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DISHONORABLE AMBASSADORS? SPIES AND SECRET DIPLOMACY IN OTTOMAN ISTANBUL*

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In the sixteenth century, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans clashed for the dominance of Europe and the Mediterranean and engaged in a global rivalry that affected every polity along the shores of the Mediterranean. This essay concentrates on the diplomatic negotiations between two imperial capitals, Istanbul and Madrid, during the second half of the sixteenth century, at the height of the Ottoman–Habsburg Rivalry. It seeks to demonstrate how the lack of open diplomatic relations between two empires and the absence of resident ambassadors in each other’s capitals provided a special case for the study of espionage in the sixteenth century Europe and the Mediterranean.

Several studies have emphasized the role of diplomats in information gathering and demonstrated the intertwined nature of diplomacy and espionage.¹ Enjoying the

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1 Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris, 1990, 116–117; Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia*. 2nd ed. Milano, 2010, 197–209; David Salinas, *Espionaje y gastos en la diplomacia española (1663–1683) en sus documentos*. Valladolid, 1994, 15–47; Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685*. Cambridge, 1994, 244–278; Alain Hugon, *Au service du Roi Catholique ‘honorable ambassadeurs’ et ‘divins espions’: Répresentation diplomatique et service secret dans les relations Hispano-Françaises de 1598 à 1635*. Madrid, 2004, 122–130; Carlos Carnicer – Javier Marcos, *Espías de Felipe II: los servicios secretos del Imperio español*. Madrid, 2005, 49–58; Jean-Michel Ribera, *Diplomatie et espionnage: Les ambassadeurs du roi de France auprès de Philippe II: Du traité du Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) à la mort de Henri III (1589)*. Paris, 2007, 181–221; Martial Martin, ‘Ambassadeurs, espions et complotteurs espagnols et ‘espagnolisés’ dans les libelles de la Ligue (1584–1598)’, in Béatrice Perez (ed.), *Ambassadeurs, apprentis espions et maîtres complotteurs: Les systèmes de renseignement en Espagne à l’époque moderne*. Paris, 2010, 243–257; Jean-Michel Ribéra, ‘Contradictions et rivalités: Les ambassadeurs du roi de France et le réseau de renseignements espagnols au temps de Philippe II’, *ibid.*, 293–312; Emrah Safa Gürkan, ‘The Efficacy of Ottoman Counter-Intelligence in the Sixteenth Century’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 65:1 (2012) 16–19; Idem, *Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean: Secret Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman–Habsburg Rivalry*. PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2012, 114–119; Idem, *Sultanın Casusları: 16. Yüzyılda İstihbarat, Sabotaj ve Rüşvet Ağları*. İstanbul, 2017. An ambassador provides information not only for his own government; at times he shared (and, needless to say, manipulated so that it fit his own agenda) information with the hosting government, the best

privileges granted by their diplomatic immunity, no matter how imperfectly states observed their status in the sixteenth century, early modern ambassadors operated as network leaders or spymasters; the best examples of which were the Venetian ambassadors in Istanbul and Rome or the Habsburg ambassadors in Venice and Genoa.² These honorable spies, *honorable espions*,³ recruited spies and informants, corrupted government officials, related rumors in the marketplace, eavesdropped in diplomatic and social circles and facilitated the transmission of gathered intelligence as well as payments to be made to information providers.⁴ The early modern

example of which was the relationship between European ambassadors in Istanbul and the Ottoman government. Gábor Ágoston, 'Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry', in Virginia H. Aksan – Daniel Goffman (eds.), *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*. Cambridge, 2007, 83–85; Gürkan, 'Espionage', 405–410. It goes without saying that ambassadors exchanged information with each other as well and thus helped the circulation of information further.

- 2 On Venetian baili's role in information gathering and its diplomatic consequences, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Laying Hands on *Arcana Imperii*: Venetian Baili as Spymasters in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul', in Paul Maddrell et al. (eds.), *Spy Chiefs. Volume 2: Intelligence Leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia*. Washington, D.C., 67–96; Idem, 'Il bailaggio e la diplomazia d'informazione fra Venezia e Istanbul', *Θησαυρισματα / Thesaurismata: Bollettino dell'Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini* (forthcoming).
- 3 The term was coined by François de Callières, a writer and a diplomat in Ludovican France, see his *De la Manière de négocier avec les souverains. De l'utilité des négociations, du choix des ambassadeurs et des envoyés et des qualités nécessaires pour réussir dans ces emplois*. Amsterdam, 1716, 30: "We call an ambassador an honorable spy [*honorable espion*], because one of his primary responsibilities was to discover the secrets of the Courts where he was and he fails his duties if he does not make the necessary spending on those who could inform him" (translation of the author). The two doyens of early modern intelligence studies, Lucien Bély and Paolo Preto used the term as well (the latter resorting to its Italian translation, *spia onorata*), Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs*, 116; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, 197.
- 4 Their extracurricular activities were not confined to the realm of information; they fully participated in secret diplomacy. They organized clandestine operations to kidnap or remove undesirable or harmful elements from enemy territory; they thus engaged also in counter-intelligence. Some even plotted against the ruler in whose country they were guests. For instance, in 1583, Bernardo de Mendoza, the intransigent Habsburg ambassador in London, participated in a plot led by Francis Throckmorton to overthrow the queen. When Walsingham's counter-intelligence managed to discover Mendoza's participation in the plot, the Habsburg ambassador was declared *persona non grata* and was given, in an ironically friendly conversation, fifteen days to leave the kingdom. Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia española*, vol. 6, *La diplomacia de Felipe II*. 2nd ed. Madrid, 2003, 178. Another similar example was "the Bedmar Plot". A passionate employer of spies, the Habsburg ambassador in Venice, the Marquis of Bedmar, managed to establish a wide network of spies and informants who provided him, in spite of the Venetian *Inquisitori di Stato*'s vigilant eyes, with crucial information during his tenure (1606–1618) which coincided with a deterioration of relations between Venice and the Habsburgs. When the *Serenissima* realized the *Congiura di Bedmar*, however, her tolerance for ambassadors' intelligence networks gave way to indignation and the ensuing international crisis paralyzed relations between Venice and Madrid even further. According to this plan proposed by Bedmar and the Duke of Osuna, the Viceroy of Naples, Habsburg agents would torch the Arsenal and the Mint, *zecca*, deflect Dutch soldiers

