia, fiscalità, diplomazia", in *Storia d'Europa e del Mediterraneo. Dal Medioevo all'età della globalizzazione*, sez. 5: *Età moderna (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, vol. XII: *Popoli, stati, equilibri di potere*, ed. Roberto Bizzocchi (Salerno-Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2013), 43.

activity of the then apostolic nunciature primarily in the context of the relations between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the papal vision of *Rzeczpospolita* as *Antemurale Christianitatis*.

As Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger observed, «another major theme within recent reassessments of early modern diplomacy has been non-verbal communication. The early modern diplomatic ceremonial was essential to the expression of hierarchies»¹². In fact, in the third part of the book, we deal with a set of texts referring to the issues of diplomatic ceremonial, as «in early modern European diplomacy, the relationship between the ceremonial symbols and the mechanisms of power was closer and carried more weight»¹³.

In Marta Szymańska's article, *The Ceremonial of Receiving of Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł and his Stay at the Courts of Western Europe as a Royal Envoy during the Journey of Prince Władysław Vasa 1624–1625*, the diplomatic role of the Lithuanian magnate, member of the Vasa Prince's retinue during Władysław's educational trip around Europe, as well as the diplomatic dimension of the entire enterprise, seemingly unrelated to the implementation of the Polish-Lithuanian foreign policy, are discussed. One of the key aspects of the study is how the ceremonial applied to the Prince's retinue members indicated the diplomatic nature of the expedition.

Mariusz Sawicki (*The Coronation Parliament of John III Sobieski in French-Language Reports Sent to London*) presents a picture of the anointing act and then the entire coronation *sejm* (1676) of the later victor from Vienna. The author shows the image that French diplomats, present at that time in Poland-Lithuania, created in their reports on the events of Sobieski's coronation: its political, social and ceremonial aspects. Interestingly, those reports were sent in London and not in Paris. Sawicki shows himself fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of historical interpreting similar creation that any external observers could create.

Ewelina Sikora (*Feasting and Fasting in Moscow: Peace Negotiation Between Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy as Seen Through Eating and Drinking Customs*) takes up the theme of feasting as an essential element of Polish-Lithuanian diplomatic practice during the missions to Muscovy. The article constitutes an important contribution for developing further research on material culture in the field of the history of diplomacy¹⁴, also in the context of ceremonial treatments and traditional usages.

Finally, Gaetano Platania draws attention to the institution of obedience missions that Polish-Lithuanian kings traditionally sent to the papal court in order to certify their loyalty to the Catholic Church and its superior (*Michał Radziwiłł's Obedience Embassy in the Rome of Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi between Diplomacy and Ceremonial*). The author presents a case study, a picture of the *Rzeczpospolita's* envoy's entry to the Eternal City in 1680, putting Michał Radziwiłł's mission in the large political context of the Holy League's organisation. The ceremonial becomes here an authentic baroque, theatrical representation, still, by no means deprived of its political importance.

The last part of the book is devoted to a series of outstanding personalities of diplomats operating in the context of seventeenth-century *Rzeczpospolita*. Many scholars have adopted an actor-centred approach to inquiry early modern diplomacy, and such career case studies result as extremely useful. Placing ambassadors at the heart of the analysis offers a rich research perspective regarding the relationships they cultivated, their contacts and personal capacities, as well as the individual factor in conducting foreign policy that has always accompanied the great policy's sketches.

Uładzimir Padalinski develops the topic of the diplomatic activity of Mikhayla Haraburda (*Diplomatic Activity as the Basis of Political Advancement and Material Reward in the Sixteenth-Century Grand Duchy of Lithuania: The Case of Mikhayla Haraburda*). It is a specific case study of a multiple envoy of

12 Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger, "Zeremoniell, Ritual, Symbol: Neue Forschungen zur symbolischen Kommunikation in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 27, 3 (2000): 389-405. Cf. Sowerby, "Early Modern Diplomatic History", 445.

13 Jan Hennings, "The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1698", *The International History Review*, 30, 3 (2008), 515.

14 Cf. Harriet Rudolph, "Entangled Objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy", in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, eds. Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzger (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2016), 1-28.

the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Muscovy and Crimea. Padalinski shows the dynamics with which the involvement in the implementation of foreign policy could determine both the political career and the social status of a diplomat in the noble context of *Rzeczpospolita*. His study also provides an outstanding example of the Lithuanian ambassador's *cursus honorum*.

