ENGLISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FIRST WAR OF RELIGION: THE EMBASSY OF SIR NICHOLAS THROCKMORTON (1559-1564)

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Abstract. This article is about English foreign policy during the French Wars of Religion and on the interplay between religion and diplomacy in the early years of Elizabeth I's reign. The study focuses on Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's embassy to France from 1559 to 1564, a period marked by the growing influence of confessional elements in political affairs. Through an examination of Throckmorton's diplomatic dispatches and the broader historiographical context, this project explores how English foreign policy was shaped by religious concerns, political reasoning, and the evolving role of diplomacy in international relations. By placing Throckmorton's mission within the framework of new diplomatic history, the study seeks to uncover the social, cultural, and religious factors that influenced English diplomacy and to shed light on the complex relationship between political identity, religious affiliation, and diplomatic practice during a key period in Elizabeth I's reign.

Keywords: French Wars of Religion, Elizabeth I, English foreign policy, early modern diplomacy, confessional struggles

Introduction

"What hathe she [Elizabeth I] to do with our well or evill doing? Theese matters touche her nothing: she hathe no interest in them. I [Sir Nicholas Throckmorton] sayd: She had as moche interest, and touched her as moche as it dyd the Kinge of Spayne and the Bushop of Rome"[1]. This dialogue between the Duke of Guise and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the English ambassador to France from 1559 to 1564, occurred a few days after the Battle of Dreux (19 December 1562). The Duke of Guise's question to the ambassador stemmed from Throckmorton's earlier declaration on the state of France after the death of Francis II, in which he strongly endorsed Huguenot propaganda and used it to denounce the actions of the Guises[2]. This dialogue showcases the two central concerns of this article: the reasons for English intervention in the French Wars of Religion and the role of the ambassador in shaping and representing English policy in France. These two issues are crucial to the study of English foreign policy at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign and the development of

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diplomatic practice during the Wars of Religion. The aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between religion and diplomacy during the Wars of Religion.

This research examines the evolution of diplomatic practice between 1559 and 1564, following the introduction of confessional elements into politics, by analyzing the dispatches received and sent by English ambassadors to France. In doing so, it explores the relationship between the political and confessional spheres in English political reasoning, as represented by the diplomats who shaped Elizabeth I's foreign policy, and delves into the interplay between political culture, religion, and diplomacy. Diplomacy played an essential role in the development of English foreign policy and its new modes of political intervention. Consequently, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's embassy during this period emerges as a remarkable case study. Not only does it offer an in-depth analysis of French confessional struggles and their impact on international politics in the second half of the sixteenth century, but it also lends itself to being examined from two perspectives: first, as a model of changing social and political practices in the diplomatic field, and second, as a *unicum* due to the peculiarities of the ambassador. To this end, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton is compared with other British diplomats sent to France, including his staff and his successor, Sir Thomas Smith, in order to identify similarities and differences in their attitudes and motivations. Moreover, the English ambassador is studied in a wider diplomatic context, with Paris at its center, precisely to identify the specificities of the English relations with France and its similarities with other French diplomatic realities.

In order to provide a complete overview of the research undertaken and its premises, this article will be divided into three sections addressing different perspectives. The first is devoted to an overview of the historiographical debate in which the current research participates, analyzing existing discussions on English foreign policy, the internationalization of the Wars of Religion, and the historiographical gap on the embassy of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. The second part discusses the methodology to be used in this study, based on the current historiographical debate on diplomatic history, which invites historians to adopt a multi-method approach when dealing with diplomatic sources. Finally, the last part analyses the sources used for this research, describing the difficulties of their use, the possibilities of their investigation, their location, and some interesting discoveries that help to shed light on various aspects of Throckmorton's mission.

The historiographical debate

The role that confessionalism and religion played in English foreign policy has lain at the center of the historiographical debate over how and to what extent religion shaped English identity as part of a broader Protestant community and thus influenced its political objectives. Moving away from the idea that Elizabeth I was rather indifferent to religious matters and that national security, in political terms, was the sovereign's central concern[3], recent studies have considered her commitment to the Protestant cause and the presence of religious matters in her and her advisers' political calculations[4]. Foreign affairs under Elizabeth I were strongly influenced by religious concerns, which was reflected not only in terms of actual policies, but also in the motivations and fears that underpinned them. For example, as the studies of M. P.