ambassador was not only an information broker but also a part of the information processing and thus, by extension he participated in the decision-making process. Even though modern scholarship tends to focus on diplomats as negotiators, their role as reporters left a bigger trace in the archives. They were experts on the political culture, institutions and customs of the capital in which they served. Therefore, central governments paid attention to their opinions and comments on acquired intelligence. Even though non-permanent Ottoman diplomats could not offer their services with the quality and efficiency of their Venetian and Habsburg colleagues,⁵ we still do know that during their temporary stay in foreign capitals they used the occasion to gather as much information as possible.⁶

In other words, diplomacy often absorbed espionage. However, this relationship between diplomacy and espionage could as well be vice-versa. By concentrating on how entrepreneurial spies took on diplomatic tasks, this paper aims to accentuate the diplomatic function of espionage, a function which was not given due attention.

Due to the absence of resident ambassadors in each other's capitals, both the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had to use spies and information brokers in order to ensure communication between each other. To a certain extent, Austrian ambassadors solved this problem, especially before the breakup of Charles V's patrimony in 1556. However, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the diplomatic gap between Madrid and Istanbul could not be covered by the intermediation of other states and their representatives. The problem of communication and correspondence was solved by spies who eagerly undertook further responsibilities in pursuit of financial gains, sometimes employed from the center and sometimes with their own initiative. These agents of secret diplomacy that brokered information between the two empires did more than just carrying information; they also rendered necessary channels of communication and cooperation between imperial elites by not only engaging in espionage, but also serving in other capacities such as diplomats, ransom agents, merchants, interpreters, etc. No matter the extent to which they lacked proper training or *decorum* required by diplomatic finesse and despite the authorities' constant criticism and suspicions

in the city and attack the *Palazzo Ducale* with the Habsburg fleet that would arrive from Naples. Amidst the swift persecution of Habsburg spies implicated in the plot, the Habsburg ambassador also took its fair share of authorities' outrage and populace's fury. Although still claiming his innocence, Bedmar fled the city in order not to jeopardize the relations further and moved to Milan where he waited for the royal order for his transfer to the Low Countries. See Preto, *I servizi segreti*, chapter 7.

5 According to "Graphique 3" in Alain Hugon, *Au service du Roi Catholique*, 123, there is an abyss between permanent ambassadors' contribution to information gathering (61.6% of all the information remitted to the capital) and those of extraordinary ambassadors who came with a specific mission and left the capital after a short visit (only 2.4%). See also *ibid.* 129.

6 Preto, *I servizi segreti*, 98–99. See also Gürkan, 'Espionage', 397–399 and Idem, *Sultan'ın Casusları*, 133–147.

of ill-will,⁷ these spies appeared to be the closest thing to a representative. Relationship between the governing elites of both empires was undertaken thanks to the intermediary role of these semi-official representatives.

Following the Habsburg defeat in the Battle of Djerba (1560) and the influx of Italian and Spanish prisoners-of-war to the Ottoman capital, the Habsburgs realized both the urgency of acquiring updated information on military preparations in the Ottoman Arsenal and the opportunity created by the existence of numerous Habsburg subjects in Istanbul. Therefore, they changed the modus operandi of their intelligence gathering in the Levant: instead of ad-hoc agents who undertook seasonal trips from Messina and Naples to Ottoman lands in order to gather information, they decided to rely on resident agents and invest in a permanent network of spies and informants.⁸

In the mid-1570s, both empires were apparently neither willing nor able to continue their costly imperial struggle; therefore, a diplomatic formula had to be found to overcome the political impasse. In the western half of the Mediterranean, the Habsburgs failed to take advantage of their victory at the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Financially exhausted and with their military resources employed in the North, it seemed unlikely that they were going to pursue an aggressive policy in North Africa and even less likely in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the east, the Ottomans were exhausted as well. The outbreak of war with the Safavids in 1577 would tie their hands and they would stand idle when Philip II acquired the Portuguese crown and refrain from seriously investing in the French Wars of Religion despite the Habsburg bid for the French throne. Even though some Ottoman grandees, first and foremost the Grand Admiral Uluc Ali and his "Mediterranean faction" that consisted of high-profile corsairs and the people of the Arsenal,⁹ never reconciled with the idea of a long-term truce with the Habsburgs,¹⁰ Ottomans were not in a position to resume this burdensome struggle.¹¹

What they needed was a honorable peace that was in accordance with their "imperial claims," that is, in explicit humiliation of the other party who would have to be reduced to sending an envoy to the Threshold of Felicity and asking for a

7 Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), *Papeles de Estado* (hereafter *E*) 1064, fol. 61 (23 December 1574); *E* 1329, fol. 57 (2 June 1571); *E* 1061, fol. 3; *E* 1064, fol. 61 (21 September 1574); *E* 1140, fol. 97 (20 May 1573); fol. 98 (9 November 1571); *E* 1500, fol. 60 (12 June 1571).

8 We do not need to give details regarding the activities of the Habsburg intelligence in Istanbul, an issue which I covered in my dissertation. Gürkan, 'Espionage', 264–344.

9 On this faction and their efforts to manipulate Ottoman decision-makers to invest in war in the Western Mediterranean, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Fooling the Sultan: Information, Decision-Making and the 'Mediterranean Faction' (1585–1587)', *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 45 (2015) 57–96.

