



Vol 24, No. 1 (2025)

Research Article

Diplomatic Alliance Procession Between Elizabeth I with Murad III Amidst European Tensions (1583-1603)

Muhammad Sholikhul Hadi

Keluarga Mahasiswa Pelajar Pati

E-mail: hady3478@gmail.com

Submitted: July 28, 2025; Reviewed: Oct 8, 2025; Accepted: Oct 11, 2025

Abstract: A unique diplomatic alliance once existed between the Tudor Kingdom of England under the leadership of Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant, and the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Sultan Murad III, a Muslim, at the end of the 16th century AD. This alliance was a mutually beneficial relationship between two nations that emerged amid religious and political tensions in Europe, following Queen Elizabeth I's excommunication from the European Catholic Church by Pope Pius V through the papal bull, *Regnan in Excelsis*, for converting her kingdom's ideology to Protestantism. In a situation of isolation and threat from Catholic powers, particularly King Philip II of Spain, Queen Elizabeth I instead forged a strategic partnership with the largest Islamic power at the time, the Ottoman Empire, to weaken Catholic hegemony in Europe. This study highlights the alliance process between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III amid religious and political tensions throughout Europe using an international relations approach, the concept of diplomatic alliance, and Hans J. Morgenthau's theory of realism. The research method employed is historical research, which consists of heuristics (source collection), verification (source criticism), interpretation (source analysis), and historiography (historical writing). The findings of this study describe that the diplomatic alliance process officially began in 1583 AD, with the dispatch of William Harborne as the official British ambassador to Constantinople to obtain special privileges from Turkey. This relationship also aimed to weaken European Catholic hegemony, open trade routes through capitulation, and establish a network of British consuls in Turkish territory. This diplomatic alliance between two ideologically distinct worlds was pragmatic and flexible, yet it was shaped by dynamics arising from changes in British ambassadors, diplomatic competition, and internal political shifts in Turkey.

Keywords: International Relations; Diplomatic Alliance; Queen Elizabeth I; Sultan Murad III; Capitulations

Abstrak: Hubungan Aliansi diplomatik yang unik pernah terjalin antara Kerajaan Tudor Inggris di bawah kepemimpinan Ratu Elizabeth I, seorang Protestan, dengan Kesultanan Turki Utsmani di bawah kepemimpinan Sultan Murad III, seorang muslim pada akhir abad ke-16 M. Aliansi ini merupakan hubungan mutualistik antara dua negara yang terjadi di tengah ketegangan agama dan politik di Benua Eropa, setelah Ratu Elizabeth I mengalami pengucilan dari Gereja Katolik Eropa oleh Paus Pius V melalui bulla kepausan, *Regnan in Excelsis*, karena mengubah ideologi kerajaannya menjadi Protestan. Dalam situasi isolasi dan ancaman dari kekuatan Katolik, terutama dari Raja Philip II dari Spanyol, Ratu Elizabeth I justru menjalin kerja sama strategis dengan kekuatan Islam terbesar saat itu, Kesultanan Turki, guna melemahkan hegemoni Katolik di Eropa. Penelitian ini menyoroti proses aliansi yang terjadi antara Ratu Elizabeth I dengan Sultan Murad III di tengah gejolak ketegangan agama dan politik di seluruh Eropa dengan menggunakan pendekatan hubungan internasional, konsep aliansi diplomatik, serta teori realisme oleh Hans J. Morgenthau. Sedangkan untuk metode penelitiannya menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah yang terdiri dari heuristik (pengumpulan sumber), verifikasi (kritik sumber), interpretasi (penafsiran sumber), dan historiografi (penulisan sejarah). Temuan dalam penelitian ini menggambarkan bahwa prosesi aliansi diplomatik dimulai secara resmi pada tahun 1583 M, dengan mengirim William Harborne sebagai duta besar resmi Inggris ke Konstantinopel, guna memperoleh hak istimewa dari Turki. hubungan ini juga bertujuan melemahkan hegemoni Katolik eropa, membuka jalur perdagangan lewat kapitulasi, dan membentuk jaringan konsul Inggris di wilayah Turki. Aliansi diplomatik antara dua dunia ideologi yang berbeda ini, bersifat pragmatis dan fleksibel, namun diwarnai dinamika akibat pergantian duta Inggris, persaingan diplomatik, dan perubahan politik internal Turki.

Kata Kunci: Hubungan Internasional; Aliansi Diplomatik; Ratu Elizabeth I; Sultan Murad III; Kapitulasi

INTRODUCTION

The major dispute between Catholics and Protestants had a significant impact on political dynamics across the European continent. The Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther in 1517, became a major catalyst for the great schism within Christianity.¹ Protestant groups rejected the authority of the Pope and certain Catholic teachings, ultimately leading to the emergence of Protestant kingdoms, including the Tudor Kingdom of England.²

Before Elizabeth I ascended the throne in 1558, Tudor England was under the rule of Queen Mary I, a Catholic who sought to restore the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church after the previous Protestant Reformation. Queen Mary succeeded in restoring the mass and strengthening relations with the papacy.³ This led to the oppression of

¹ Nugroho, "The Protestant Reformation and the French Religious Wars," *Journal of Religious Studies* 20, No. 1 (June, 2019): 69–85.

² Jerry Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*, (New York: Viking, 2016).

³ Lorraine Attreed and Alexandra Winkler, "Faith and Forgiveness: Lessons in Statecraft for Queen Mary Tudor," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, No. 4 (Winter, 2005): 971-989.

Protestants, including the burning of those considered heretics. This policy forced many Protestants to flee into exile in Swiss Reformation centres such as Zurich and Geneva.⁴

When Elizabeth I succeeded Queen Mary I, the transition was smooth, but some politicians realised that Queen Elizabeth I's reign would mark a major change in the religious and political landscape of England. Queen Elizabeth immediately enacted the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity in 1559, which legally severed England's ties with the Pope and established the Church of England, with Queen Elizabeth herself as its supreme governor. Although she rejected Catholic doctrine, Queen Elizabeth consciously retained traditional liturgical elements such as church music, crosses, and clerical vestments as symbols of political compromise to avoid direct conflict with European Catholic powers and to foster sympathy with Lutheran rulers.⁵

These measures, although seemingly moderate internally, still drew criticism from the Holy Roman Empire, which viewed Queen Elizabeth's government as a form of rebellion against the global authority of the Church. This culminated in the issuance of the papal bull *Regnan in Excelsis* by Pope Pius V in 1570. In the context of this official excommunication, Queen Elizabeth then sought allies outside religious boundaries, including the Ottoman Empire, which at the time was led by Sultan Murad III, who wielded significant influence across Europe. In the bull, the pope declared Queen Elizabeth a heretic and a false queen, and urged Catholics in England not to obey her laws. As a result, Queen Elizabeth's position became increasingly isolated on the European political stage, and she sought to secure her country's position from the threat of Spanish invasion and economic isolation.⁶ This was the primary factor driving Queen Elizabeth to seek allies beyond religious boundaries. Her decision to establish ties with the world's largest Islamic power at the time reflected a shift in diplomatic patterns, from those based on religion to those based on shared interests.