Thorp and C. Zwierlein show, religious-related fears, like that of a Catholic conspiracy, played a role in the English ruling elite's assessment of political reality[5]. This is not to say that the protection of national security, strategic concerns, and the balance of power were any less important to the English than religion, but these elements of English political reasoning coexisted, and at times influenced each other. In fact, the presence of these sometimes-contradictory priorities, or different political and religious views even within the English court, should not lead observers to adopt a dichotomous view between strategic and confessional interests or to assume Elizabeth's government chose one over the other in justifying lines of action and intervention. Since it is difficult to assume the primacy of one over the other, it is more fruitful to see these two elements as sometimes contrasting, sometimes overlapping[6]. The Queen or her advisers at times doubted or opposed active confessional policies, which makes it necessary to assess carefully whether the first years of Elizabeth I's reign can be seen as reflecting a "Protestant program of action"[7]. This is because the reasons that shaped English foreign policy appear multifaceted since, at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, the religious sphere was deeply intertwined with the dynastic and political problems that Elizabeth I faced[8]. In the context of religious wars, considering the protection of faith not only as an objective but also as an opportunity to solve dynastic and national security problems, and to develop new models of action and political cooperation in order to do so, allows for a more effective approach to the challenges that have emerged from the analysis of English foreign policy during these early religious conflicts. Furthermore, the opportunities offered by religious conflicts in Scotland and France should also be seen as an opportunity for political experimentation that requires seeing Elizabeth's early interventions also as attempts to pursue new lines of confessional actions.

These coexisting factors led the Queen to take an active role in both the rebellion of the Lords of the Congregation in Scotland and in the first French Wars of Religion. The political and religious challenges that Elizabeth I faced at the beginning of her reign required the development of policies to ensure internal and external security that also addressed the new difficulties and opportunities that religious division presented. The religious conflicts that erupted in Scotland and France provided the Queen with an opportunity to experiment with new forms of political action by considering whether and how to support Protestants in other countries. Drawing on P. Benedict's volume *Season of Conspiracy* and on É. Durot's analysis of the transnational dimension of the Franco-Scottish Protestant rebellions[9], the present research argues that England saw the Scottish and French struggles deeply intertwined as the English perceived these wars as different fronts in a single struggle for its security and the maintenance of its international role, as well as from the perspective of the broader reformed consciousness that was developing in the same period. However, the novelty of moving from active warfare to the support of internal, confessional groups to solve political problems and to help fellow religionists, must be fully addressed also in terms of the contradictions, difficulties, and uncertainties it created. First, the Scottish rebellion and the first French war of religion, although linked in some respects, also differed profoundly, and must be each appreciated in their own right. Secondly, at least at the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth I was reluctant to openly support subjects rebelling against their legitimate rulers. She wished instead to present herself as a

supporter of fellow Protestants fighting for their liberties, a distinction that was made possible in Scotland and France thanks to her propagandistic agenda[10]. The importance of legitimizing the Queen's actions internationally led her both to help shape the propaganda of the Lords of the Congregation and to incorporate many of the themes of the Huguenots' declarations and pamphlets into her own proclamations. The theoretical and legal framework that allowed her to act was thus embedded in a Protestant propagandistic discourse adapted to England's specific needs. To understand this, it is necessary to assess how Scottish and French Protestant propaganda shared some common features and to consider how certain ideas from France and Scotland were adopted or transformed in England. Although there are few studies on the reception of French political thought in the country[11], and most of them focus on the later period of confessional struggles, especially on the reception of the Catholics' League propaganda[12], in recent years a number of specific studies have appeared on the reception of certain French or Genevan texts by English intellectuals and politicians[13]. Thus, this research aims to trace the circulation and reception of foreign ideas in England and to explore how these ideas influenced English political thought and practices. By examining various sources, including pamphlets, letters, and official documents, this study seeks to shed light on the mechanisms through which Scottish and French ideas were disseminated and adapted within the English context. Additionally, it will analyze the role of key figures and institutions in facilitating or obstructing the flow of these ideas.