10 Gürkan, 'Espionage', 301–302.

11 Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Osmanlı-Habsburg Rekabeti Çerçevesinde Osmanlılar'ın XVI. Yüzyıl'daki Akdeniz Siyaseti', in Haydar Çoruh et al. (eds.), *Osmanlı Dönemi Akdeniz Dînyası*. Istanbul, 2011, 44–50.

truce.¹² One of the basic tenets of Ottoman diplomacy vis-à-vis the Habsburgs was to compel them to send their diplomats to Istanbul, an act which they thought was a sign of submission. In harmony with the Ottoman imperial ideology, this was an effort to claim the superiority of the eternal "Empire," the heir to the Roman throne, and to delegate other claimants such as Charles V, to the status of kings, that is, those who received their crowns from the dispenser of the crowns, the Ottoman sultan.¹³ However, Charles V skillfully dodged the danger of recognizing Ottoman

12 Given that in early modern world honor was implied by reciprocity, the Ottoman Sultans' refusal to reciprocate European sovereigns' dispatch of a resident ambassador could be read as an Ottoman declaration of universal kingship. The Ottoman worldview that put Istanbul at the center of the world and the sultan at the highest position in the hierarchy of world's rulers preferred a unilateral diplomacy while dealing with foreign powers. According to this, opening up diplomatic talks for peace or establishing a permanent embassy in the court of another prince was to accept him as an equal and thus unacceptable. It was other rulers who had to keep a permanent agent in Istanbul. In a similar vein to Ottoman vassals or governor-generals did, these rulers should send their envoys to the Porte whose doors were open to anyone who came to ask, in humility, to be included among the friends of the sultan (*âsitâne-i sa'âdet-üvvânımız mesdûd olmayup inâyet-i hakk celle ve alâ ile dâimen mekşûf olup etrâf u cevânibde eğer dostluğa ve düşmanlığa kimesne geliüp gimesine men ü redd yokdur*). This Ottoman attitude became a thorn in Ottoman-Habsburg relations. During endless negotiations for an Ottoman-Habsburg truce between 1578 and 1581 and later throughout the 1580s for its renewal, one of the main points of contention was that the Ottomans insisted that Philip II should send an official ambassador who would enter Istanbul with a pompous celebration, thus announcing the world of his arrival. Despite promises, Philip II skillfully refrained from doing so, because a similar mentality prevailed in Madrid as well. Sending an ambassador to start negotiations for a peace was a proof of weakness and entailed a loss of prestige that the Catholic King, no matter how badly he was in need of a peace in the Mediterranean, was unwilling to accept. The idea that one would lose reputation and honor by opening diplomatic talks for a truce was shared by others than the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. According to what the Polish ambassador reported to the Venetian bailo Lorenzo Bernardo, the English ambassador argued that Philip II "lowered himself so much by sending ambassador to ask for a truce," (*si era tanto abbassato, che ha mandato qui un suo Amb.r a domandar le tregue a questo Sig.r*) who had to return, in spite of presents worth thousands of *scudi*, empty handed, *senza conclusione alcuna*. ASV, SDC, fil. 25, c. 374r (10 June 1587).

13 Such diplomatic gestures should by no means be considered trivial. The issue of *intitulatio*, for instance, was a serious aspect of the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry. In Ottoman diplomatics, there was a clear distinction between the Ottoman emperor, the sole ruler of the world, and several other "kings". The title of "king" was also used for the very person of Emperor Charles V, "the king of Spain". The Ottoman Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, for instance, addressed him as the "*roy d'Hispaignes et des terres dépendantes audict Hispaignes*". Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, 'Autour d'une Correspondence entre Charles Quint et İbrahim Paşa', *Turcica* 15 (1983) 234. In another document dated 28 June 1533, preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, a similar title was used: "*Siz ki vilâyet-i İspanye ve ana tâ'bi olan yerlerin kralı Karlo*." Bibliothèque nationale de France, Supplément Turc, no: 816, cited by M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, 'Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu ve Bizimle İlgili Diğer Belgeler', *Belgeler: Türk Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 5-8 (1968-1971) 115. This is in accordance with the Ottoman claim that there should exist one emperor as there exists one God. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*. İstanbul, 1990, vol. 5, 93. It was not uniquely an Ottoman practice to insist on denying other sovereigns equal titles in an effort to employ the

superiority and publicly entering into an impious alliance, *impium foedus*. He refused to send an official envoy and tried instead to have himself included in the negotiations between the Ottomans and his brother and lieutenant in the East, Ferdinand I. When he sent an envoy, such as Cornelius Duplicius Schepper or Gerhard Veltwyck, these officially appeared as Ferdinand's envoys rather than the Emperor's.¹⁴

Still, as the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry lost steam and both empires needed a break in the 1570s, a more durable solution had to be found. The absence of a diplomatic representative forced both sides to negotiate through go-betweens who mastered the cultural codes of both empires and weaved dense network of patronage across capitals. Their hybridity and in-betweenness enabled them to establish trans-imperial connections and appear as ideal brokers between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. In a spirit of entrepreneurship, these boundary-crossers unsurprisingly took advantage of their privileged position in between different cultures and offered their services to central governments as information brokers, agents of secret diplomacy (sabotage, defection, fomenting dissidence, etc.) and finally unofficial diplomatic intermediaries.

The Ottomans attempted to lure Philip II into sending an official ambassador to Istanbul in 1575 by using one of his agents in the city. A former slave of the Ottoman Grand Admiral Uluc Ali named Jaime Losada arrived in the Ottoman capital, disguised as a ransom agent, while in fact his real mission was to spy for the Habsburgs and convince Uluc Ali to defect to the Habsburg side in exchange for hereditary titles and lavish financial rewards.¹⁵ Although refusing the offer, Uluc welcomed him warmly and even secured an audience with the Ottoman Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha by advertising his former slave's expertise in Habsburg affairs. Sokollu asked Losada to intervene in a dispute with the Maltese knights over an Ottoman ship whose Christian slave rowers mutinied and fled to Malta. When during the conversation the issue came to the possibility of a truce, both Sokollu and Jaime were quick to realize the opportunity. Ironically, by introducing his former slave to the grand vizier, Uluc Ali had inadvertently paved

imperial prestige in the implementation of their grand strategy. An interesting speculation that requires a more extensive study: The Ottomans could have (willingly or unwillingly) adopted this from the Byzantines of whom they considered themselves the legal heir. To the Ottomans, Charles V was what Charlemagne was to the Byzantines: a usurper of the imperial title and a staunch rival. One could see a similar attitude in Byzantine palace protocol in negotiations with the envoys of lesser barbarian rulers. See *De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae*, a tenth-century book on ceremonial procedures in Constantinople, generally attributed to the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, in *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. Johann Jakob Reiske. Bonn, 1829, 679–692.