Krzysztof Zbaraski's Constantinopolitan mission is examined by Tetiana Grygorieva (*The "Decisive Embassy" of Prince Krzysztof Zbaraski to Constantinople (1622–1623) and European Diplomacy amidst the Thirty Years' War*). The article rejects the bilateral vision of Polish-Lithuanian and Ottoman diplomatic contacts, presenting the image of Zbaraski's expedition in a broad European context, including, *inter alia*, political relations of both countries with Transylvania, as well as their involvement in the events of the Thirty Years' War.

Peter P. Bajer presents a diplomatic career as a path of personal development and one of the ways to build a social position in the early modern *Rzeczpospolita*. The author observes the case of foreign newcomers or/and their families (based on the example of Scottish immigration), the desirable result of who was usually obtaining a noble status in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*The Career of Jerzy (George) Bennet, the Scottish Agent of the Radziwiłł Family*)¹⁵.

The diplomatic mission as a field for the realisation of personal interests of a diplomat, in addition to the tasks provided by representing his political superior, is presented by Aleksandra Skrzypietz (*Between the King's Instructions and the Ambassador's Ambition. Cooperation Between Melchior de Polignac and Polish Magnates*). The author shows how diplomatic feedback could have influenced the evolution of the instructions entrusted to ambassadors and, consequently, had a direct impact on their political activity. Skrzypietz presents Polignac not only as a performer but as a co-creator of the French political program towards the *Rzeczpospolita* ruled by John III Sobieski. Finally, she explains the difficulties encountered by ambassadors of foreign countries in approaching the complex political and social context of the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The activities of diplomats of Pope Innocent XI in Poland-Lithuania and at the imperial court, as well as the nature of their regular contacts with the Roman Curia, are presented by Claudia Curcuruto (*Francesco Buonvisi and Opizio Pallavicini. Correspondences and Activities of Two Apostolic Nuncios in the Service of Pope Innocent XI Odescalchi. 1676-1689*). The author focuses on the communicative aspects of the activities of the apostolic nunciatures. She presents diplomats as mediators between radically different (geographically, politically, culturally) realities (not only on the line of the royal/imperial court and the papal court but also between local bishops and the Bishop of Rome – the pope). Finally, the issue of mediation, as one of the crucial elements of early modern diplomatic practice, is presented by Béla Mihalik on the example of the activity of a relative of the Polish-Lithuanian monarch Augustus II the Strong (1697–1706, 1709–1733) – Bishop of Győr, Christian August (*The King's Cousin, the Emperor's Bishop. Christian August of Saxe-Zeitz as Mediator between Poland and the Holy See*). It is another text that highlights the problem of the personal interests of diplomats in carrying out their missions. In the case of Wettin, these were primarily the efforts to obtain the cardinal's hat. As observed by John Watkins, «the time has come for a multidisciplinary reevaluation of one of the oldest, and traditionally one of the most conservative, subfields in the modern discipline of history: the study of premodern diplomacy»¹⁶. Contemporary research on the history of diplomacy in the early modern *Rzeczpospolita* is doing quite well, but it still requires a reorientation and innovation of methodological approach. The history of diplomacy should no longer be seen as an abstract account of negotiations and treaties, disconnected from parallel social, economic and cultural aspects. Indeed, as this collection of studies demonstrates, historiography is continually discovering new research fields in matter. Among those contained in the presented volume, we can indicate: legal and institutional forms of early modern “international” relations, nature of diplomatic sources and character of the narrative present in the documents, multilaterality and complexity of the early modern interstate connections,

15 Recently on similar issues: Michał Salamonik, *In Their Majesties' Service. The Career of Francesco De Gratta (1613–1676) as a Royal Servant and Trader in Gdańsk* (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2019); Wojciech Tygielski, *Dylematy włoskiego emigranta. Giovanni Battista Jacobelli (1603–1679), śpiewak i kapelan nadworny, kanonik warmiński* (Warszawa: Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, 2019).

16 Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History”, 1.

their religious and confessional nature¹⁷, diplomatic ceremonial and non-verbal communication, tools and techniques used by ambassadors, *people* as direct implementers of the “art of diplomacy”, their *cursus honorum* and mechanisms of social advancement, cultural image expressed in diplomatic documents, social, economic, commercial and dynastic causes that determined political choices, as well as material culture in diplomacy¹⁸. This volume will undoubtedly contribute to the further development of contemporary analysis of these issues. We would like to continue to engage in new methods, ask additional questions, and rethink how early modern Polish-Lithuanian diplomacy is currently being studied.

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17 Cf. *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Roberta Anderson and Charlotte Backerra (London-New York: Routledge, 2021).

18 Cf. Daniela Frigo, “Politica estera e diplomazia: figure problemi e apparati”, in *Storia degli antichi stati italiani*, eds. Gaetano Greco and Mario Rosa (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996), 117.