The focus of this research is on English involvement in the first French war of religion. Foreign powers, supporting both confessions, were involved in the French religious struggles. England's role in supporting the Huguenots has been extensively analyzed by the most recent studies on religious wars[14], and had also been examined in general studies on Elizabeth I's reign; on the political reasoning of her counsellors, such as William Cecil[15]; or in more detailed analysis on specific aspects of English participation[16]. However, the early phase of England's involvement in the French religious troubles has only been addressed in terms of financial or military support or by assessing the failed attempt to recapture Calais during the First Religious War, while the diplomatic sphere of England's foreign policy has not received an in-depth study of the French embassy, even though it is crucial to understanding the early years of Elizabeth's reign. Thus, this research uses diplomacy as a lens to examine the major developments in English foreign policy and international relations during the First War of Religion.

This study must therefore address a fundamental issue: the role of religion in shaping diplomatic relations. As R. Anderson and C. Beckerra stressed in their volume *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*, religion is important "in defining not only the collective identity of international actors, but also their foreign policies, choice of alliances, and more generally their international outlook"[17]. A growing literature analyzes the role religion played in shaping diplomatic practice, giving particular attention to the individuals who were involved in this operation[18]. D. Riches has noted that the "historiographical separation of early modern diplomacy from the intellectual, cultural, and religious contexts in which it was embedded is insupportable", suggesting "a focus on the diverse range of individuals involved in crafting a diplomatic

relationship 'on the ground' to recapture these elements"[19]. As for the historiographical debate on English foreign policy, instead of attempting to disentangle secular and spiritual concerns in ambassadors' minds, it proves to be more efficient to put the individuals involved in the diplomatic practice at the center of the analysis, uncovering how their political views, religious sensibilities, and socio-cultural background influenced their policymaking. The Elizabethan diplomatic corps "did not comprise detached commentators of the international scene, but on the contrary partisans, whose strong religious and political views influenced their observations and opinions"[20]. As diplomats played an essential role in building transnational and confessional forms of alliances, in establishing a network through which political and religious concepts could circulate, and in providing the Queen with the necessary information on which to base her policy, it is crucial to analyze ambassadors' political and religious views and how these views could vary profoundly based on the individual carrying out the diplomatic activity.

Thus, this research focuses on the embassy to France of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton since, though essential in the understanding of the period, he had been overlooked by historiography. Despite Throckmorton's centrality to Elizabethan politics, his embassy has rarely been the subject of close analysis. Except for the article dedicated to him in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, some articles by S. Walsh in *History Today*[21], and a series of unpublished dissertations, in particular a PhD dissertation written by C. Carson in 1973[22], his political biography and embassy have yet to be studied in depth on the model, for instance, of the study carried out by T. A. Sowerby on Sir Richard Morison[23]. This lacuna persists despite his successor, Sir Thomas Smith, and one of his closest collaborators, Henry Killigrew, receiving scholarly attention in the 1960s[24]. Furthermore, in recent years, diplomacy in the French Wars of Religion and the ambassadors who were involved in the first outbreaks of religious conflict have received new attention, in works such as the D. Potter's editions of the letters of Paul de Foix and Michel de Seure, French ambassadors in London[25]. Therefore, this research aims to close the historiographical gap on Throckmorton's embassy by adopting the methodological approach of the *new diplomatic history*.

Methods

In the development of English foreign policy and its elaboration of new modes of political intervention, diplomacy played an essential role in building confessional alliances, in establishing a network through which political and religious concepts could circulate, and in providing the Queen with the necessary information on which to base her policy. Because of English diplomacy's roles not just as conduits of information to the Queen and her government, but also as nodes in networks through which political and religious ideas could travel, the men involved in such an operation were not merely political actors but also cultural intermediaries, whose careers, political views, and social spheres significantly influenced their conduct and decisions. This research therefore aims to address diplomacy as a social and cultural practice, following the methodological insights from the *new diplomatic history*[26]. The present work will analyze the relationships between religion, political thinking and subjectivity, considering the latter as influenced by the ambassadors' political views, religious sensitivities, cultural backgrounds, and

social status. In this respect, this study stands within a lively historiographical debate whose name, "new diplomatic history," refers not only to a different and cross-disciplinary approach and use of diplomatic sources, but also to new questions that can be posed to this type of source.