This research is interesting to study because Queen Elizabeth I's diplomatic alliance with Sultan Murad III not only illustrates a political response to pressure from European Catholic powers, but also reveals a complex and carefully considered diplomatic process. This alliance did not form instantly, but rather through a series of negotiations, the dispatch of envoys, the exchange of diplomatic letters, the exchange of gifts, and trade agreements that took place within the dynamics of competition with other nations.⁷ The uniqueness of this diplomatic alliance lies in the fact that two major powers with differing ideologies could establish cooperation through a mature and structured diplomatic mechanism. This relationship demonstrates that, in the context of European tensions at the end of the 16th century, diplomacy was not solely determined by religious affinity but could also be driven by shared interests. Therefore, by thoroughly exploring this diplomatic alliance process, this research aims to enrich the body of knowledge on interfaith diplomatic practices during the medieval era.

⁴ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and region: 1558-1603*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁵ Doran, *Elizabeth I and region: 1558-1603*.

⁶ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

Discussions regarding this diplomatic alliance have been the subject of attention in several previous works. However, research that specifically examines the diplomatic alliance process in a concrete and chronological manner as a response to religious and political tensions in Europe at the end of the 16th century is still limited. Existing literature has mostly explored the background of the alliance, Queen Elizabeth's global relations with the Islamic world, the role of a particular figure, trade aspects, or the symbolism of cross-cultural diplomacy. All of this literature remains relevant for use as references in this research.

One such piece of literature is an article entitled "William Harborne and the Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial Relations" by Arthur Leon Horniker, published in *The Journal of Modern History*.⁸ This article discusses William Harborne as the first British ambassador who played an important role in establishing formal relations between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III.

Next is Tomasz D. Kowalczyk's dissertation entitled "Edward Barton and Anglo-Ottoman Relations, 1588–98" from the University of Sussex.⁹ This dissertation discusses the role of Edward Barton as the second British ambassador who strengthened the foundations of the alliance. However, this dissertation only focuses on one figure, not on the dynamics of the diplomatic alliance as a whole.

Another piece of literature is an article titled "Gloriana Rules the Waves: Or, the Advantage of Being Excommunicated (And a Woman)" by Lisa Jardine, published in *Transactions of The Royal Historical Society*.¹⁰ This article explores a symbolic and ideological analysis of the relationship between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III, emphasising how excommunication by the pope actually paved the way for interfaith and gender cooperation in diplomacy. Although highly interpretative, this literature provides insight into the symbolic context behind the correspondence between the two leaders.

There is literature that takes a more cultural approach, namely Mathilde Alazraki's article entitled "The Queen and the Sultana: Early Modern Female Circuits of Diplomacy and the Consumption of Gendered Luxury Items Between East and West", which discusses feminine diplomacy between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III's concubine, Sultana Safiye.¹¹ This diplomacy was conducted through the exchange of luxury goods and the involvement of a female mediator, Esperanza Malchi. However, this literature focuses too much on formal diplomatic alliances rather than informal and cultural parallel diplomacy.

Meanwhile, an article titled "The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Relations (1580–1603)" by Eda Nur Yavuzaslan maps out the strategic background of the early relations between

⁸ Arthur Leon Horniker, "William Harborne and The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial", *The Journal of Modern History* 14, No. 3 (September, 1942): 289-316.

⁹ Tomasz David Kowalczyk, "Edward Barton and anglo-Ottoman Relation, 1588-98", (Doctoral Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy Programme, Universitas of Sussex, 2020).

¹⁰ Lisa Jardine, "Gloriana Rules The Waves: Or, The Advantage of Being Excommunicated (And a Woman)", *Transactions of The Royal Historical Society* 14, (2004): 209-222.

¹¹ Mathilde Alazraki, "The Queen and the Sultana: Early Modern Female Circuits of Diplomacy and the Consumption of Gendered Luxury Items Between East and West", *Revue française de civilisation britannique* 29, Nomor 03 (2024): 1-12.

Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III.¹² This article explores the pressure from Catholic Spain and England's need for trading allies as triggers for interfaith relations. However, this article focuses more on the initiation phase and does not discuss the alliance process in depth and comprehensively.

The book entitled *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* by Jerry Brotton, later republished in a new edition entitled *The Sultan and the Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*, also discusses England's relations with the Islamic world, including the Ottoman Empire.¹³ However, this book contains a fairly broad narrative of diplomatic and trade relations between England and various Muslim rulers, making it less focused on the bilateral relationship between the two figures. Thus, the discussion of Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III in this book is still not specific enough to explore the diplomatic alliance between the two in depth.

Building on previous research, this study focuses on exploring the diplomatic alliance procession between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III in a factual, chronological, and political context within the framework of bilateral relations. This study places the roles of ambassadors, diplomatic correspondence, excommunication by the pope, and geopolitical factors as part of the construction of the alliance between the two countries in interfaith Europe. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on the diplomatic alliance process as a response to the European crisis at the end of the 16th century AD.

This study uses an international relations approach with the concept of diplomatic alliances and Hans J. Morgenthau's theory of realism. An alliance is a formal or informal collaboration between two or more countries with political objectives.¹⁴ Meanwhile, diplomacy is a political activity that aims to help countries achieve their international policy objectives through communication between official officials without involving violence, propaganda, or oppressive laws.¹⁵ Based on the explanation of these concepts, it can be concluded that a diplomatic alliance is a form of collaboration, whether formal or informal, between two or more sovereign states, formed through political interaction and official communication between diplomatic officials, with the aim of realising each state's interests or foreign policy without relying on violence, propaganda, or legal coercion.

According to Morgenthau, realism theory provides an overview that international politics is essentially a strategy of states to balance power and protect national interests.¹⁶ Thus, in this case, realism theory provides an overview that the alliance between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III was a political strategy of both countries to balance the power of Catholic Europe and protect their respective national interests amid the religious and political crisis in Europe at the end of the 16th century AD.

¹² Yavuzaslan, Eda Nur. "The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Relations (1580-1603)", *Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations* 4, No. 2 (June, 2023): 51-61.

¹³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

¹⁴ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of alliances*, (New York: Cornell University, 1987).

¹⁵ G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

¹⁶ Vinsensio Dugis, *Theories of Onternational Relations: Classical Perspectives*, (Surabaya: PT Revka Petra Media, 2016).