14 Ochoa Brun, *Historia*, 452–453.

15 For Habsburg attempts of assassination and bribery targeting the Ottoman Grand Admiral, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'My Money or Your Life: The Habsburg Hunt for Uluc Ali', *Duelo entre colosos: el Imperio Otomano y los Habsburgos en el siglo XVI*. Salamanca, 2014 (Studia Historica. Historia Moderna 36) 121–145.

the way for negotiations of an Ottoman-Habsburg truce which he would later adamantly oppose, marshaling all the resources at his disposal. The grand vizier told Losada that if Philip II sent a diplomat to the Sultan, he would be welcome and well-treated. Losada showed an impressive acumen and aptness in diplomacy, arguing against a possible tribute and refusing to say something binding. Moreover, he quickly socialized in diplomatic circles of the Ottoman capital by befriending Venetian, French and Imperial ambassadors. Even though he soon set sail in order to relay the message to the Habsburg authorities, he died in Otranto before completing his mission, fortunately leaving behind a detailed report thanks to which these pages could be written. It was one of his men who went to Naples and informed the viceroy.¹⁶

The prospects of an Ottoman-Habsburg truce through the intermediation of Habsburg spies in Istanbul resurfaced two years later, this time with the instigation of Habsburg spies, rather than that of the Ottoman authorities. The Habsburgs sent a former war captive named Don Martin de Acuña¹⁷ to Istanbul in order to negotiate the ransom of certain prisoners-of-war and torch the Ottoman Arsenal,¹⁸ one of the objectives that the Habsburg secret service could not achieve in spite of repeated attempts in previous two decades.¹⁹ When de Acuña arrived in the Ottoman capital,²⁰ Aurelio Santa Croce, the spymaster and the leader of the Habsburg intelligence network in the city, was waiting for him, having already done the necessary arrangements. He warned de Acuña and the three men he brought along to be careful and not leave the house; Aurelio should have feared that one among numerous Christians and renegades strolling in Pera might recognize them. Unfortunately, his warnings fell on deaf ears and one of de Acuña's men decided to take a promenade. It did not take long before a Greek renegade named Esteban, who had run away from Naples, converted to Islam and entered Ottoman service, recognized de Acuña's man and had him apprehended by the janissaries. When he confessed under

16 AGS, E 1072, fol. 14 (10 December 1575); Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), *Senato, Dispacci, Costantinopoli*, (hereafter SDC), fil. 11, fol. 12 (23 March 1577).

17 For a detailed monograph on this shady character of the Mediterranean borderlands, see Javier Marcos Rivas and Carlos Carnicer García, *Espionaje y traición en el reinado de Felipe II: la historia de vallisoletano Martín de Acuña*. Valladolid, 2001. Fernand Braudel wrote one of his few articles on the suspicious death of de Acuña in a Spanish dungeon. "La Mort de Martin de Acuña, 4 Février 1585", in Maxime Chevalier – Robert Ricard – Noël Salomon (eds.), *Melanges offerts à Marcel Bataillon par les hispanistes français*. Bordeaux, 1962, 3–18.

18 AGS, E 1072, fol. 177 (28 August 1576).

19 For these attempts, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Fitilin ucunda Tersane-yi Amire', in Feridun Emecen – Emrah Safa Gürkan (eds.), *Osmanlı İstanbulu I: I. Uluslararası Osmanlı İstanbulu Sempozyumu Bildirileri, 29 Mayıs – 1 Haziran 2013, İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi*. İstanbul, 2014, 43–70.

20 He arrived on 24 February 1577, under the pretense of negotiating the ransom of prisoners-of-war, ASV, SDC, fil. 11, fol. 2 (9 March 1577). He was travelling with the passport of another Habsburg agent, Antonio Avellán. The latter had obtained it during his third visit in Istanbul in 1576. AGS, E 1074, fols. 6, 102, 104 (3 January 1577), 105 (16 January 1577), 106 (21 January 1577), 107 (27 January 1577), 108 (5 March 1577).

torture, the panicked de Acuña and Santa Croce came up with a remarkably creative story. Evoking the memory of Jaime Losada's mission, Santa Croce contacted the Palace Dragoman Hürrem Bey, already on Habsburg payroll with 500 ducats per annum since 1573,²¹ and claimed that de Acuña was the long-awaited envoy that Philip II was to send to the Ottoman capital.

Upon hearing Aurelio's story, Hürrem seemed compliant. He asked whether de Acuña brought a safe-conduct or a letter of credence (*carta de credencia*) from the king; such a reference would ease the minds of the Ottomans who had just caught three Habsburg spies, one of whom confessed that they had come with their boss. Always wearing several professional hats, Aurelio this time plunged into the role of a counterfeiter. He immediately forged a letter of credence by placing the name of the grand vizier on the letter that Philip II had originally written to the influential Jewish power broker Joseph Nasi²² in recognition for his services to the crown. He also came up with the story that de Acuña arrived secretly in order not to diminish Philip II's reputation by publicizing his mission and that the three men who were caught were his guides and most definitely not enemy spies. With Hürrem's intermediation, the issue was quickly resolved. Having acquired the necessary clothes worthy of a Habsburg diplomat and a suitable present for the grand vizier,