An emerging theme in this historiography is the difficulty of distinguishing between the public and private spheres in diplomatic practice, as the boundaries between these realms were often blurred by the overlapping roles of diplomats who navigated both personal interests and state directives, intertwining their own social networks, familial connections, and individual motivations with the official duties they performed on behalf of their governments[27]. In this sense, diplomacy was profoundly influenced by the individual who carried it out, since "the social actors of the early modern period escape the grid of professional classifications and rigid identities: their profiles are shaped by multiple aptitudes and skills, articulated in a multifaceted prism of identity that cannot be flattened into a rigid physiognomy"[28]. While some of the different political attitudes of diplomats can be traced back to the instructions they received and the interests of their sovereign, there are other crucial factors in understanding their missions and political vision. In fact, even within the diplomatic corps of the same state, the readings and narrations of events, the construction of information networks, and the adoption of certain political visions, which also lead to modes of action, were highly variable, showing the necessity of understanding the position of each ambassador to understand his political views. As stated above, various lenses of analysis and identity coexisted in diplomats' minds, resulting in the overlap of various elements ranging from political and courtly affiliations to religious sensitivities, as well as considering family bonds, cultural landmarks, and hopes of social advances.

For the purposes of this study, therefore, it is particularly relevant to approach diplomacy from a social perspective. This viewpoint includes different aspects of the social framework in which ambassadors were embedded: the mechanisms through which ambassadors were able to construct their information-gathering networks based on personal acquaintances, opportunism, and religious or political affinities; and the position of the ambassador in the foreign court, determined by his personal contacts, and how this position influenced diplomats' actions, codes of behavior, and letter-writing. The former has been at the center of scholarly attention, in particular with regard to how the ambassador's household was constructed and managed in its function as a representation of power abroad, as well as a place of information exchange and social promotion[29]. In fact, the study of the careers and social backgrounds of the ambassador's secretaries, servants, or assistants, as well as the ways in which each was linked to the diplomat and which tasks they performed, provides a vivid picture of the day-to-day running of the embassy and of the behind-the-scenes operations that contributed to the diplomats' missions[30]. The ambassadorial household must be understood as a space for diplomats to build their socio-political networks, to strengthen personal ties, and sometimes to reintegrate individuals into the socio-political fabric of the state through their intercession at court. Ambassadorial letters, in this sense, emerge as an important means of social uplift and a way of getting back into the good graces of the sovereign. The social, day-to-day, and representative aspects of diplomacy must also address actors who have remained almost silent, such as diplomats'

wives, by analyzing their specific forms of communication and political practice[31]. Lady Throckmorton fully participated in her husband's mission, speaking to the Queen about her husband's revocation, corresponding with sovereigns and courtiers, and creating female-specific networks of information-gathering, reinforced by diplomatic courtesies and gift-giving practices.

Furthermore, a vital aspect of the analysis covers how Throckmorton created his news-gathering network, as the collection and reporting of information was his primary goal[32]. Ambassadors had many ways to procure the information they needed. In addition to personal observation, ambassadors relied on contacts internal to the foreign court to which they were sent to provide them with news that was difficult to gain by other means. These sources could range from other ambassadors to the personalities at court who were politically or religiously interested in sharing information and communicating with foreign diplomats. The creation of such links particularly reflects ambassadors' ability to make such contacts, to identify the most valuable allies, and to exchange information with other diplomats. In a confessional context, the identification of potential interlocutors in the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé becomes apparent from the earliest stage of Throckmorton's embassy. Furthermore, diplomats relied on a wide network of unofficial informers who did not have any institutional role[33]. News and information could arrive from friends, merchants, and a variety of other figures all connected to the ambassador or to the English sovereign through bonds of friendship, affinity with the same faction, loyalty to the Queen, hope for reward, and religious affinities[34]. What is particularly relevant for the scope of this research is the role of diplomats in shaping and contributing to English foreign policy through their personal contacts and interactions with political and religious leaders, highlighting a transnational and confessional dimension of communication. As "the spread of heterodox religious movements also produced new social ties centering around common religious identities and grievances [...] ties often crossed regional, class, and even state boundaries"[35], this research aims to reconstruct the growing development of diplomatic networks, assess whether it is possible to see an evolution of their confessional base over time, and evaluate the extent to which individual ambassadors could influence it.