This research falls under the category of qualitative research by applying a literature study. In a literature study, information must be collected from various sources such as books, journals, theses, and other literature. This activity involves reading, recording, and processing data that will be used as the basis for the research.¹⁷ The method used in this research is the historical research method, which includes heuristics (source collection), verification (source criticism), interpretation (source analysis), and historiography (historical writing).¹⁸

In the heuristic stage (source collection), researchers collected sources from books, journals, theses, online articles, and digital archives relevant to the research topic. These sources were obtained from libraries such as UIN Sunan Kalijaga and online websites such as Google Scholar, JStore, and Taylor Francis. In the next stage, verification (source criticism), the researcher uses primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include historical documents such as letters from Murad III to Elizabeth I and a copy of Regnan in Excelsis by Pope Pius V in 1570 AD. Meanwhile, for secondary sources, the researcher refers to Jerry Brotton's book, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*. The verification stage is useful for testing the authenticity (external criticism) and validity of the content (internal criticism) of the various sources that have been collected, by examining all source identities such as the author, year of publication, and comparing the content between sources.¹⁹

Then interpretation (source analysis), this stage is carried out by interpreting data through analysis and synthesis, aiming to explain and integrate information.²⁰ In this stage, the international relations approach with the concept of diplomatic alliances and Hans J. Morgenthau's realism theory is used as an analytical tool in this research. Finally, historiography (historical writing), which is the stage of writing and presenting the results of historical research that has been conducted,²¹ is organised chronologically and systematically, and involves intuition, emotion, imagination, and appropriate language style with a focus on the process of the diplomatic alliance between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III amid European tensions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Initiation of Diplomatic Relations (1578-1580)

The first step in establishing these relations was to send an envoy to Constantinople to obtain trade permits. Queen Elizabeth sent William Harborne, an experienced international trader, as the first British ambassador to Turkey in 1578.²² Harborne departed with Queen Elizabeth's orders and was funded by English merchants. He travelled secretly overland to avoid detection by European Catholic powers, particularly Spain and Venice.²³

¹⁷ M. Zed, *Literature Research Method*, (Jakarta: Obor Indonesia Foundation, 2004).

¹⁸ Dudung Abdurrahman, *Methodology of Islamic History Research*, (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2019).

¹⁹ Abdurrahman, *Methodology of Islamic History Research*.

²⁰ Kuntowijoyo, *Introduction to Historical Science*.

²¹ Abdurrahman, *Methodology of Islamic History Research*.

²² Joel Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607", (Dissertation, Faculty Of History, Universitas of Oxford England, 2022).

²³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

Harborne's journey was indeed advised to take the overland route to avoid attention and sabotage from these European Catholic powers and others like Italy, which were feared to secretly undermine his reputation.²⁴

William Harborne was not merely a merchant; he also worked as an English spy before his departure to the Ottoman Empire. This indicates that his selection as an envoy to Turkey was the result of a strategy devised by England. With the support of Queen Elizabeth and English merchants, Harborne departed for Constantinople in 1578 via land, accompanied by Joseph Clements and a servant. Their route took them through Germany to Poland, where he met his brother-in-law in Lvov (likely an Englishman named John Wright). He also encountered Mustafa Beg, the Turkish diplomatic translator (Ottoman Turkish dragonman) leading the Turkish diplomatic delegation to renew the peace treaty with Poland.²⁵

Harborne's joining Mustafa Beg's entourage was a great stroke of luck for England. By infiltrating the Turkish diplomatic mission, he gained direct access to the Turkish power circle and accelerated his journey to Constantinople. They followed the route previously suggested by Jenkinson in 1561, passing through Moldavia, Romania, and Bulgaria, and finally arrived in the capital of the Ottoman Empire on 28 October 1578. Harborne's arrival in Constantinople marked the first step in the formation of a diplomatic alliance between England and Turkey.²⁶

Harborne's initial encounters with Turkey's highly hierarchical and convoluted political bureaucracy must have been extremely confusing. Harborne corresponded with his Turkish counterparts in Latin or Italian, which was then translated into Turkish, leaving plenty of room for licence and strategic misunderstanding. There were also difficulties in gaining proper formal access to the Turkish court. Harborne's first task was to establish dialogue with the grand vizier Murad, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who was 73 years old. Sokollu, who had Bosnian blood, was a Devsirme who rose quickly through the ranks of the Turkish hierarchy before finally being appointed grand vizier by Suleiman in 1565. It was a testament to his political skill that Sokollu not only survived but also excelled in the role for 14 years under three different sultans. However, at the time of Harborne's arrival, he was locked in a bitter power struggle with Murad's empress, Safiye Sultan.²⁷

Harborne's presence marked the beginning of official communication between Sultan Murad III and Queen Elizabeth I, immortalised in the first diplomatic letter sent by Sultan Murad to Queen Elizabeth in March 1579. The letter was written on behalf of Murad III in Diwani script, using a special variant of Turkish known as Fasih Türkçe, a language often chosen specifically for use in high-level official documents. As a leader who understood the complexities of global politics, Sultan Murad III did not use this letter merely as a form of greeting to Queen Elizabeth, but also slipped in a strategic message that outlined the political and economic interests of the Ottoman Empire. In the letter, Murad

²⁴ H. G. Rawlinson, "The Embassy of William Harborne to Constantinople, 1583-8", *Transaction of The Royal Historical Society* 5, (1922): 1-27.

²⁵ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

²⁶ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

²⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

carefully referred to Elizabeth as one of the 'worshippers of Jesus' and part of the 'Family of Nazareth'. This choice of words was a careful diplomatic strategy, and Murad sought to highlight the similarities between Protestantism and Islam, both of which were opposed to Spanish Catholicism.²⁸ Here is the text of the letter:

*"In greatness and glory most renowned Elizabeth, most sacred queen, and noble prince of the most mighty worshippers of Jesus, most wise governor of the causes and affairs of the people and family of Nazareth, cloud of most pleasant rain, and sweetest fountain of nobleness and virtue, lady and heir of the perpetual happiness and glory of the noble realm of England [Anletār] (whom all sorts seek unto and submit themselves) we wish most prosperous success and happy ends to all your actions, and do offer unto you such pleasures and courtesies as are worthy of our mutual and eternal familiarity: thus ending (as best beseemeth us) our former salutations."*²⁹

At the end of October 1579, Elizabeth sent a reply to Murad and Mustafa Beg's first letter. The opening of her letter to Murad clearly hinted at the superficial similarities between Protestantism and Islam by threatening Christians who falsely claimed the name of Christ. Upon learning that the Turks would grant them special commercial treatment as 'Lutherans,' Elizabeth and her advisors clearly saw the advantage of presenting themselves as religious rulers who rejected idolatry.³⁰

Subsequently, England successfully secured an important agreement with Turkey in June 1580, consisting of thirty-five articles in their capitulation agreement. The treaty granted extensive trading rights to English merchants, including the ability to trade in Turkish territories without restrictions under their own flag. They obtained this treaty despite having to contend with France, which had previously secured these trading rights, but whose influence and prestige in the Levant had diminished since England obtained the capitulation.³¹ On the other hand, from France's perspective, the success of British diplomacy was driven by a cunning strategy involving bribery, and it was claimed that the British had secured the agreement by bribing the late Mehmed Pasha. Although these allegations may have been part of a geopolitical rivalry between France and Britain in the

²⁸ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

²⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

³⁰ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

³¹ This capitulation between England and Turkey proved to be more important than the Walsingham Memorandum of 1578, and lasted for 343 years, until it was finally dissolved under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Republic of Turkey. The treaty began with praise, followed by its contents: "Elizabeth, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, the most honourable queen in the Christian religion, to whom Murad agreed to grant permission to all her subjects and merchants to come peacefully and safely to our empire. They are permitted to bring their goods, conduct trade without hindrance, and use their own customs and rules of trade. This means that English merchants have the right to trade according to their business practices without having to fully submit to Turkish local trade laws. See Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