21 AGS, E 1071, fol. 189.

22 A wealthy Jewish banker with connections with European royal families, Joseph Nasi finally settled in Istanbul after many years of wandering in Europe, escaping Catholic persecution. He quickly became a close confidant of the Ottoman Sultan Selim II who made him the duke of Naxos, i.e. gave him the governorship of the newly conquered Dodecanese Islands. An important figure in factional politics, he was the arch-rival of Grand Vizier Sokollu and the instigator of the War of 1570–1573 between the Ottomans and Venice (later the Christian Holy League). He employed several spies who sent him information from all parts of Europe and the Mediterranean. Contemporaries attributed, unjustly, the great fire in the Venetian Arsenal in 1569 to these spies. He also had extensive commercial relations and financial investments throughout the Mediterranean. He died in Istanbul in 1579. For his biography, see Cecil Roth, *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos*. New York, 1948; Paul Grunebaum-Ballim, *Joseph Nasi: Duc de Naxos*. Paris, 1968; Constance H. Rose, 'New Information on the Life of Joseph Nasi Duke of Naxos: The Venetian Phase', *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 60:4 (1970) 330–344; Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, volume XVIII: The Ottoman Empire, Persia, Ethiopia, India and China*. 2nd ed. New York, 1982, 84–109. For his activities in the Habsburg service, see Norman Rosenblatt, 'Joseph Nasi, Friend of Spain', in Izaak A. Langnas – Barton Sholod (eds.), *Studies in Honor of M. J. Benardete (Essays in Hispanic and Sephardic Culture)*. New York, 1965, 323–332; AGS, E 1072, fol. 232. and E 1071, fol. 191 (5 March 1577). Also see: David Kaufmann, 'Don Joseph Nassi, Founder of Colonies in the Holy Land, and the Community of Cori in the Campagna', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 2:3 (1890) 291–310; Idem, 'A Letter from the Community of Pesaro to Don Joseph Nassi', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 4:3 (1892) 509–512; Cecil Roth, 'Joseph Nasi, Duke of Naxos, and the Counts of Savoy', *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Series* 57 (1967) 460–472. For his activities as a spymaster who furnished the Ottomans with information, see Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Touting for Patrons, Brokering Power and Trading Information: Trans-Imperial Jews in Sixteenth-Century Constantinople', in Emilio Sola Castaño – Gennaro Varriale (eds.), *Detrás de las apariencias. Información y espionaje (siglos XVI–XVII)*. Alcalá de Henares, 2015, 132–136.

Aurelio quickly prepared de Acuña for an audience with Sokollu. The contented grand vizier assured his inclination towards a truce and sent de Acuña back to his king.²³

It is hard to ascertain to what extent the Ottomans were convinced of this story. First of all, we have to remind the prevalent suspicion among some Habsburg officials as well as other spies that Aurelio was an Ottoman agent.²⁴ Thus, Aurelio might be working in cooperation with Sokollu and that the afore-mentioned story, based on Aurelio's and de Acuña's letters, was a fabrication, a ruse to induce the Catholic King to send an ambassador to Istanbul.

It could alternatively be argued that Aurelio and de Acuña genuinely came up with this plan hoping to save their skins. If this was the case, three possibilities arise. The Ottomans could have decided to use the occasion even though they were not convinced of Aurelio's story. As long as it ensured the arrival of an official ambassador from Madrid, they would have had no reason to complain. Grand Vizier Sokollu was a proponent of an Ottoman–Habsburg truce in the Mediterranean and he might have intended to play along in order to overcome the resistance of the war party, i.e. the “Mediterranean faction,” led by Grand Admiral Uluc Ali who advocated a bellicose policy in the Western Mediterranean. Alternatively, even though they realized that de Acuña was the employer of the three spies that they caught, the Ottomans might not have seen a contradiction. After all, do we not call these ambassadors “honorable spies”? Finally, the Ottomans might have simply believed Aurelio's story. His story would not have been outlandish given the frequency with which in the sixteenth-century states employed unofficial intermediaries who lacked the qualifications of an official diplomat. The fact that, only a couple of days following de Acuña's audience with the Ottoman grand vizier, the Venetian bailo was convinced that he was sent by Philip II to negotiate a secret treaty furthermore illustrates the potential credibility of Aurelio's story.²⁵

Be that as it may, the negotiations for an Ottoman–Habsburg truce commenced under these rather unorthodox circumstances. Having secured an armistice, a *suspensión de armas*, for a year, de Acuña returned to Naples with the mission of informing the authorities that the Ottomans consented to an incoming Habsburg ambassador.²⁶ Nonetheless, the first crisis having been dodged, it was not long before another followed. As de Acuña failed to show up, the Ottomans, already uneasy because of rumors of a possible Habsburg participation in the Portuguese king Sebastian I's campaign against Morocco, grew restless. Their suspicion forced

23 AGS, *E* 1071, fol. 191 (5 March 1577).

24 AGS, *E* 1144, fol. 212.

25 ASV, *SDC*, fol. 11, fol. 2 (9 March 1577).

26 For Istanbul's orders to local judges, corsairs and port masters (*iskeleler eminleri*) that “*Don Martine nam adem dört nefer adem ile*”, de Acuña and four of his men should be escorted and not be molested on their way to and from Madrid, and that no attack should be undertaken against the Pugliese coasts, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (hereafter BOA), *Mühimme Defterleri* (hereafter *MD*), XXX, nos. 76 (H. 28 M 985, A.D. 17 April 1577) and 78.

Aurelio to resort to counterfeiting once again; he would forge two more letters, one for the grand vizier and one for the dragoman Hürrem, testifying to the illness of Martin de Acuña. Unable to write in Spanish, he had one of Uluc Ali's slaves translate his version to proper Spanish. He then dismantled the Prudent King's seals in other letters and put it on the new ones. Convinced by this fraud, Sokollu decided to send a second person to Naples, which ended up being, thanks to the dragoman Hürrem's instigation, none other than Aurelio himself!²⁷ Aurelio would not return and the negotiations would go on with the participation of other figures sent by the Habsburg authorities,²⁸ but his role as the instigator of the truce is clear.