Throckmorton's position at the English court and his relationship with the Queen also profoundly impacted his diplomatic mission, letter-writing, and behavior. His bond with the Queen, based on a reciprocal relationship of *fidelitas*, is vital in understanding his mission as, due to his closeness to Elizabeth I, he perceived himself more as a detached advisor of the Queen than a simple ambassador. He believed that the young Queen needed to be counselled and tutored, which helps to explain his way of presenting information to Elizabeth I and how he put forward his political ideas[36]. He used a series of rhetorical strategies with her to guide her along certain political lines and to give her his sometimes overt and sometimes subtle advice, which needs to be fully analyzed[37]. Furthermore, Throckmorton's courtly connections, based on political bonds, friendship, and patronage, were pivotal during his embassy[38]. In addition to the Queen's favor, his political position was determined by his long-standing connections with the most powerful men of the Elizabethan court, such as William Cecil and the Earl of Bedford[39]. For instance, Throckmorton's friendship and cooperation with Cecil

is one of the most solid foundations of his position at court, for Cecil trusted Throckmorton and even gave him a great deal of political responsibility, asking for his advice and suggestions and informing him of what was happening at home during his embassy. Along with Cecil, Throckmorton corresponded with other courtiers such as the aforementioned Earl of Bedford, Robert Dudley, and others with whom the ambassador adopted different tones of writing based on their closeness, political affinity, and personal acquaintance. Thus, it is crucial to assess how this social and courtly sphere was reproduced in the ambassador's correspondence, as recent studies of the rhetorical strategies and social significance of diplomatic correspondence have shown the multi-layered character of early modern information[40]. The ways in which news is narrated and selected, the different rhetorical strategies adopted according to the recipients, and the practical actions of the ambassadors should also be understood as manifestations of the political and social position of each diplomat[41]. Moreover, considering dispatches as sites of political and social self-construction is a meaningful way to understand their complexity. This approach not only highlights the intricate nature of diplomatic communication but also underscores the ambassador's role as a key player in the broader political landscape, whose writings and decisions were deeply intertwined with the power dynamics and cultural norms of the time.

It is also essential, in the context of the Wars of Religion, to assess how the ambassadors' religiosity influenced their political views, thereby identifying the development of English religious identity as a further element of analysis. From a spiritual point of view, the plurality of religious ideas in England, which raised expectations of further reforms by the sovereign in religious matters but also led to a more conservative approach to the religious settlement, was also reflected in diplomats' political thinking. This can be seen not only in the adoption of certain policies, but also in the ways in which religion provided models for interpreting the surrounding world from a providential point of view. For instance, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton has generally been described by historiography as a "hot-gospeller" whose religious militancy deeply influenced his policymaking[42]. However, the framework emerging from his correspondence proves to be far more complicated. On the one hand, a providential framework clearly emerges from his letters, especially when writing to William Cecil, with sentences such as "God trieth us with many difficultees"[43]. He kept close ties with a variety of religious leaders who, for instance, kept him informed of the proceedings of the Colloquy of Poissy, and he was also an avid reader of religious literature, as his library demonstrates. On the other hand, his religious position appears to be more conservative than generally acknowledged, as shown especially by some of his letters in which he criticized John Jewel's *Apology of the English Church* because "as well answered the [Calvinists] and suche as be greyved with retaynyng so many ceremonies yn the Churche of England" as he had "the papists wyche ar offendyd with taking away so many"[44]. He also proved to be inclined to the conservation of homilies in the English church. Thus, it is necessary to re-consider the role religion played in the diplomat's mind. Even though he often referred to a religious and providential framework in his correspondence, suggested confessional-based lines of policy, and constantly reported the situation of fellow Protestants in France, his confessional position seems to be more elusive than historiography has so far described.