Middle East and Mediterranean regions, they also strengthened economic and diplomatic ties with the Ottoman Empire.³²

Figure 1. Peta Wilayah Levant



Source: Britannica.com

The Bark Roe Incident and Its Impact (1581)

In 1581, hopes for establishing stable trade relations with the Ottoman Empire were dashed by the Bark Roe incident³³ involving Peter Baker. He was an English pirate involved in piracy in the Mediterranean Sea. Baker and his crew threatened the newly established trade relations between England and Turkey. They were arrested and tried by the Roman Inquisition on charges of heresy. As a result of this incident, the Ottoman Empire viewed England as an untrustworthy partner in trade and diplomatic relations. Harborne, who had worked hard to establish connections with Sultan Murad III, was also adversely affected by this incident. The Bark Roe incident, involving an English merchant ship accused of violating Turkish law, further tarnished England's image in the eyes of the Turkish government. This situation forced Harborne to leave Constantinople and return to England. His return was not a diplomatic victory but a journey filled with shame and fear. Ultimately, Sultan Murad revoked the English Capitulations and signed a new treaty with France, so that by July 1581, France once again controlled European trade with Turkey, and Harborne's mission appeared to be in ruins.³⁴

³² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean World in The Age of Philip II*, (London: Collins, 1972).

³³ A merchant ship carrying cargo worth more than £1,000 in the form of Kerseys cloth, tin, Brazilian wood, madder, tin, and fragments of bells from Catholic churches in England, left London for the eastern Mediterranean. The ship's captain was Peter Baker, a servant of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (one of Elizabeth's closest advisors and a man believed by a small group of eccentrics to be the author of Shakespeare's plays). Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*. Baker was a subordinate of Harborne, known among Londoners as a greedy and wicked man with a reputation for piracy against Greek ships (i.e., Greeks who were subjects of the Ottoman Empire under Ottoman protection). See Steven A. Roy, "The Anglo-Ottoman Encounter: Diplomacy, Commerce, and Popular Culture, 1580-1650", (Thesis, Departement of History, California State University, Long Beach, 2012).

³⁴ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

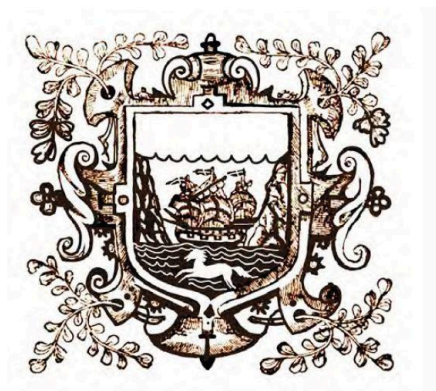
Elizabeth I was moved to write a letter of apology to Murad III regarding the Bark Roe incident, emphasising how intolerable it was to her. Elizabeth said: “How it violates our trust, undermines the strength of our authority, and damages the integrity of the words we have faithfully given to the dignity of your Empire.” The Queen then promised compensation and reaffirmed her commitment to friendship with Murad. This diplomatic manoeuvre came to Harborne’s rescue, supporting the establishment of English capitulations.³⁵

Mustafa Beg reported that Turkey, possibly in response to Elizabeth’s letter, was ready to make a deal. They would restore English privileges on condition that the queen formalised trade and diplomatic relations and appointed an official ambassador to Turkey. Harborne decided to abandon his efforts, and on 17 July, he fled Constantinople. He had spent three difficult and costly years building an English alliance with Turkey, only to return to London with a sense of disappointment.³⁶

Strengthening of Alliances and Appointment of Official Ambassadors (1581-1583)

On 11 September 1581, the Levant Company was established by Queen Elizabeth through the issuance of a Letter Patent granting special privileges to Sir Edward Osborne, Richard Staper, Thomas Smith, William Garret, and several others with combined shares. These privileges included the right to appoint representatives in Turkish port cities and a monopoly on English trade with Turkey.³⁷ The formation of the company caused some friction with English merchants who had been trading more or less on their own account in the Levant, and with those who were informally associated with Venetian trade. In November 1582, the ship Susan sailed from London to Constantinople carrying gifts and a letter to the sultan from the queen, carried by William Harborne.³⁸

Figure 2. Levant Company Logo



Source: *Tarihbilimi.net*

³⁵ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

³⁶ Butler, “Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607”.

³⁷ Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Braudel, *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean World in The Age of Philip II*.

On 20 November 1582, Queen Elizabeth issued an official order to Harborne to serve as ambassador or noble agent in the Turkish territories. Harborne then travelled to Constantinople aboard the Turkish company's ship Susan. He became the first English ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and the official representative of the newly formed Turkey Company.³⁹ Harborne finally arrived in Constantinople on 29 March 1583.⁴⁰

On 24 April 1583, Harborne had a direct audience with Sultan Murad III at Topkapi Sarayı.⁴¹ He kissed his hand as a sign of respect. He came with an entourage of more than eight Chiaus (palace guards). Harborne was received with the same hospitality and treatment as the French ambassador. As part of diplomatic tradition, he presented various gifts to the Sultan, including a jewel-encrusted watch and pearls, ten pairs of shoes, two small dogs, twelve pieces of royal cloth, two pieces of white linen cloth, and thirteen pieces of gold-plated silver. Sultan Murad welcomed him warmly and was flattered that a powerful queen from England had sent her envoy from afar to express support and friendship to the Turkish Sultanate.⁴²

After confirming that he had presented the proper credentials as an ambassador, Harborne was rewarded with the renewal of the English treaty with Turkey, which had been damaged in 1581 due to the Bark Roe incident. This enabled him to begin appointing consuls throughout the Turkish territories to represent English commercial interests. He took pride in his success in renegotiating the customs duties imposed on English goods. "In my speech to the Grand Signior upon my first arrival to His Majesty, I obtained from him for the company the exemption of nearly half of the customs duties," he recalled, reducing the Ottoman customs tariff from 5% to 2%, giving the Turkish Company an important advantage over its European competitors.⁴³

The day after his meeting with Sultan Murad III, Harborne immediately took strategic steps to strengthen British presence across all Ottoman territories. He appointed Harvie Millers as consul in Cairo, Alexandria, and surrounding areas to protect British trade interests and the safety of British citizens in the region. Two months later, Richard Forster was chosen as consul in Aleppo, Damascus, Tripoli (Lebanon), Amman, and Jerusalem, expanding Britain's diplomatic network into the heart of the Levant. Subsequently, the appointment of consuls continued in various important cities such as Chios and Patras in Greece, as well as Algeria and Tunisia in North Africa. In this way, Harborne successfully established a wide network of British representatives from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Holy Land, as well as to the region of the Ionian Sea. All the consuls stationed in Turkish territories not only strengthened Britain's position in Mediterranean trade but also affirmed Britain's ambition to become a major player. Harborne then reported that Murad had agreed to the free release of British kitchen slaves at his request.⁴⁴

³⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴⁰ Horniker, "William Harborne and The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial".