As could easily be seen, Aurelio, a factotum and an opportunist Mediterranean go-between *par excellence*,²⁹ quickly invested in another trade, that of diplomacy. He proved himself to be a master entrepreneur and an apt broker who continually improvised to find new means of survival and further his own interest in the world of secret diplomacy. Apart from the connections he established among the Ottoman officials over the years thanks to Habsburg money, he relied on his experience in Istanbul politics. Versant in the rules and customs of negotiating in the Ottoman capital, his creativity and audacity rendered him as an ideal negotiator mediating two worlds and connecting Madrid, Naples and Istanbul.

This was by no means an isolated incident where unofficial intermediaries dealt with diplomacy in the Ottoman capital. In 1539, the interpreter-cum-diplomat³⁰ Yunus Bey, resorted to the services of a friend from his native Modon, Antonio de

27 AGS, E 1071, fol. 197. For Sokollu's reply to one of these fake letters, see E 1073, fol. 135. For Ottoman order to governors, local judges, corsairs and port officials that "*Sante Kroje nam zimmi*," Aurelio Santa Croce, who was sent to Spain to handle some important issues, "*bazi mesalih-i milhimme*", should not be molested, see BOA, MD, XXXI, fol. 49 (H. 28 R 985 / A.D. 8 December 1577). It is interesting to see that the Ottomans were not less tightlipped than the Habsburgs when it came to revealing information about truce negotiations to local authorities. For other similar orders for the provisioning of postal horses to "*Civani Itefano ve refikleri*", Giovanni Stefano Ferrari and his companions, see BOA, MD, XXXIII, nos. 560 (both H. 27 Za. 985 / A.D. 4 February 1578) and 637 (H. 18 Z 985 / A.D. 25 February 1578).

28 The details of negotiations for an Ottoman-Habsburg truce has been studied in detail, first by Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2nd ed. Paris, 1966, vol. 2, 439-450; then by Susan Skilliter, "The Hispano-Ottoman Armistice of 1581", in C. E. Bosworth (ed.), *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*. Edinburgh, 1971, 491-515; and finally by Maria-Jose Rodríguez-Salgado, *Felipe II, el "paladín de la cristiandad" y la paz con el turco*. Valladolid, 2004.

29 A Venetian merchant who settled in 1552 in Istanbul, he was engaged in a wide range of activities other than trading: brokering information, leading an intelligence network, proposing clandestine operations such as sabotage and ransoming Christian slaves, etc.

30 Ottoman interpreters or *dragomans* were experts in diplomacy and had a significant role in the conduct of foreign affairs. They were sent to the West as ambassadors (Yunus Bey for one went to Venice six times, see Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore: inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*. Venice, 1994, 40-44 and Appendix I), and allowed to negotiate directly with foreign diplomats in the Ottoman capital, one example being the negotiations between Hürrem Bey and Giovanni Margliani for a truce between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs.

Modone, who came to Adrianopolis to ransom some family member. Yunus advised him to tell the Venetians that they could send an ambassador to ask for a truce.³¹ In 1559, it was the merchant-cum-spy Francesco de Franquis who carried a similar message from the Ottomans for the Habsburgs.³² Likewise, there were rumors that the Ottomans entrusted the Habsburg spy Michel Černović with the task of instigating truce negotiations with Philip II.³³ Exactly around the same time when Aurelio opened up the truce negotiations, a certain Pietro Amanati, known by his nickname Moreto among merchants, arrived in the Ottoman capital with letters from the Grand Duke of Tuscany who was seeking the right to trade for his subjects secured by an *'ahdname*, i.e. a capitulation. Clinging to his privileged background and education, the Venetian bailo Giovanni Corraro rebuked this former prisoner-of-war. The analphabet Amanati was not suitable for such a mission as he was not a *"huomo di negocio,"* but a little soldier, *"soldatello,"* who was engaging in things that were beyond his capacity, such as claiming while entering the Ottoman lands to be a French envoy carrying important letters for Sokollu.³⁴ Although he did not meet Correr's criteria, he successfully negotiated in Istanbul, defending aptly his master when the issue came to the corsairs of St. Stefano that operated under the aegis of the Grand Duke and convincing Sokollu to accept a resident ambassador, a *bailo*, from Florence.³⁵

The truce of 1581 between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs were the products of lengthy relations (1578–1581) between grand viziers and Giovanni Margliani, a former prisoner-of-war whom the Habsburgs sent unofficially and in a temporary capacity. As the promised Habsburg ambassador Juan Rocafull never arrived, the Ottomans had to negotiate with this "one-eyed" go-between whom they scorned because of his personal background and lack of official status. Even though they still insisted that Philip II should send an official ambassador, the Ottomans had to negotiate the renewal of the truce in 1584 and 1590 with another Mediterranean go-between, Giovanni Stefano Ferrari who replaced Giovanni Maria Renzo (d. 1577), the founder and the spymaster of the Habsburg intelligence network in Istanbul. Ferrari was not only an unofficial diplomat; he also assumed Renzo's responsibilities and used his travels between Madrid, Naples and Istanbul in order to carry information, letters, wages and instructions from the Habsburg authorities to

31 AGS, *E* 1314, fols. 126, 131 (16 March 1539). ASV, *Consiglio dei Dieci, Parti Segrete*, (hereafter *CX-ParSec*), reg. 4, cc. 111v–112r (14 March 1539).

32 AGS, *E* 1323, fols. 232 (6 October 1559), 243–244 (20 January 1559) and 281 (8 April 1559).

33 This rumor that was related by the Venetian bailo Daniele Barbarigo [ASV, *SDC*, fil. 4D (5 February 1564)] is credible since the Ottomans treated this agent who had been sending information to the Habsburgs for years exceptionally well. They not only refused to hand him down to the Venetian bailo, saving him from Venetian prosecution, but also gave him a safe-conduct, assuring the cooperation of local authorities while leaving the Empire.

34 ASV, *SDC*, fil. 11, fol. 148r–149r (17 June 1577), 154v–155r (18 June 1577); Emilio Sola Castaño, *Uchalf: El Calabrés Tiñoso, o el mito del corsario muladí en la frontera*. Barcelona, 2011, 255–256.