Throckmorton's personal faith is thus adopted by the research as a crucial interpretative paradigm of English diplomacy in this period with the goal of assessing how religion provided a general framework for foreign policy, considering that the way in which this was translated into action profoundly varied among ambassadors, who did not always share the same providential understanding of politics and were more inclined to give precedence to other concerns[45].

The religious and social spheres must, however, be placed within a broader intellectual framework within which ambassadors gave meaning to the reality around them. The analysis of the upbringing and thus the *forma mentis* of the English governing elite, of which diplomats were a part, has become, thanks to the studies of S. Alford and N. Jones on the figure of William Cecil and T. Sowerby on Richard Morrison, to be a fruitful field of investigation to understand the cultural lens through which events were interpreted[46]. On this basis, this research aims to grasp the cultural background of the ambassadors, by assessing their education, which encompassed to both the canonical curriculum of the English ruling class and the ideal characteristics of humanist ambassadors[47]. The English ruling elite shared a similar educational background, based mostly on the study of classical literature, rhetoric, history, and philosophy, and these models were seen as perfectly suitable for interpreting the politics of their time[48]. Throckmorton's solid humanist education gave him the ability to converse, write, and use rhetorical strategies to convince his audience, but also to interpret his role from an ethical and moral point of view[49]. His readings provided a solid foundation for his actions and words, with his dispatches reflecting those cultural landmarks can be found as well as the application of their teachings and ideals. Assessing the presence of a classical culture of reference and the employment of historical, literary, and mythological examples will be crucial to understanding the theoretical and practical framework through which ambassadors thought about their role, politics overall, and international relations.

Sources

The main sources are the letters sent and received by the English ambassadors to France between 1559 and 1564, most of which are preserved in The National Archives (TNA). These include not only the official correspondence between the ambassador and the Queen, her secretary, and the Privy Council, but also his letters to a variety of personalities who participated to varying degrees in his mission. He exchanged a great deal of correspondence with the other English ambassadors sent to the court of Philip II or to the Empire, thus creating a European network of information exchange, fueled by other informers in Italy, France, and various other countries[50]. Many of his contacts with key figures at the French court have also survived, shedding light on his relationship with his host court. These letters provide invaluable insights into the dynamics of Anglo-French relations and the ambassador's role in navigating the complex political landscape of the French court. Moreover, his letters to the King of Navarre, the Prince of Condé, and other leading Huguenot figures help to outline the early contacts between the ambassador and the Huguenots, providing an insight into the religious and political alliances that were forming during this turbulent period. Finally, letters were also received from or sent to a variety of other people, often

English subjects asking for some sort of favor, informers, intellectual or religious personalities, or Throckmorton's own relatives[51]. These letters are extremely rich because they combine "public" information with "private" concerns, as official dispatches often include personal matters. This more personal correspondence therefore offers a unique window on Throckmorton's career that can be studied from a variety of angles. The aim of this research is to reveal and acknowledge the complex world these writings encompass, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of early modern diplomacy and the intricate web of relationships that underpinned it. The TNA does not, however, contain all of Throckmorton's correspondence. Many of his letters are held in various archives, notably the British Library, which need to be included as they contain important documents such as Throckmorton's personal letters[52]; his correspondence with the Queen[53]; letters with the Earl of Bedford, Dudley, and others[54]; and his travel expenses during his special mission from 1563 to 1564[55].