⁴¹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴² Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁴³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴⁴ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

British Diplomatic Strategy in Dealing with Spain (1585-1586)

Harborne once again demonstrated his role as an effective English agent in January 1585 in the Islamic world, particularly in handling a maritime incident that threatened England's relations with Turkey. He successfully resolved the case of the seizure of the Turkish Company's merchant ship *Jesus*, which was captured in Tripoli (Libya) in May 1584, its cargo confiscated, and its crew imprisoned. This incident was triggered by allegations that a factor on the ship owed 450 crowns to a local Turkish merchant, prompting the Tripoli authorities to immediately seize the ship and sentence the captain and one of the crew to death by hanging. Thanks to a secret letter from the ship's master, Thomas Sanders, the case came to light and provoked the anger of the Turkish Company, which considered it a breach of the English agreement with Turkey. Supported by Queen Elizabeth's intervention with Sultan Murad, who then demanded the release of the ship and its crew, Harborne also pressured Kaid Ramadan Pasha with threats of punishment from the Sultan and God if he did not release them immediately.⁴⁵

After establishing himself as ambassador with a network of British consulates throughout the Mediterranean, Harborne began to play a more active political role. He maintained regular communication with Walsingham, who instructed him to persuade Sultan Murad to join the anti-Spanish alliance. By early 1585, English-Spanish relations had grown increasingly tense, nearing war, while England found itself increasingly isolated from Europe. Elizabeth eventually approved an aggressive strategy against Spain, including Walsingham's plan to deploy Sir Francis Drake to attack the Spanish fleet. On 10 August, England signed the Treaty of Nonsuch with the Dutch Calvinists who were fighting Spain. In the treaty, the queen offered the Dutch £125,000 and the support of an English military expeditionary force. King Philip II responded to the treaty as a declaration of war and informed Pope Sixtus V of his plans to invade England. Towards the end of 1585, Spain began to draw up grand plans to attack England.⁴⁶

Aware of the inevitable Spanish threat, Walsingham coordinated with his agents in the Low Countries and Harborne in Constantinople to form an alliance between England and Islam to counter the Spanish threat. In December 1585, William Herle's spy wrote a letter to Queen Elizabeth, justifying England's policy of arming Muslims against Catholics as not only strategic but also morally correct. He argued that using the King of Fez was not supporting a barbarian against Christians, but rather against heresy, namely King Philip II, who was considered a true destroyer of religion and a tyrannical ruler. This view reinforced Walsingham's policy in approaching Turkey.⁴⁷

Throughout the autumn of 1585, Walsingham encouraged Harborne to influence Sultan Murad to divert some of his forces from the war against Persia to the resistance against Spain. The aim was to weaken King Philip's plans to invade England by keeping the Spanish Catholic fleet busy facing the Turkish threat in the Mediterranean.⁴⁸ Realising the magnitude of this challenge, Walsingham advised that if Sultan Murad could not be fully

⁴⁵ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴⁶ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁴⁸ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

convinced, then at least Turkey could pretend to be preparing to attack Spain, so that Philip would hesitate to deploy his best troops to Western Europe.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the Venetian ambassador, Morosini, understood this political dynamic and reported that Sultan Murad highly valued his relationship with England because the religious divide between Catholics and Protestants made it impossible for Queen Elizabeth to join other Christian alliances against the Turks. This relationship illustrates how political pragmatism was more dominant than religious ideology in England's alliance with the Turks.⁵⁰

In 1586, it appears that the Barbary and Turkish companies helped weaken the threat of Spanish aggression. Both companies were established with dual objectives: trade and politics, to exploit strategic and potentially profitable commercial alliances, and to build military alliances in the face of Catholic aggression. Although trade results in Morocco varied, the Turkish Company grew rapidly with large investments and profits of up to 300 per cent from trade with the Turkish Sultanate.⁵¹ This strategic relationship benefited both Elizabeth and Murad.

From its inception, the Levant Company grew rapidly as a trade monopoly granted by royal charter on 11 September 1581. With profits reaching 300%, the company quickly became one of the most successful trading entities in England by the late 16th century. Its growth continued, and by 1595, the Levant Company had a fleet of fifteen ships and a workforce of 790 sailors. Its trade network expanded to various strategic regions in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Alexandretta, Cyprus, Chios, and Zante, which were major trading centres in the Turkish region. Additionally, although on a smaller scale, the Levant Company also established trade relations with important cities such as Venice and Algiers.⁵²

Harborne spent most of his time negotiating the release of British naval slaves throughout the Mediterranean, and he later claimed that he had spent £1,203 during his five years there to 'redeem fifty-four of his people [Englishmen] from long and miserable captivity in Constantinople, Algiers, Tripoli in Barbary, and other places.'⁵³

The Diplomatic Transition from William Harborne to Edward Barton (1588-1595)

In August 1588, Harborne officially ended his tenure as British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and handed over diplomatic responsibilities to his 25-year-old secretary, Edward Barton.⁵⁴ This decision was based on Barton's fluency in Turkish⁵⁵ and his skill in administration and negotiation.⁵⁶ Twelve days before his departure, Harborne appointed Barton as temporary head of the embassy before finally leaving Constantinople for good. The journey ended in Hamburg on 19 November, where he received news of the English

⁴⁹ Jardine, "Gloriana Rules The Waves: Or, The Advantage of Being Excommunicated (And a Woman)".

⁵⁰ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁵¹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁵² Braudel, *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean World in The Age of Philip II*.

⁵³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁵⁴ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁵⁵ Mathilde Alazraki, "The Queen and The Sultana: Early Modern Female Circuits of Diplomacy and The Consumption of Gendered Luxury Items Between East and West", *Revue française de civilisation britannique* 29, No. 3(2024): 1-12.

⁵⁶ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

and Spanish victory, a moment that was a mixture of disappointment and satisfaction. During his decade in Constantinople, Harborne had secured the restoration of a nearly lost trade agreement, established the first official English embassy in the Islamic world, and built a network of English trade in the Mediterranean. Although he failed to persuade the Turks to attack Spain, his diplomatic efforts still disrupted Spain's plans for an invasion of England. This was what Harborne emphasised upon his return to England. Harborne then spent the rest of his life quietly in Norfolk until his death in 1617.⁵⁷

The first instruction Barton received from Harborne before he left Constantinople in August 1588 was that Harborne emphasised the importance of Barton acting cautiously in carrying out his duties in the interests of Queen Elizabeth. Harborne also reminded Barton to keep expenses to a minimum to stay within the British embassy's budget. Additionally, Harborne advised Barton not to rush into direct dealings with the grand vizier regarding trade matters but to first discuss them with their servants to understand the situation before taking action. After receiving these instructions, Barton followed up by sending a letter to Francis Walsingham on 15 August 1588 to request further guidance on British foreign policy in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁸

Then, Barton skilfully took advantage of the political tensions in Constantinople to strengthen British influence. With an aggressive diplomatic approach, he established close ties with Sultan Murad III's favourite consort, Safiye Sultan, who provided direct access to the heart of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, Barton was respected by the Turks and feared by the Christian community there. He used his position to weaken the influence of French diplomat Jacques de Savary Lencosse, whom he accused of working for King Philip II.⁵⁹