35 ASV, *SDC*, fil. 11, fol. 168r–168v (2 July 1577).

the network and supervise its activities.³⁶ In 1593, when Carlo Cicala arrived in Istanbul to spy for the Habsburgs and to visit his brother, the Ottoman Grand Admiral Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha, the rumor was that he came to negotiate a truce.³⁷ It is not certain whether this was true or not; but it is evident that Carlo saw himself more than a spy; in spite of his lack of appropriate credentials, he refused for instance to walk in after the French ambassador and be seated in an inferior seat during the Venetian ambassador's banquet.³⁸ In 1614, an *alferez* named Pedro Munez Montefrio, originally sent to the Ottoman Empire by the Emperor Mathias to arrange the ransoming of certain Hungarian *cavalleros*, negotiated a truce on behalf of Philip III with the Ottoman grand vizier.³⁹ Finally, in 1630, Iuseppo da Mesina, a spy-cum-courier-cum-friar from Naples, was entrusted with the task of secretly negotiating with the grand vizier to prevent the Ottomans from dispatching a fleet against Puglia and Calabria.⁴⁰

It was not only during direct political negotiations that central governments needed spies as unofficial intermediaries. Although the two empires were continuously fighting with each other, among the governing elites instances of courteous relations were many. First of all, in spite of the lack of direct diplomatic channels, there was still correspondence between Habsburg and Ottoman grandees. For instance, in 1548, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, then the Ottoman Grand Admiral, sent a letter to his colleague, the viceroy of Sicily Juan De Vega to congratulate him on the recently signed truce between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs and offered his respect to Emperor Charles V whose hands he would like to kiss.⁴¹ A correspondence between the Ottoman sultan and Don Juan after the Battle of Lepanto conveys a similar tone of courtesy and esteem.⁴²

An even more astonishing exchange of letters took place between the Ottoman Grand Admiral Cigalazade Yusuf Sinan Pasha, *alias* Scipione Cicala and the viceroy of Sicily, Bernardino de Cardines, Duke of Maqueda, when the former anchored off Messina with the Ottoman fleet and asked the latter for permission to see his mother, brothers and nephews who were living in the city.⁴³ Leaving the curious fact that a

36 For details of these negotiations, see Gürkan, 'Espionage', 291–329.

37 Horatio Brown, ed., *Calendar of State Papers relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, vol. 9, 1592–1603, British History Online, Matheo Zane, June 9, 1593. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=95458>.

38 *Calendar of State Papers*, Marco Venier, May 3, 1594. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=95469>.

39 AGS, E 1168, fols. 59 (22 October 1614), 60 (FES 2423), 61 (H. 15 Cemaziyevvel 1023, A.D. 23 June 1614), 62.

40 AGS, *Inquisitori di Stato* (hereafter *IS*), b. 148, fol. 41 (6 July 1630).

41 AGS, E 1118, fol. 105. (24 June 1548).

42 AMAE, *Mémoires et document divers: Originaux et copies du XVIe et XVIIe siècles sur la période de 1520 à 1648*, fols. 40–42; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, *Collezione Capponi*, cod. CLXXIII, pp. 41–44, reproduced in Spanish in Sola, *Uchalí*, 194–197.

43 AGS, E 1158, fols. 186 (1 October 1598) and 187 (15 letters between the grand admiral, his family and Habsburg authorities dated September 1598).

renegade Ottoman grand admiral stopped with the entire Ottoman fleet to visit his mother in Christian waters aside, the friendly tone in the letters as well as an apparent elite consciousness between the viceroy and the grand admiral is indicative of the usualness and frequency of such correspondence. Apart from a courteous correspondence, there was also a shared perception of *decorum*, traditions and customs between imperial elites, evident from the indignation of Cigalazade when he was asked to send his son as a hostage against his mother. The renegade pasha managed to reverse the decision by evoking the memory of favors granted in the past to Habsburg aristocrats by the Ottomans, such as Suleiman I's decision to liberate Sancho de Leyva, the father of Pedro de Leyva, Sicily's *general de las galeras*, without asking for hostages. He also accentuated good relations between the houses of Cicala and Leyva and pointed out to the fact among the imperial elites, precautions that hinted distrust were not the norm for they "who do the profession of honor" ("*che fanno professione di honor*") would not break their words.

Scipione wrote to the viceroy that he did not expect a "*cusi dura risposta*" and pointed out that leaving his son as a hostage would delay him on his voyage back to Istanbul, a just complaint given that it was the end of the sailing season. He also assured that he would not have thought of asking for hostages in a similar situation. The Habsburgs accepted Scipione's arguments, "believing and esteeming his word as it should be, due to his "*estado y discrecion*" which was an obligation for "*los grandes hombres*" ("*creiendo y estimando su palabra como se deve a su estado y discrecion que conoze las obligaciones de los grandes hombres*").

Secondly, several clandestine operations functioned in such a way that it linked the political elites of the two empires. It was a custom in the Ottoman capital to give presents to dignitaries in order to attain certain diplomatic ends.⁴⁴ This should have convinced the Habsburgs to extend their patronage to the Ottoman elites some of whose members they kept on their payroll. The list included the influential members of the Ottoman governing elite such as Grand Vizier Mustapha Pasha,⁴⁵ the former governor-general of Algeria, Mehmed Pasha (the son of the famous corsair Salih Reis, himself a governor-general of Algeria),⁴⁶ the members of the Ottoman

44 This custom could not be more observable and easily documentable than it is in the Ottoman-Venetian relations. A quick look to the ASV, *CX-ParSec* (or a more thorough one to *SDC*) would demonstrate the frequency of the practice of giving presents to Ottoman dignitaries who themselves did not shy from directly requesting them. This practice enabled European diplomats to become a part of Ottoman factional politics and help them curry favor in a system where money and gifts were of utmost importance for accumulating political power and receiving promotion. Thus, Ottoman grandees sought to enrich themselves by using their offices, because they needed financial capabilities to improve their career by currying favor with presents and bribes given to higher officers, palace factions and the Sultan. This is what I call the *Zeitgeist* of early modern Ottoman politics. See Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Mediterranean Go-Betweens and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560-1600', *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015) 107-128.