In addition to this primary corpus of analysis, which focuses on the years of his diplomatic mission, other sources can help reconstruct the diplomat's life and career. His life before his appointment as ambassador, as well as his family history, can be pieced together from various sources, despite some remaining ambiguities. A certain degree of interest has arisen from the Throckmorton's family, as the volume *Ralegh and the Throckmortons* by A. L. Rowse shows, and information about Sir Nicholas' father, brothers, and wider family can be traced from various sources and works[56]. The first source that helps uncover Throckmorton's early life, which needs to be used carefully due to a series of inaccuracies, is *The Legend of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton*, a somewhat epic poem about Throckmorton's life, allegedly written by his nephew Thomas[57]. Due to the difficulty presented by this source, it has to be complemented with the primary documentation left about his early life at court[58], his political career[59], and his trial under Mary Tudor[60]. The last, in particular, had been recently addressed in an article entitled "The Trial of Nicholas Throckmorton" by A. Patterson and has recently received scholarly attention both for its importance and Throckmorton's adept use of eloquence and legal knowledge during his defense[61]. Another essential document which, for its relevance, had been already edited and studied is "Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's Advice to Queen Elizabeth on Her Accession to the Throne," in which Throckmorton, one of her closest supporters, gave her his advice particularly on the new appointments she needed to make at her accession[62]. Further details about Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's life and legacy come from his son Arthur's diary, a valuable source also for Throckmorton's family after the death of Sir Nicholas[63].

Sir Arthur Throckmorton, other than his diary, left another important source for studying his father's intellectual, religious, and political background: his library, of which his father's library composed the core and which is not held at the Old Library of the Magdalen College (Oxford)[64]. Despite a reference to a copy of *The Prince* of Machiavelli owned by Throckmorton in A. Petrina's work on the reception of Machiavelli in the British Isles and T. Sowerby's comment on Throckmorton's copy of *The Prince* in her *Renaissance and Reform in Tudor England,* this collection has yet to be studied[65]. For the objectives of this research, the examination of the books contained in the diplomat's library and of his annotations will be essential. It is difficult to distinguish which books belonged to the library of Sir Nicholas, as all of the volumes

present Arthur's signature or monogram while just a few bear the monogram 'NT,' which indicates Sir Nicholas' ownership. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace information about some of these volumes in the diplomat's dispatches. Furthermore, some of these volumes contain a variety of religious and political pamphlets, together with French edicts and legislation, which enable us to reconstruct how the diplomat was informed and, as can be seen in his correspondence, influenced by Huguenot propaganda and French religious discussions and literature. In this respect, it is important to consider the religious and political literature that Throckmorton sent to the English court, which has proven to be a valuable source for the of study the first French War of Religion, and to compare these texts with English and Scottish propaganda to fully grasp how these bodies of work were connected by some shared propagandistic points[66] .

Finally, the study of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's diplomatic career is complicated by the vast quantity and diversity of the available sources, including extensive correspondence and personal writings. To address the challenges of managing and cataloguing these materials, informatics tools have been employed to create a digital database. This database enables the categorization of letters by content, topic, provenance, and date, facilitating a more efficient analysis. Additionally, this database supports advanced methods such as network analysis to map the circulation of letters, as well as statistical tools to examine the recurrence of concepts or terms. Despite these tools, paleographic challenges and the inherent limitations of the sources still require careful and critical interpretation to fully grasp Throckmorton's influence and the broader diplomatic context of the period. Moreover, the analysis of Throckmorton's library and its annotations, while promising, is complicated by the overlap between his and his son's collections and the limited information about the ownership of individual volumes. These challenges underscore the need for a meticulous and critical approach in reconstructing Throckmorton's mission.

Conclusion

This research explores the intricate relationship between religion and diplomacy during the early years of Elizabeth I's reign, focusing on the role of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton's embassy in shaping English foreign policy during the first French War of Religion. By examining the intersections of political culture, religious identity, and diplomatic practice, this study analyses how the introduction of confessional elements into international relations influenced the scope and conduct of English diplomacy. Throckmorton's mission, as a case study, reveals the intricate interplay between personal beliefs, political allegiances, and the broader strategic interests of the Elizabethan state. Thus, this research highlights the importance of considering the individual diplomat's socio-political background, religious sensibilities, and personal networks in understanding their role in the broader diplomatic landscape. Furthermore, analysis of Throckmorton's embassy sheds light on the evolving nature of diplomatic practice in the context of religious wars, where the lines between public and private, secular and spiritual, were increasingly blurred. By bridging the gap between diplomatic history and religious studies, this research will open new opportunities for

exploring the role of individual diplomats in shaping the course of international relations in a period marked by profound religious and political transformations.

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