After Harborne's departure, Barton immediately took over as the British representative in Turkey, even though he had not yet been officially appointed as ambassador. By 1589, British influence in Turkey was so strong that some Florentine merchants preferred British protection over French.⁶⁰ He also played a role in diplomatic mediation between Turkey and Poland by encouraging a failed member of the Polish embassy to write to the Polish king in support of a peace agreement in line with British interests.⁶¹ He also established close ties with influential figures such as David Passi, a Jewish merchant and spy with connections to England. This illustrates how Barton actively built networks to strengthen England's position in Turkey.⁶²

On 21 March 1590, Queen Elizabeth instructed Barton to mediate peace between Turkey and Poland. Barton worked with the new Polish ambassador to draft a petition, which was then submitted to Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Paşa. The petition offered a compromise that was favourable to Poland, demonstrating the British diplomatic approach of maintaining regional stability while maintaining relations with both sides.⁶³ Then, in April 1592, Barton used his influence in the Ottoman Empire to thwart negotiations

⁵⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁵⁸ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁵⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁶⁰ Kowalczyk, "Edward Barton and Anglo-Ottoman Relation, 1588-98".

⁶¹ Kowalczyk, "Edward Barton and Anglo-Ottoman Relation, 1588-98".

⁶² Kowalczyk, "Edward Barton and Anglo-Ottoman Relation, 1588-98".

⁶³ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

between Spain and Ferhad Pasha, which ultimately led to Ferhad's downfall.⁶⁴ This action demonstrated how Barton exploited political intrigue within the Ottoman Empire to weaken Spanish influence.

During this period, Barton also successfully devised a strategy to remove the French ambassador, François Savary de Lancôme, who was pro-Catholic and pro-Spanish. He then ensured that the position was filled by his ally, François Savary de Brèves, who was more friendly towards England. This change strengthened England's diplomatic position in Turkey and weakened French influence in the geopolitical competition in the region.⁶⁵

The success of Barton's diplomacy led to speculation among European monarchies that Queen Elizabeth supported Turkey in its attacks on the Christian world, thereby strengthening relations between England and Turkey. These rumours were inseparable from Barton's efforts to actively promote Turkish policy. He also submitted a petition to Burghley (Queen Elizabeth's advisor on foreign policy, focusing on diplomacy and governance) requesting that Queen Elizabeth send gifts to Sultan Murad as a sign of support for his influence in Constantinople. Barton's presence not only strengthened diplomatic ties but also caused anxiety among the Catholic kingdoms of Europe.⁶⁶

In September 1593, Burghley approved the sending of gifts from Queen Elizabeth to Sultan Murad. The ship *Ascension* of London arrived in Constantinople carrying various offerings, including gold plates, luxurious fabrics, and satin. Barton specifically presented gifts to Safiye Sultan. The gifts sent in Elizabeth's name included ruby and diamond-encrusted jewellery, gold tableware, expensive fabrics, and gold-plated glass bottles.⁶⁷ The gifts for Murad III arrived in October 1593.⁶⁸ Safiye Sultan received them with great joy, sending a reply in the form of luxurious Turkish clothing and a thank-you note that demonstrated their close relationship.⁶⁹

Esperanza Malchi, an Italian Jewish woman who served as Safiye Sultan's intermediary, frequently interacted with Edward Barton on many occasions, as all of Barton's dealings with Safiye went through Malchi, making her a key figure in this diplomatic relationship. Thus, all gift exchanges were conducted through royal female intermediaries, with Barton acting on behalf of Queen Elizabeth I, while Safiye Sultan entrusted the matter to Esperanza Malchi.⁷⁰ Barton valued Safiye's gift at £120 before sending it to England.⁷¹ Although there are no archival records of the jewel-encrusted

⁶⁴ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁶⁵ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁶⁶ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁶⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁶⁸ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607"; Susan Skilliter, "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. Samuel M. Stern (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970).

⁶⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁷⁰ Alazraki, "The Queen and The Sultana: Early Modern Female Circuits of Diplomacy and The Consumption of Gendered Luxury Items Between East and West".

⁷¹ In the 16th century, £1 had much greater purchasing power than its current nominal value. For example, in 1510 M, £100 was equivalent to approximately £66,000 in modern terms. Thus, the gift of £120 from Safiye Sultan to Edward Barton at that time was a significant amount, reflecting high value in the economic context of the time. With that amount, someone at the time could hire an expert for approximately 3,333 days, which is about 9 years, or

portrait sent by Elizabeth, other surviving examples, such as the gold pendant made by Nicholas Hilliard, provide insight into the type of object that may have been sent.⁷²

The exchange of gifts, a carefully crafted diplomatic strategy to strengthen the alliance, was reinforced in Safiye's letter of thanks, which arrived in Greenwich in August 1594 along with her gifts. The letter contained statements affirming the political supremacy of the Ottoman Empire, beginning with praise for God and the Prophet Muhammad before referring to Sultan Murad as the 'emperor of seven climates and four parts of the world.' Safiye also emphasised that Elizabeth corresponded with the 'mother of Sultan Murad Khan's son,' as if placing the English queen under Turkish political and theological protection. For Elizabeth's opponents, such as Verstegen and the exiled English Catholic diaspora, the letter only reinforced the accusation that England had become a vassal state of Turkey, willing to trade everything, including its beliefs, for the sake of diplomacy.⁷³

The Turkish costume Safiye sent in 1593 marked the first time an Ottoman sultana had ever presented a gift to an English ruler. The letter that came with it is still regarded as "an outstanding specimen of Turkish calligraphy," featuring paper "liberally flecked with gold" and text written "altogether [in] five colours, black, blue, crimson, gold and scarlet."⁷⁴ It is probable that presenting the sultana with a portrait of the queen, and Safiye's reply in the form of an Ottoman garment paired with an impressive letter, reflected an effort to establish a visual connection within their exchange. As Rayne Allinson observes, "[f]or the Ottomans, the materiality of royal letters carried as much significance as their contents, or even greater significance."⁷⁵

Examining the sultana's request for English goods shifts attention away from a Eurocentric focus on Eastern luxury and highlights instead Eastern consumption of Western objects. This inversion of exoticism is particularly striking in the early modern period, when the Ottoman Empire was economically stronger than England. Ottoman elite demand for European luxury extended beyond England: in 1590, Sultana Safiye requested Venetian glassware imitating chalcedony, a technique largely forgotten by the late sixteenth century, forcing the Venetian Senate to search for a craftsman capable of reproducing the desired style.⁷⁶

Although Elizabeth's letters are lost and it is unclear if she sent the cosmetics Safiye requested, the surviving letters from Safiye offer a rare example of female diplomacy. This exchange between two powerful women used their shared femininity to foster intimacy and strengthen ties. Viewing it through the lens of New Diplomatic History highlights how

purchase 263 cows, or even 70 horses. Heather, "The Renaissance English History Podcast Blog", 3 July 2025, <https://www.englishcast.com/2019/08/tudor-money/>

⁷² Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁷³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁷⁴ Skilliter, "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I," 121–22.