45 AGS, E 1337, fols. 161 (18 June 1580), 162 (3 July 1580), 167 (7 August 1580).

46 AGS, E 488, Mehmed Pasha to Philip II (21 June 1576).

bureaucracy such as the dragoman Hürrem Bey⁴⁷ and influential lay figures in the Ottoman capital such as Joseph Nasi, David Passi and Doctor Salomon Ashkenazi.⁴⁸

Thirdly, there were several instances which prove the possibility of changing employers for imperial elites. Examples of defection negotiations between the imperial elites are many. Secret negotiations between the Habsburgs and prominent figures from every aspect of the Ottoman state structure, (renegade vs. free-born Muslim, *Enderun*-educated vs. self-made), even though almost none of these came into fruition, demonstrate that such a move between imperial elites was at least considered possible and thus worthy of negotiation.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Ottoman elites entered into similar defection negotiations with important political and military figures on the other side of the political spectrum, as was the case with Christophe de Roggendorf, a hereditary grand master of Austria, who found employment in the Ottoman palace without conversion.⁵⁰ Most of the time, they invited them to Islam. The newly enthroned Ottoman sultan, Mehmed III took a close interest in Carlo Cicala, for instance. The sultan offered him the opportunity to follow his brother the Grand Admiral's footsteps and convert in order to become a fully-fledged member of the imperial elite. A man of his quality had a lot to offer to the Empire.⁵¹ Even though he refused to convert, his brother still secured him the governorship of the Aegean Archipelago (Naxos).⁵² His was not the only example of a renegade member of the Ottoman elite bringing his kin to his side.⁵³

47 AGS, E 1082, fol. 193 (1 July 1580).

48 For the activities of Hürrem, Ashkenazi, Passi and Nasi for Habsburg secret and open diplomacy, see Gürkan, 'Touting for Patrons.' Suffice it here to call attention to two letters that Philip II wrote to Hürrem (AGS, E 1082, fol. 194) and Ashkenazi (fols. 195), in recognition of their services for the crown. Both documents were dated 1 July 1580.

49 For a summary of the negotiations between Charles V and Barbaros Hayreddin Pasha, renowned corsair and the Ottoman Grand Admiral, see Carlo Capasso, 'Barbarossa e Carlo V', *Rivista storica italiana* 49 (1932) 169–209. For those with his successors, see Adrien Berbrugger, 'Négociations entre Hassan Agha et le comte d'Alcaudete, gouverneur d'Oran, 1541–1542', *Revue Africaine* 9 (1865) 379–385; Gürkan, 'My Money or Your Life.'

50 After a dispute with Charles V, he entered the Ottoman service as a *müteferrika* in the palace. After having realized that his career would not take off without conversion, he ran away from Istanbul, only to be caught on the way and brought back to the capital for prison. The French ambassador d'Aramon saved him and Roggendorf entered French service where he served Henry II, Charles IX and Henry III. Christine Isom-Verhaaren, 'Shifting Identities: Foreign State Servants in France and the Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Early Modern History* 8:1–2 (2004) 130–132.

51 AGS, E 1344 K 1675, fol. 44 (30 April 1591); E 1158, fols. 53 (15 June 1595), 55 (30 March 1595) and 62 (10 May 1595).

52 ASV, IS, b. 460, 25 July 1600.

53 Antonio Fabris, 'Hasan "il Veneziano" tra Algeria e Costantinopoli', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5 (1997) 59–61; Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, 'Veneziani a Costantinopoli alla fine del XVI secolo', *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 15 (1997) 67–84; eadem, 'Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy', *Turcica* 32 (2000) 9–31, esp. 20–23; Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean*. Baltimore, 2011, Chapters 1 and 2.

Fourthly, one area in which imperial elites came into frequent contact and favored each other was the exchange of slaves. The practice of ransom put both elites into contact because elite prisoners-of-war generally ended up at the hands of the other side's elites. The latter sought to preserve for themselves these prestigious slaves with the hope of large sums of ransom payments. The fact that prominent people that constituted the human capital of both empires were regularly exchanged and ransomed points to a certain level of mutual understanding and institutionalization of networks of trust. In the Ottoman capital, spy-cum-ransom agents negotiated the ransom of several important Spanish/Italian nobles from the hands of the Ottoman elites, with notable exceptions of Scipione Cicala and Diego Pachego, both of whom were young enough to be inducted to the Ottoman palace. Likewise, Ottoman elites who fell captive at the Battle of Lepanto were ransomed and therefore escaped the unfortunate fate of the Ottoman sailors who were executed rather than ransomed, a decision taken in order to debilitate the Ottoman navy by depriving it of its hard-to-train human capital.⁵⁴

To conclude, members of the ruling elites had to cooperate to a certain extent even when they were running rival empires. In this picture of great complexity and profundity, cultural barriers and religious differences, although still decisive to a certain extent, failed to prevent communication, conspiracy and cooperation between these elites and cross-confessional diplomacy between two nemeses. Secret diplomacy as an institutionalized practice and spies as a professional group actively fostered cooperation and provided necessary channels of communication.

In the absence of open diplomatic negotiations, spies and informants on enemy payroll became precious commodities for decision-makers. Relying on their trans-imperial background, their familiarity with both governing circles and the webs of personal and political ties they wove over the years, they successfully positioned themselves as liaisons between capitals. Their services and contributions were so crucial that without their efforts the diplomatic gap between the two empires and its elites could not have been bridged and the unofficial relations between two empires, essential even among the parties in perpetual conflict, would not have been possible.

54 This was a standard practice in the Christian West. Throughout the Middle Ages, elites ransomed their elite captives and murdered foot soldiers taken prisoner. Kings could intervene directly about a key prisoner, as was the case of Charles, the Duke of Orléans, and Henry V of England – who, on his deathbed, made his brother, soon-to-be-regent, swear never to release Orléans until the infant Henry VI had reached adulthood. Moreover, the scarcity of fisheries in the Mediterranean made it hard to recruit sailors.