⁷⁵ Rayne Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 135.

⁷⁶ Luca Molà, "Material Diplomacy: Venetian Luxury Gifts for the Ottoman Empire in the Late Renaissance," in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, ed. Zoltán Biedermann et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 73–74.

diplomacy could occur beyond the Eurocentric focus on ambassadors as the sole agents of negotiation.⁷⁷

The Death of Sultan Murad III and New Diplomatic Dynamics (1595-1603)

On 15 January 1595, Sultan Murad died at Topkapi Palace. However, his death was kept secret until Crown Prince Mehmed III arrived in Constantinople to ensure a smooth transition of power. Four weeks later, Barton forwarded a letter to Burghley from a man he referred to as a 'curious Jew,' who reported the death of Sultan Murad and the accession of Sultan Mehmed III. The letter was written by Alvaro Mendès, a Portuguese Jew known at the Turkish court as Salomon Aben Yaèx. Mendès reported that on 27 January, Mehmed arrived from Manisa, a city near the Aegean coast, to claim the throne and bury his father in Hagia Sophia.⁷⁸

The death of Sultan Murad III was a crucial moment for Anglo-Turkish relations. Much of Elizabeth's diplomacy depended on her personal correspondence with Sultan Murad and Safiye Sultan. With the accession of Mehmed III, the future of these relations became uncertain. Barton immediately sent Salomon's report to London, hoping that Burghley would send gifts to strengthen his diplomatic position. However, the response from the Privy Council was slow, forcing Barton to take independent action to maintain English influence in the Sultanate.⁷⁹ Barton reached a significant milestone in his career when he decided to accompany Sultan Mehmed III on a military campaign against the Habsburgs in Hungary in 1596. Although initially reluctant to join the expedition due to a lack of financial support, Barton eventually departed with the Sultan.⁸⁰ He witnessed firsthand the Turkish victory over the Habsburgs at Keresztes. However, Barton's presence drew criticism in Europe and Russia, forcing Elizabeth to send envoys to Prague and Moscow to deny her involvement in the war against Christian nations. Despite religious differences and fears of Turkish ambitions, the alliance persisted due to strategic and economic interests.⁸¹

Economically, trade with the Turks had a significant impact on England. Unlike the less profitable Barbary Company, the Turkish Company grew rapidly and eventually merged with the Venetian Company in 1592 to form the Levant Company. With this expansion, English cloth exports to the Mediterranean reached £150,000 per year. This surge in trade also increased interest in the Muslim world, as evidenced by the numerous publications related to Turkey in England during Elizabeth's reign, particularly in the 1590s.⁸²

On 28 January 1598, Barton died in Constantinople from dysentery, ending his tenure as English ambassador to Turkey. He was buried in the Christian cemetery on the

⁷⁷ John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 1–14, 2; Mathilde Alazraki, "The Queen and the Sultana", 7.

⁷⁸ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁷⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁸⁰ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

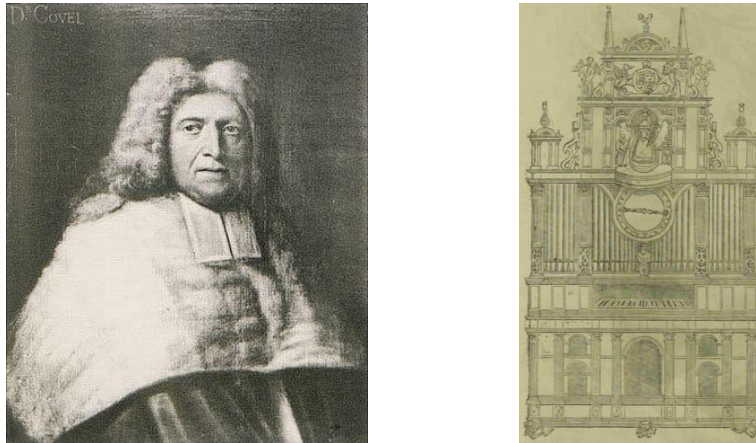
⁸¹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁸² Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

island of Heybeliada, near Constantinople.⁸³ Sultan Mehmed never officially ratified his position, and his adventures in Hungary further delayed the delivery of the royal gift. His successor, Henry Lello, had to renegotiate the English commercial capitulation amid competition with France. However, Lello lacked Barton's diplomatic skills. Even his colleagues nicknamed him 'The Fog' and mocked his unconvincing manner of speaking before the sultan. Despite the difficulties, he managed to convince London that relations with Turkey could only be maintained if the gifts and official letters were sent immediately.⁸⁴

News of the ship carrying gifts for the Turkish Sultanate began to circulate, causing concern among observers in January 1599. John Chamberlain wrote that the gifts would cause problems, especially for countries like Germany. Elizabeth herself chose the gifts, including a £600 carriage for Safiye Sultan, as a clever strategy to maintain her influence at the Turkish court.⁸⁵ Another ornate gift was a versatile organ produced by Thomas Dallam.⁸⁶ He was a musician and blacksmith from Lancashire.⁸⁷

Figure 3. Left Portrait of Thomas Dallam and Right Dallam Organs



Source: Istanbulelsewhere.com

On 28 August 1599, the ship Hector arrived in Constantinople, but reports about its cargo varied. The Venetian bailo, Girolamo Capello, noted that the organ was 'very cleverly designed,' but some of the fabrics sent were mouldy and damaged. In fact, the Dallam organ was severely damaged by the sea voyage and the hot temperatures, as were the other fabrics. This failure made Lello worry that he would lose the official blessing of Sultan Mehmed III as ambassador. The French and Venetian embassies mocked the damaged gift, while the Venetian Bailo remained suspicious of Lello's ambition to establish a Protestant church in Constantinople, which could disrupt the diplomatic balance in the Turkish capital.⁸⁸

⁸³ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁸⁴ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁸⁵ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁸⁶ Butler, "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607".

⁸⁷ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁸⁸ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

Then, in May 1600, Hector returned to England, bringing with him gifts and a letter from Safiye Sultan for Elizabeth. At first, everything seemed to be going well. In her letter, Safiye confirmed that the gift carriage had been received with pleasure. She also sent a reply in the form of a robe, a sash, two gold-embroidered bath towels, three handkerchiefs, and a crown set with rubies and pearls. More than just a symbolic exchange, these gifts had significant diplomatic implications. Safiye assured Elizabeth that she continued to advise her son to honour the agreement with England. In other words, Safiye's role as an intermediary remained influential in ensuring the ratification of the English Capitulation with Turkey, thereby strengthening the relationship between the two kingdoms.⁸⁹

This exchange of gifts marked the peak of English-Turkish relations under Queen Elizabeth I. Although the Capitulation was approved and Lello's embassy ratified, he failed to build as strong a relationship as Barton had with Sultan Safiye, who began to increasingly favour Venice. Additionally, he was often outmanoeuvred by French diplomats. Lello remained in his position until 1607, when he was recalled to England and replaced by Thomas Glover. However, the vengeful Lello accused his successor of various scandals, including bigamy, adultery, and, most bizarrely, wearing too much jewellery in the presence of the sultan.⁹⁰

England was nearing the end of Queen Elizabeth I's reign; she died on 24 March 1603 at 2:30 a.m. at the age of 70, becoming the first English monarch to reach that age.⁹¹ This marked a major shift in English policy, as her successor, James I, immediately changed England's foreign policy. He preferred to make peace with Spain and align with Christian European nations. Unlike Elizabeth, who saw Turkey as a strategic ally, James opposed their expansion in Europe. He was more interested in relations with the Greek Orthodox Church and colonial projects in the New World.⁹² With the accession of James I, the close relationship between England and the Turkish Sultanate that had been established over several decades came to an end.⁹³

CONCLUSION

This study has thoroughly examined the diplomatic alliance procession between Queen Elizabeth I and Sultan Murad III in the context of European tensions from the official initiation in 1583 until the end of Queen Elizabeth I's reign and the ascension of King James

⁸⁹ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁹⁰ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

⁹¹ Robert Stedall, *Elizabeth I's Final Years: Her Favourites and Her Fighting Men*, (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2022).

⁹² The New World was the name given to the American continent, which, in the early 17th century, became the main target of exploration and colonisation by European nations, including England. This region was seen as a new land rich in resources and opportunities, and became an arena for competition between European powers such as Spain and England. During the reign of King James I, England began to focus its attention on exploration and expansion into the New World in order to maintain its position as a leading maritime and trading nation. Driven by imperialist ambitions and concerns over Spanish dominance in the Americas, King James I granted a charter to the London Company to establish colonies in the region. The result of this policy was the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 in Virginia, which became the first permanent English settlement in America and marked the beginning of English presence in the region that would later develop into the United States. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, "Jamestown, 1607-1957", *Proceedings of The American Philosophical Society* 101, No. 4 (Augustus. 16, 1957): 369-374.

⁹³ Brotton, *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*.

I in 1603. This process involved various communications, negotiations, and official capitulations from Sultan Murad III. The alliance process was not merely a political agreement but also had an impact on military defence, economic growth, and the fight against a common enemy. This diplomatic alliance began with the dispatch of William Harborne as the first official English diplomat to Constantinople in 1583. However, England had already established an informal cooperative relationship with the Ottoman Empire through a capitulation agreement in 1580. These informal relations were temporarily strained due to the Bark Roe tragedy, but were later renewed in 1583 after Harborne was sent as an official diplomat to Constantinople at the request of Sultan Murad III. This alliance did not always run smoothly, with various incidents occurring, such as diplomatic competition with France and political changes within the Ottoman Empire, which posed challenges for England.

The succession of ambassadors from Harborne to Barton, then to Lello, reflected the fluctuating dynamics of the relationship. Although Elizabeth sought to maintain close ties with Turkey through correspondence and the exchange of gifts, major changes occurred after her death on 24 March 1603. The accession of James I to the English throne ended this alliance, as he preferred to align with Christian European nations and abandoned Elizabeth's foreign policy of supporting Turkey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Archive, Ottoman Imperial. "The letter from Sultan Murad III to the Queen of England, Elizabeth I". July 17, 2025. <https://bit.ly/The-Letter-Murad-III-to-Elizabeth-I>
- Alazraki, Mathilde. "The Queen and the Sultana: Early Modern Female Circuits of Diplomacy and the Consumption of Gendered Luxury Items Between East and West". *Revue française de civilisation britannique* 29, No. 03 (2024): 1-12.
- Allinson, Rayne. *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Attreed, Lorraine and Alexandra Winkler, "Faith and Forgiveness: Lessons in Statecraft for Queen Mary Tudor", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, No. 4 (Winter, 2005): 971-989.
- Abdurrahman, Dudung. *Methodology of Islamic History Research*. Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2019.
- Brotton, Jerry. *The Sultan and The Queen: The Untold Story of Elizabeth and Islam*. New York: Viking, 2016.
- Braudel, Braudel. *The Mediterranean and The Mediterranean World in The Age of Philip II*. London: Collins, 1972.
- Berridge, G. R. *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Butler, Joel. "Between Company and State: Anglo-Ottoman Diplomacy and Ottoman Political Culture, 1565-1607". Dissertation, Faculty Of History, Universitas of Oxford England, 2022.
- Dugis, Vinsensio. *Theories of International Relations: Classical Perspectives*. Surabaya: PT Revka Petra Media, 2016.
- Goffman, Daniel. *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

- Horniker, Arthur Leon. "William Harborne and The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Diplomatic and Commercial". *The Journal of Modern History* 14, No. 3 (September, 1942): 289-316.
- Heather. "The Renaissance English History Podcast Blog". July 3, 2025. <https://www.englandcast.com/2019/08/tudor-money/>
- Jardine, Lisa. "Gloriana Rules The Waves: Or, The Advantage of Being Excommunicated (And a Woman)". *Transactions of The Royal Historical Society* 14, (2004): 209-222.
- Kowalczyk, Tomasz David. "Edward Barton and anglo-Ottoman Relation, 1588-98". (The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy University of Sussex, 2020).
- Kuntowijoyo. *Introduction to Historical Science*. Yogyakarta: Tiara Discourse, 2013.
- Manuscripts, Madieval Blog. "Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Causins, Rival Queens". Accessed on July 17, 2025. <https://bit.ly/RegnansinExcelsis>
- Molà, Luca. "Material Diplomacy: Venetian Luxury Gifts for the Ottoman Empire in the Late Renaissance." In *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, edited by Zoltán Biedermann et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Nugroho. "The Protestant Reformation and the French Wars of Religion". *Journal of Religious Studies* 20, No. 1 (June, 2019): 69-85.
- Online, Papal Encyclicals. "Regnan in Excelsis Excommunicating Elizabeth I of England". Accessed on July 13, 2024. <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius05/p5regnans.htm>
- Online, Arcadian Library. "Coppie de la Requeste Presentee au Turc". Accessed on July 17, 2025. <https://bit.ly/CoppiedelaRequeste>
- Rawlinson, H. G. "The Embassy of William Harborne to Constantinople, 1583-8". *Transaction of The Royal Historical Society* 5, (1922): 1-27.
- Roy, Steven A. "The Anglo-Ottoman Encounter: Diplomacy, Commerce, and Popular Culture, 1580-1650". Thesis, Departement of History, California State University, Long Beach, 2012.
- Skilliter, Susan. "Three Letters from the Ottoman 'Sultana' Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I." In *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, edited by Samuel M. Stern. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970.
- Stedall, Robert. *Elizabeth I's Final Years: Her Favourites and Her Fighting Men*. Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2022.
- Watkins, John. "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 1-14.
- Wertenbaker, Thomas J. "Jamestown, 1607-1957". *Proceedings of The American Philosophical Society* 101, No. 4 (August. 16, 1957): 369-374.
- Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of alliances*. New York: Cornell University, 1987.
- Yavuzaslan, Eda Nur. "The Beginning of Anglo-Turkish Relations (1580-1603)". *Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations* 4, No. 2 (June, 2023): 51-61.
- Zed, M. *Literature Research Method*. Jakarta: Obor Indonesia Foundation, 2004.